

**SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAMS' AND PARENTS' COLLABORATIVE
STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE LEARNER ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE**

By

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DECLARATION

I, Philile Radebe, declare that this dissertation titled “*School Management Teams’ and parents’ collaborative strategies to enhance learner academic performance*” is my own work. All sources utilised have been acknowledged and indicated by means of a reference.



Student's signature

Date: July 2024

DEDICATION

To my beloved son, “Oratilwe Bokamoso Radebe”, you were quickly wiped out from the face of the earth, and I am still left with too many questions that I do not have answers to. May your soul continue to rest in peace. I will always love you.

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ABSTRACT

Scholars from across the globe have conducted studies and recognised the importance of parents -schools collaborations. South Africa and other nations have adopted several policies and initiatives requiring parents to be involved in their children's education because research demonstrates that learners benefit when schools and parents work together. The study aimed to explore the collaborative strategies of SMTs and parents to enhance learners' academic performance. The following secondary questions guided the study: How do SMTs and parents collaborate to enhance learner academic performance? What challenges do SMTs and parents experience with their collaborative strategies to enhance learner academic performance? What can be done to enhance effective collaborative strategies between the SMTs and parents? Grounded in collaborative leadership theory, the study adopted an interpretive paradigm and employed a qualitative approach. The study used a multiple case study design.

Purposive sampling was used to select participants, including two School Governing Body (SGB) parents, one principal, and one Head of Department (HOD) from each of the five schools in Thabo Mofutsanyana District. Data collection methods included semi-structured interviews and document analysis. Data analysis using thematic analysis revealed four key themes: conceptualisation of collaboration, experiences on parent-school collaboration, challenges on parent-school collaboration, and strategies for enhancing parent-school collaboration. The key findings indicate that although all participant groups recognise the importance of collaboration, obstacles such as limited communication, resource shortages, and a lack of trust impede its effectiveness. The study suggests several strategies to improve collaboration, including holding regular meetings, using various communication platforms, implementing policies, and encouraging active parent participation. The conclusions highlight the necessity for transparent communication, adequate resource support, effective policy implementation, and training programmes to enhance school-parent collaboration. Recommendations include fostering regular communication, addressing resource limitations, bolstering policy implementation, and providing training and support for stakeholders.

Key concepts: School Management Teams, parental involvement, strategies, collaboration, learner academic performance

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

HOD	Head of Department
SIP	School Improvement Plan
SMT	School Management Team
SGB	School Governing Body
SSE	Self-School Evaluation

SASA South African Schools Act 84 of 1996
SACE South African Council for Educators
DOE Department of Education
PAM Personnel Administrative Measures
NECT National Education Collaboration Trust

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In this study, collaborative strategies that the School Management Teams (SMTs) and parents implement to enhance learners' academic performance are explored in detail. This chapter is an orientation to the study, which outlines the background of the study, the rationale for the study, value, the problem statement, research questions, aims and objectives, definition of terms, delimitations of the study, overview of research methodology, overview of theoretical framework, as well as the structure of each chapter of the study.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

In the education context, collaboration refers to an act of shared participation and responsibility by educational stakeholders aimed at enabling a learning and teaching environment that is favourable where learner achievement performance can be enhanced (Lewallen, Hunt, Potts-Datema, Zaza & Giles, 2015). According to Griffiths, Alsip, Hart, Round and Brady (2020), it can be used to provide comprehensive education and support for all children through carefully planned and implemented instructions. It involves regular communication among stakeholders (School Management Teams, teachers, and parents) regarding the progress of learners and solving problems, as well as gathering information and sharing resources (Fodo, 2020).

The education system around the world aims to provide high-quality education for all children following the right to education, which creates a need for effective collaboration between parents and School Management Teams (SMTs) (Griffiths et al., 2020). According to Nkosi and Adebayo (2021), principals, teachers, parents, and learners should be responsible for the overall performance of learners. The School Management Team (SMT) has a mandate to promote collaboration between the school and the parents to ensure that learners are well-equipped to reach their full potential (Lethoko, 2019). The SMTs and parents should collaborate to advance the educational goals of learners through shared planned strategies and responsibilities, to cultivate learner achievement (Sadiku & Sylaj, 2019).

Globally, decades-long research demonstrated that learners benefit when schools, communities, and families collaborate (Epstein & Associates, 2019). Martinez (2015) asserts that schools should develop creative strategies to involve parents in their children's academic development. Martinez (2015) further postulates that providing parents with the necessary resources to actively engage in their children's education will contribute to the enhancement of academic achievement. Empirical research has consistently demonstrated a strong correlation between parental engagement in education and academic success, leading to improved self-esteem and school performance among learners (Lara & Saracostti, 2019). For example, in Chile, the importance of collaborative relationships between parents and schools to enhance learner performance was acknowledged by developing a National Policy for Fathers, Mothers, and Legal Guardians' Participation in the Educational System in 2002 (Lara & Saracostti, 2019). Hartas (2015) states that in Chile, across all educational levels, a substantial proportion of parents maintain a consistent and ongoing involvement in their children's education.

The Australian community acknowledged the role of collaboration between learners, their families, and educators, for example, schools establish decision-making policies that promote the active involvement of the entire school community (learners, family, and school staff) in which they collaborate to facilitate the process of negotiating learner development plans to enhance student learning (Padayachee, 2021). The Australian Act Government (2014) indicates that there is a Family-School and Community Partnership Bureau as a strategy aimed at ensuring collaboration between parents and the management of the school. In the Australian schooling context, there is an emphasis on parent engagement, which is a deliberate and cooperative approach aimed at enhancing and utilising the knowledge, abilities, and social connections of families to enhance the educational and overall welfare outcomes for all children (Act Government, 2014). Collaboration in Australian schools enables educators and parents to comprehend learners in various settings, facilitating the identification of disparities and preventing unneeded tensions and conflicts (Act Government, 2014). This leads to a more efficient collaboration between parents and SMTs in the development and execution of learner support policies and plans (Griffiths et al., 2020).

In Greece, the educational system is centralised, and it establishes the guidelines and objectives for parental involvement in schools with the mandatory formation of a Parents' Association in every school unit as parental involvement in educational activities has been formalised (Anastasiou & Papagianni, 2020). Anastasiou and Papagianni, (2020) further state that parental engagement in Greece is still evolving and taking on the characteristics of the culture, values, and perspectives of teachers, principals, and parents to increase parent-school collaboration. According to Martinez (2020), giving parents the tools they need to participate actively in their children's schools would help to improve academic attainment in Greek schools.

In the African continent, countries are also following suit on the trends of promoting collaboration between schools and parents. For example, in Nigeria, the Nigerian National Policy on Education and National Parent-Teacher Association encompasses a directive that necessitates the involvement of the community, specifically parents, in the management of the school (Olibie, 2014). This mandate recognized the need for parental involvement in the Nigerian education system (Olibie, 2014). Nigerian Parents remain steadfast in their dedication to supporting their children's academic endeavours by keeping an eye on their academic progress and fostering strong relationships with instructors and schools (Ugwuegbulem, 2018). Parental involvement in children's lives outside of the classroom can have numerous positive effects, including heightened motivation, enhanced self-esteem, and increased self-reliance. These benefits can contribute to academic success, irrespective of the family's financial circumstances (Martinez, 2020).

According to Kibaara and Ndirangu (2014), in countries like Kenya parents actively participate in their children's education by fulfilling financial obligations, supervising homework, and attending scheduled school meetings. As a result, learners exhibit a high level of discipline, remain enrolled in school, and achieve superior academic performance. Kibaara and Ndirangu (2014) further report that parents collaborate with teachers to ensure that their children comply with school rules and regulations and actively participate in meetings, as schools promote parental engagement in their children's education.

In South Africa, there are various Acts and White Papers that have made an environment more conducive to parent involvement in schools and have put in

procedures to involve parents. The South African Schools Act (SASA) (Republic of South Africa, 1996) compels parents to participate in the governance of the school. The act also encourages parents, educators, and learners to promote and accept the responsibility for the organisation, governance, and funding of the school in partnership with the state. However, actual parental involvement in South African schools remains weak (Lethoko, 2019). This means there is still a lack of collaborative efforts, strategies, and practices between parents and the School Management Teams. The non-participation of parents in education is believed to be defeating the purpose of social justice-oriented education (Mbatha, 2018). It is argued that parental involvement, as it is currently happening in South Africa, may not lead to improved learner performance. Mbatha (2018) emphasises how imperative it is for the School Management Teams to take their pivotal role as the management of the curriculum to collaborate with parents to get support from them as the first teachers of the child to achieve better academic performance. This study, therefore, investigated the SMTs and parents' collaborative strategies to enhance learner academic performance.

1.3 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

The South African Council of Educators (SACE) code of professional ethics (4.3) stipulates that teachers must involve parents in their children's progress timely, but this factor seems not succinct. Attending extra classes in Thabo Mofutsanyana District is executed to improve academic learner performance. If learners do not attend these classes, they fall behind with the syllabus and do not get to experience reflective teaching, which leads to lower or poor performance for both promoted and progressed learners, hence the requirement for parental involvement.

As an educator working in one of the schools in the same district, I had to adapt to the dynamics of a school context. Working under the same leadership in my workplace, I observed that parents and teachers do not have good relations, hindering learners' academic performance. When the SMT fails to foster collaboration with parents, they are essentially limiting the multifaceted roles that parents can play, and the importance of schools initiating strategies that actively include parents in decision-making processes (Eptein & Associates, 2019).

From my observation, the SMT did not involve parents in strategic planning, and it led to non-support (in some meetings, parents would not form a quorum, or in other cases, most parents did not avail themselves although letters were sent and received by the parents) from parents to the school. Research by Green et al. (2022) suggests that when schools fail to involve parents in decision-making processes, parents feel excluded and less motivated to participate, leading to challenges in collaboration and trust-building. In the same school, the SMTs failed to support educators when involving parents in disciplinary matters or in strategies to improve learner performance. Meeting with other teachers at the marking centre and discussing workplace challenges that are encountered in a school environment, some asserted that they work well with parents, while some alleged that there is a lack or no cooperation. Colleagues who postulated that they do not compromise discipline worked well with SMTs and experienced parental involvement, while other colleagues who struggled with learner discipline contended a lack of parental involvement. According to Leithwood & Louis (2020), a balance of structure and support in leadership leads to higher parental involvement and better learner outcomes. Parental involvement, in turn, positively impacts learner discipline, as shown in the research of Jeynes (2022), who found that when parents are engaged in school affairs, learners are more likely to exhibit better behavior and achieve academically.

For these reasons, I developed an interest in doing research in Thabo Mofutsanyana District about SMTs and parents and the strategies they use to enhance academic learner performance. My career aspiration in the education field is to advance further into the practice of management and leadership with the desire to contribute particularly to developing creative and innovative teaching practices in Free State Province, transcending all the barriers that hinder the delivery of quality education within our communities. I am interested in acquiring skills and knowledge that will improve educational policies and advance the vision of impacting the education system of our country.

1.4 VALUE OF THE STUDY

Various studies have been conducted on parental involvement and the role of the SMTs in parental involvement in South Africa. However, there is a gap in studies investigating the collaborative efforts of SMTs and parents to enhance learner

academic performance in one district. As a result, this need and value prompted this study. The study presented collaborative strategies that the SMTs and parents can implement to assist them in providing learner support to enhance their academic performance. The findings presented offered the following potential benefits: provide the SMTs and parents with practical techniques that can be implemented to promote collaboration to enhance academic learner performance. The SMTs was made aware of how they can help parents with challenges that hinder them from practising parental involvement. The SMTs and parents can make tremendous changes in academic learner performance through collaborative efforts, mutual accountability, and responsibility.

1.5 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Internationally, research shows that learners gain when schools and parents work together (Eptein & Associates, 2019). Various Acts and White Papers mandate parents to work together with schools and provide procedures on how such collaboration should unfold (Lethoko, 2019). In the same way, The South African Schools Act (SASA) (Republic of South Africa, 1996) compels parents to collaborate with schools by actively participating in matters regarding governance to promote optimal learning. Setlhodi (2020) suggests that the element of collaborative practice that should be Ubuntu-inspired leadership is hampered in its efforts to improve performance. Setlhodi (2020) adds that there is a dearth of haphazard planning, a lack of creative collaboration, and insufficient inclusion of all important parties to enhance learner performance.

Studies conducted in South Africa reveal that parental collaboration remains weak in schools (Lethoko, 2019; Mbatha, 2018). Finding from the study conducted by Munje & Mncube revealed that most parents are not involved in the learner's education which results to poor learner academic performance. Parents and families have increasingly overlooked their responsibility to partner with schools, instead placing the entire burden of education on the schools. Likewise, educators seem unperturbed by operating independently (Smith & Johnson, 2023; Martinez & Lee, 2022). The absence of relations between schools and families contributes to challenges like learner dropout, disciplinary issues, and learner withdrawal from school (Gubbels, van de Put & Assink, 2019). However, Bipath (2017) alleges a lack of directives from the

Department of Education regarding strategies that can be used to enhance collaboration between parents and SMTs. According to Smith & Johnson (2023); Martinez & Lee (2022) schools and families must seek innovative approaches to collaborate effectively. Hence, the study aimed to investigate the collaborative strategies of SMTs and parents to enhance learners' academic performance.

1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1.6.1 Main research question

- What are School Management Teams' and parents' collaborative strategies to enhance learner academic performance?

1.6.2 Secondary questions

- How do SMTs and parents collaborate to enhance learner academic performance?
- What challenges do SMTs and parents experience with their collaborative strategies to enhance learner academic performance?
- What can be done to enhance effective collaborative strategies between the SMTs and parents?

1.7 RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The study aimed to explore the collaborative strategies of SMTs and parents to enhance learners' academic performance . Therefore, the following objectives were formulated:

- Explore how SMTs and parents collaborate to enhance learner academic performance.

- Examine challenges experienced by the SMTs and parents as a result of collaborative strategies they use to enhance learner academic performance.
- Determine effective collaborative strategies between the SMTs and parents to enhance learner performance.

1.8 DEFINITION OF TERMS

It was essential to define the main terms that were employed in the study, as done next.

1.8.1 School Management Team (SMT)

School Management Team (SMT) refers to the structure of the school that is responsible for the proper running of the school. It is made up of the principal, deputy principal, and heads of department. It is responsible for planning, organising, leading, and monitoring school activities, as well as managing school resources, to guarantee that the school operates successfully and efficiently (Lethoko, 2019).

1.8.2 Parent

Parent refers to (a) the parent or guardian of a learner, (b) the person legally entitled to the custody of a learner, or (c) the person who undertakes to fulfil the obligations of a person referred to in (a) or (b) (SASA, 1996:2). Manamela (2015) defines a parent as a person who gave birth to a child and should take complete responsibility for the upbringing and well-being of that child. This includes a guardian who takes care of the child without biological parents.

1.8.3 Parental Involvement

Manamela (2015) defines parental involvement as parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaboration with the community. Parental involvement entails multiple tasks, such as parents visiting the school for meetings or to volunteer, communicating with school staff, attending parent-teacher association meetings, assisting children with academic activities at home,

participating in school events, holding high expectations and positive attitudes towards their children's education, and forming support groups where parents can share their expertise (Manilal, 2014).

1.8.4 Collaboration

Collaboration refers to an act of shared participation and responsibility by educational stakeholders aimed at enabling a conducive teaching and learning environment where learner achievement performance can be enhanced (Lewallen, Hunt, Potts-Datema, Zaza & Giles, 2015). According to Griffiths et al. (2020), collaboration can be used to provide comprehensive education and support for all children through carefully planned and implemented instructions.

1.8.5 Strategies

Strategies are action plans designed to achieve a long-term or overall aim (Lethoko, 2019). Khalifa (2020) defines strategy as exploring the connections between several ideas that are typically coupled, like formulation and execution, control and learning, planning and emergence, and intention and action.

1.8.6 Academic Performance

The academic performance of learners is of utmost importance and is one of the main goals of education. Narad and Abdullah (2016) expressed it as the overall knowledge obtained by a learner, which is assessed through marks by a teacher and/or educational goals set by learners and educators to be attained over a specified period, such as a term.

1.8.7 District

District offices are local hubs of Provincial Education Departments and provide the vital lines of communication between the provincial head office and the education institutions in their care. They have an important role in ensuring that all learners have access to education of progressively high quality (Department of Basic Education, 2021).

1.9 OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is grounded in the interpretivism paradigm which generally attempts to understand phenomena through the meaning that people assign to them (Mbatha, 2018). The researcher employed a qualitative approach in this study. Lethoko (2019) asserts that qualitative research is distinguished by its capacity to provide deep insights into a problem, thus enabling the researcher to gain a comprehensive understanding of the strategies currently employed and those not implemented by School Management Teams (SMTs) and parents in their collaborative efforts within selected schools. The qualitative approach facilitated the acquisition of views and perceptions from parents, heads of departments, and principals regarding the collaborative initiatives and strategies between SMTs and parents.

The study employed a multiple case study approach to understand the similarities and differences between the cases and to ensure that the evidence generated is strong and reliable with each sampled school treated as an individual case (Gustafson, 2017). Participants for this research were drawn from a population comprising three secondary schools and two primary schools in Thabo Mofutsanyana District. Purposive sampling was utilised to select the principals, departmental heads, and School Governing Body (SGB) parents who were deemed knowledgeable and experienced in the research topic (Maphoke, 2017). In total, five schools were selected for the study with twenty participants. The study implemented data triangulation methods (Hadi & Closs, 2016), incorporating semi-structured interviews and document analysis to collect data from the participants. Thematic analysis was applied to identify patterns, aiding in the interpretation and understanding of the data collected (Clarke & Braun, 2016).

1.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

To ensure ethical considerations, participants were requested to sign an informed consent form upon deciding to participate in the research study (Maphoke, 2017). They were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time, with the assurance that no participant would be compelled to participate unwillingly (Maphoke, 2017). Anonymity and confidentiality measures were strictly applied to safeguard the

privacy of every participant, ensuring that neither the names of the schools nor the participants were disclosed (Dominguez, 2015). According to Wells and Molina (2017), researchers must avoid misleading participants by maintaining honesty and transparency about the research. Ethical clearance was obtained from the University of the Free State, and permission to conduct the research was sought from Free State Department of Education.

1.11 OVERVIEW OF THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study employed collaborative leadership theory to assist in identifying collaborative strategies SMTs and parents use to enhance learner academic performance in Thabo Mofutsanyana District. Collaborative leadership refers to a mutually advantageous partnership between two or more parties, collectively striving towards shared objectives by distributing responsibility, authority, and accountability for attaining outcomes. (Lim, 2018). TenKeys® model and Bolman and Deal's Four-Frame Model were discussed in detail as elements of the theory in Chapter Two.

1.12 LAYOUT OF CHAPTERS OF THE STUDY

The study chapters were laid out as follows:

1.12.1 Chapter One: Introduction and background of the study

This chapter provided an introduction and background presentation of the focus of the study; it also outlined the rationale of the study; the value, the problem statement and research questions, aims and objectives of the study. The explanation of key concepts, a summary of the research methodology, as well as the outline of the chapters were all presented.

1.12.2 Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

This chapter presented the current and relevant literature review. Along with this, a theoretical framework that underpinned the study was discussed.

1.12.3 Chapter Three: Research Methodology and Design

The chapter discussed the research design and methodology used to investigate the topic of this research. It further discussed research instruments, research population and sampling, data analysis, trustworthiness of the study, and ethical considerations.

1.12.4 Chapter Four: Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion

This chapter presented a detailed discussion of research findings and data analysis from semi-structured interviews and document analysis and discussions. Emerged themes and subthemes were discussed in detail.

1.12.5 Chapter Five: Summary of The Findings, Conclusion and Recommendations

This chapter outlined the summary of findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the study.

1.13 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The purpose of this chapter was to present the background of the study and to outline the rationale for conducting this research. Additionally, the chapter introduced the research problem, questions, as well as the aim and objectives of the study. A summary of the research methodology as design adopted to achieve the research aims was also provided. Finally, the key concepts were defined. A review of the theoretical framework and relevant literature is presented in the following chapter.

CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Hart (2018) refers to a literature review as an academic document that presents conclusions based on the most recent knowledge on a certain subject as well as theoretical and methodological contributions to that specific area of research. The literature review is essential for developing a research project as it assists the researcher in preparing for the project, categorises the suggested literature topics for the study, and facilitates the identification of themes in related subjects. Additionally, it aids the researcher in becoming familiar with the employed writing style and cultivating their skills for reading and critiquing (Selolo, 2018). The literature review process entails researching existing research to identify how other scholars have approached similar research problems (Poole, 2017).

This chapter is organised into eleven sections. The first section deals with the theoretical framework that underpins the study. Followed by the concept of collaboration in education and reviewed literature addressing the following headings: South African policy and legislature mandating collaboration, the role of the Department of Education, school-parent collaboration, teacher-parent collaboration, SMT in the South African education system, the significance of SMT and parent collaboration, as well as the barriers to effective SMT-Parent collaborative effort.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

According to Grant and Osloo (2014), the theoretical framework of a study serves as a navigational tool for conducting research. Padayachee (2021) postulates that a study without a theoretical framework lacks precise guidance for searching relevant literature and academic debates of related findings. The chosen theoretical framework must highlight the research's significance and goal (Grant & Osloo, 2014). Grant and Osloo (2014) further outline that it elaborates the study's epistemology, philosophy, and methodology. The theoretical framework underpinning and serving as a guide in this study is collaborative leadership theory, discussed in detail below.

2.2.1 Collaborative leadership theory

Hank Rubin, founder and president of the Non-profit Institute for Collaborative Leadership, developed the collaborative leadership theory (Rubin, 2009). Collaborative leadership is a relationship between parties that is intentional, strategic, and cooperative and involves accomplishing a shared outcome (Rubin, 2009). DeWitt (2016) defines collaborative leadership as the intentional actions taken by leaders to enhance teacher education, establish strong relationships with all stakeholders, and promote collective learning. The collaborative leader adeptly achieves a harmonious equilibrium by motivating stakeholders to participate and jointly establishing goals at the building and classroom levels (DeWitt, 2016).

Maarlouf (2018) identifies several key components of collaborative leadership, including developing a suitable attitude, reducing operational expenses, thinking outside the organisation's boundaries, promoting harmony, maintaining the ability to communicate effectively with others, and managing contradictions. Collaborative leadership can be seen as a necessary procedure to deal with issues that are bigger than one person can handle from an ethical perspective in a selfless manner or from a logical, pragmatic approach. Subsequently, numerous authors have employed collaboration as a leadership style to effectively attain organisational objectives (Padayachee, 2021).

2.2.2 Collaborative Leadership Elements

Collaborative leadership is a mutually advantageous association between two or more entities, who collaborate to achieve shared objectives by jointly assuming authority, responsibility, and accountability for attaining outcomes (Lim, 2018). The theory posits that when individuals in organisations transcend their particular interests and collaborate, they can effectively direct their efforts towards achieving common objectives (Modha, 2021). To exemplify the aspects of collaborative leadership that are relevant to the context of educational administration and leadership, the study focuses on two models discussed below.

2.2.2.1 TenKeys® model

Jäppinen and Ciussi (2016) contend that collaboration is the fundamental component of leadership and that a more thorough understanding of the initiatives taken by management education to address the worldwide trend towards increased social complexity would be extremely beneficial to educational leadership. According to Jäppinen (2017), TenKeys® model is a framework that can be used in many different educational contexts when analysing the collective effort of a group of individuals. The model elucidates ten attributes with explanatory subtleties that contribute to collaborative leadership in organisations, particularly when teams unite to pursue a common aim (Jäppinen, 2017). Padayachee (2021) asserts that numerous tests of the model's reliability have been carried out, and they have shown that it is effective in simulating collaborative leadership in real educational settings.

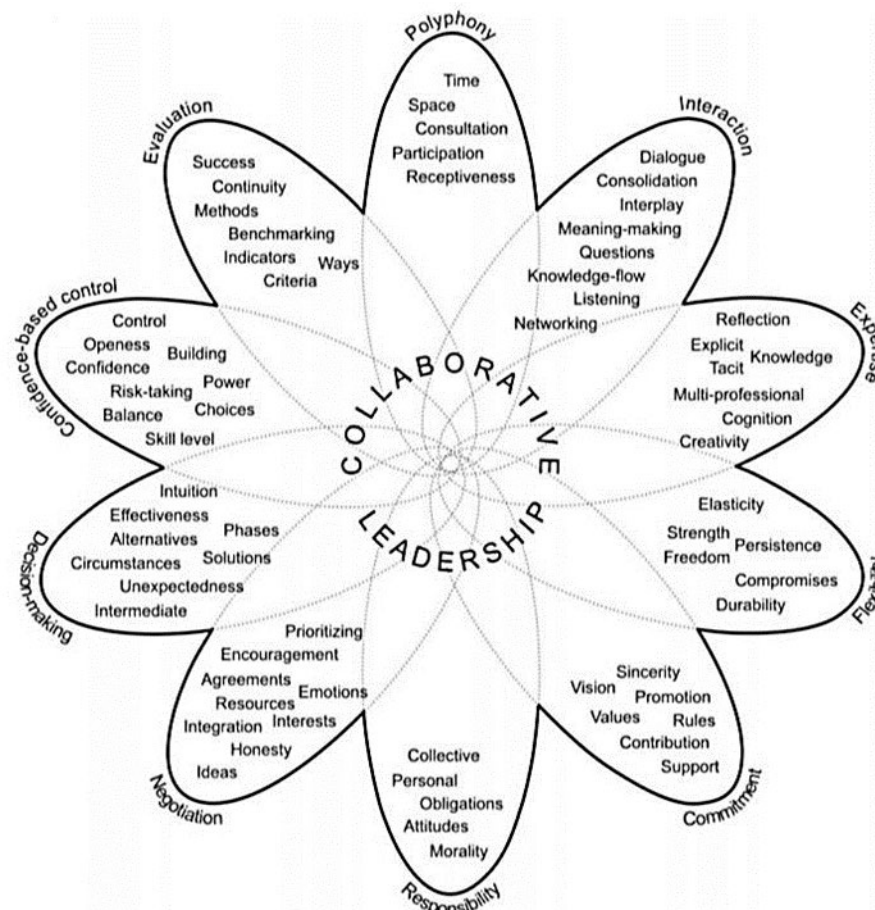


Figure 2.1 The ideal TenKeys® model of collaborative leadership

Adapted from: Jäppinen and Ciussi (2016)

According to the model, educational leadership is a situational and shared phenomenon that involves a variety of human attributes as well as context, time, geography, and circumstances within a collaborative process (Padayachee, 2021). The model comprises 10 attributes, which are interaction, expertise, flexibility, commitment, responsibility, negotiation, decision-making, confidence-based control, evaluation, and polyphony. The connection and influence that these ten attributes have on one another are illustrated in Figure 2.1. The model is a dynamic and growing micro-process comprising fundamental components for creating a shared understanding (Jäppinen, 2017). The TenKeys® model of the professional learning community encapsulates the crucial elements of collaboration (Jäppinen, 2012). The keys are outlined by Jäppinen (2012:26):

- **Polyphony:** engaging in consultation with all staff concerned about the relevant topics. It guarantees the involvement of every individual.
- **Interaction:** refers to a methodical and ongoing interaction among the individuals involved. The process entails amalgamating diverse viewpoints, extensive and ongoing discourse, and the creation of substantial interpretations.
- **Expertise:** the facilitation and dissemination of interdisciplinary knowledge and comprehension of pertinent matters.
- **Flexibility:** the capacity to reach equitable concessions regarding fundamental organizational issues. While it is recommended to prioritise a collective orientation, flexibility also grants individuals the ability to exercise their decision-making within the collective structure.
- **Commitment:** refers to the voluntary contributions made by individuals for the benefit of the collective. Furthermore, it entails transparency and candour.
- **Responsibility:** encompasses both group and personal dispositions. It involves adhering to strong ethical principles and endorsing mutually agreed-upon norms and behaviours.
- **Negotiation:** the issue at hand is the establishment of a shared comprehension in the process of determining the order of importance for various inquiries. Negotiation involves addressing the emotional needs of others. It also implies making concessions that are advantageous to everyone.

- **Decision-making:** fosters conditions that lead to effective resolutions. The options provided are ample and diverse and reveal underlying problems.
- **Confidence-based control:** refers to achieving a harmonious equilibrium between the essential regulation and ample autonomy for personal decisions. Therefore, confidence-based control enhances the collective power and capability of society. It pertains to the act of preserving transparency and honesty while also enhancing proficiency. This approach encompasses the transfer of power to lower levels of authority.
- **Evaluation:** centres on individual acts throughout the community. There is consensus on the methods and styles used for evaluation.

Jäppinen (2014) postulates that the model offers a structured approach to comprehending the process of human interaction and serves as a useful instrument for evaluating the manifestation of collaborative leadership in real-world scenarios. The model explains collaborative leadership in any organisation at any point when a team is working together towards a common goal (Jäppinen & Ciussi, 2016). According to Padayachee (2021), the model illustrates how the structural characteristics of social systems, such as the qualities of collaborative leadership, serve as both the origin and the result of the innovations they continuously generate. Therefore, their interactions can be characterised as both a process and a collaborative design, illustrating the concept of leadership.

2.2.2.2 The Bolman and Deal's Four-Frame Model

Lee Bolman and Terrence Deal created the Four-Frame Model (2008), which offers a thorough framework for comprehending organisations from four distinct angles, or "frames". Bolman and Deal (2017) define a frame as a cohesive collection of ideas or beliefs that act as a prism or lens, enhancing one's perception and comprehension of the surrounding reality. Frames are crucial in comprehending leadership since they guide leaders' thoughts and influence their behaviour (Bolman & Deal, 2017; Pekkola, Kivistö, Kohtamäki, Cai & Lyytinen, 2018). Padayachee (2021) concurs that two tensions underpin this paradigm: how work is assigned and how those assignments come together to achieve the organisation's objectives. According to Padayachee (2021), this model is important for school management teams since it recognizes the dual nature of leadership, encompassing both leadership and management functions.

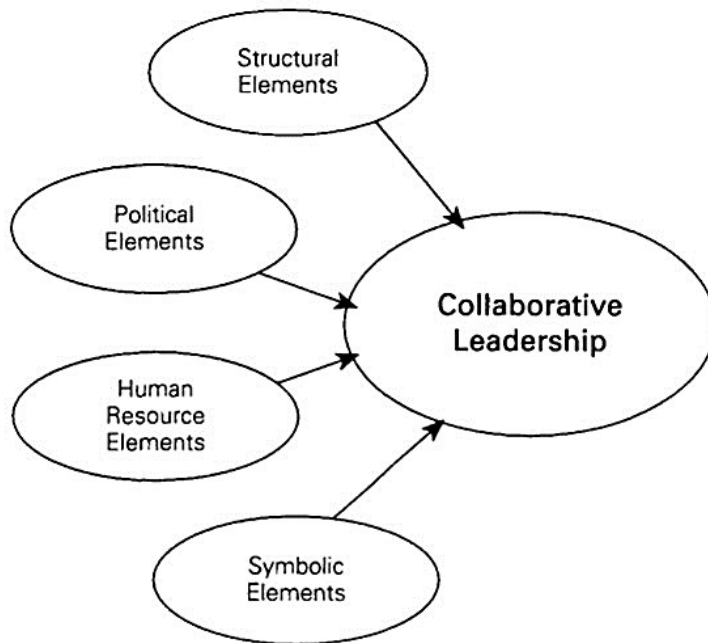


Figure 2.2 Bolman and Deal's Four-Frame Model

Adapted from: Padayachee (2021)

The above model illustrates the four frames: structural, political, human resource, and symbolic, which are discussed below.

Structural Elements: The structural framework of an organisation encompasses rules, environment, goals, policies, roles, and technology (Fruehauf, Al-Khalifa & Coniker, 2015). There is a direct relationship between the structural components and collaborative leadership. This is exemplified by how school administrators organise the decision-making process in schools, enabling all staff members, parents, learners, and other relevant stakeholders to contribute their perspectives and reach a consensus on the strategies and methods for achieving the established goals, procedures and policies (Padayachee, 2021).

Political elements: The political aspects of a collaborative leader pertain to the decision-making process, considering the constraints of limited resources. While it is typical for stakeholders to have conflicts and differing opinions, a collaborative leader should actively promote the process of achieving goals. A leader employing this

perspective seeks to advance their interests by engaging in bargaining, persuading, negotiating, and studying the strategies and actions of rival organisations and stakeholders (Pekkola et al., 2018). According to Padayachee (2021), by fostering cooperation, the school can leverage the integration of stakeholders' ideas, knowledge, interests, views, beliefs, information, values, and perceptions of reality to propel its organisational success.

Human resource elements: The elements prioritise strategic planning and emphasise that change may be achieved through collective action. According to Fruehauf et al. (2015), this element deals with skills, needs, and relationships or the personnel components of any organisation. Leaders employing this framework strive to promote staff engagement in the decision-making process (Vuori, 2015; Pekkola et al., 2018). The premise is that leaders establish an atmosphere of reciprocal assistance, professional inclusivity, and ongoing education, which are defining traits of collaborative leaders (Padayachee, 2021).

Symbolic elements: Fruehauf et al. (2015) highlighted that the element symbolises a portion of the company's future vision. Collaborative leaders utilise these components to cultivate an atmosphere that facilitates amicable connections motivated by a desire to establish alliances that will result in transformation. The leader's role is to serve as a catalyst or facilitator in establishing and preserving a culture founded on shared understandings (Pekkola et al., 2018).

Farley (2014) postulated that one of the most prevalent misconceptions among individuals in leadership and management is that crucial events are often missed or misinterpreted, leading to an incomplete or distorted image. In order to prevent cognitive stagnation, executives engage in the deliberate exercise of reframing their perspectives and attempting to view their organisations from other vantage points (Pekkola et al., 2018). Pekkola et al. (2018) contend that reframing and multi-framing enhance leadership effectiveness by enabling leaders to recognise numerous signals in their surroundings, offer multiple perspectives on intricate occurrences, and select from a range of options in their tool-kit for resolving conflicts. Bolman and Deal (2008) and Pekkola et al. (2018) suggest that frames have a significant impact on leaders' decision-making process. They shape their choices regarding which organisational behaviours to prioritise, which questions to ask, which alternatives to explore, how

they view problems, and what actions they believe should be taken to address those problems.

The emphasis of collaborative theory is on the importance of leaders working in collaboration with others, and it encourages the building of the capacity of teachers and parents to partake in leadership decision-making and school management (Jung & Sheldon, 2020). The study is, therefore, grounded in the collaborative theory to assist in identifying collaborative strategies SMTs employ with parents to enhance learner performance. The relevance of Rubin's collaborative leadership theory in this study is essential because it offers a thorough and insightful lens for understanding the value of collaboration in the context of education.

2.3 THE CONCEPT OF COLLABORATION IN EDUCATION

In the past two decades, 65 systematic reviews or meta-analyses have been published on collaboration in education or educational settings (Fontana et al., 2022). Researchers have defined collaboration in many ways to suit different contexts. A definition of collaboration that encompasses various definitions offered by education scholars is that collaboration is a consensual process of social interaction when two or more experts exchange their experience, jointly plan and establish objectives, and distribute duties equitably to produce innovative solutions to challenges, thereby mutually learning from one another (Taylor et al., 2015; Engelbrecht & Hay, 2018).

In other words, collaboration makes use of the expertise, skills, values, and competencies of all parties involved in the attempt to attain a common goal (Fontana et al., 2022). This definition emphasises the significance of parents' role in their children's education and the need for schools to make it conducive for teachers and parents to collaborate to assist learners with their academic progress and performance. Ketterlin-Geller et al. (2015) and Mulholland et al. (2016) agreed that collaboration between schools, parents, and other professionals is an important tool that can be used for a variety of purposes, including the provision of educational programmes, the development of learner education, the planning of support for learners with special needs in classrooms, the improvement of parental involvement, and the monitoring of learner performance. Teachers in educational institutions should

engage in both official and informal collaboration with support personnel, including parents, government department professionals, and SMTs (Fodo, 2020). Solone et al. (2019) identified the following characteristics as essential for effective collaborative efforts:

- (1) Parity: this calls for equal respect for each person's input and the distribution of decision-making authority among all participants. To accomplish shared objectives, parents and schools should be seen as partners.
- (2) Mutual goals: the foundation of teamwork is shared objectives. Effective teamwork necessitates shared accountability and trust while embracing each team member's perspectives.
- (3) Shared resources: Enhancing the sense of ownership and creativity among team members can be achieved by facilitating the sharing of resources such as knowledge, time, and materials.
- (4) Shared responsibility for outcomes: Whether the outcomes of collaboration are favourable or unfavourable, all involved parties are accountable for what transpires and are required to execute the plan's agreed-upon components with the utmost faithfulness and integrity.
- (5) Synergy: Experiences of synergistic thoughts and viewpoints are possible through teamwork. Team members communicate with each other in this way so that fresh concepts and ideas are generated.

Collaboration among team members is a crucial element in providing efficient and top-notch services at schools (Solone et al., 2019). Depending on the requirements of the learner, school, teachers, and parents, collaboration will vary from context to context (Taylor et al., 2015). Within the framework of this research, for successful collaboration to occur, the SMT and the parents should willingly share their skills and experience to generate diverse knowledge that can aid them in making decisions and achieving the shared objective of improving academic achievement among learners in the district (Engelbrecht & Hay, 2018). This can be achieved by implementing mechanisms such as SMT utilising social network analysis to assess the interests, ideas, and needs of teachers and parents, creating a flexible schedule to promote parental involvement, formulating and disseminating family-friendly policies and regulations, and offering

specialised training for teachers on engaging parents and the community, among other strategies (Maphoke, 2017).

2.3.1 International context of school and parental collaboration in education

Internationally, research increasingly recognises parents as essential partners in the education of learners and the essential of developing collaborative strategies between parents and schools to benefit learners' academic performance. Many countries, including China, Mexico, the United Kingdom, and the United States, have created policies and initiatives for schools to encourage collaboration among all parties involved in education (Selolo, 2018).

Parents are currently being held responsible for their children's education through these policies and initiatives. In the United States of America (USA), the federal government created a programme to promote parents' involvement in the educational process in order to support and improve their child's learning through legislation known as the "No Child Left Behind" Act from 2004. (Malatji, 2021). Similarly, Goals 2000: Educate America Act has prioritised parental involvement in their children's education (Mavuso, 2022). Parents in the USA have different economic and educational backgrounds; therefore; the level of collaborative efforts by parents varies. Myende and Nhlumayo (2020) highlight that parental involvement is a notable asset for high-poverty, high-performing schools, and it has been observed that rural parents have a keen interest in and active participation in their children's education. However, Mavuso (2022) contends that parental participation is more common among rich parents in America than it is among their less fortunate peers.

The United Kingdom is among the countries that have policies governing the involvement of parents in school governance (Sibanda, 2020). Families and Schools Together (FAST) is one of the programmes supported by policy in England. It was created to strengthen the connection between home and school and foster two-way communication to improve learner performance (Selolo, 2018). In a study by Menzo (2016) cited in Myende and Nhlumayo (2020), results demonstrated that Latino parents in California united with teachers to promote school attendance and assist other parents facing difficulties. Similarly, a study conducted by Pascua and Dulos (2020) in the Philippines acknowledged the significance of collaboration between

parents and teachers. The study revealed that teachers and parents' collaboration frequency in terms of school-based and home-based activities was rated as "always". This means that both parents and teachers recognised collaboration as key to improving the academic performance of learners.

Research demonstrates that most Chinese parents can support and help their children academically in primary school. However, many parents cannot assist their children in coping with the heightened complexity of subject matter in secondary school (Gao, 2016). Ma et al. (2021) state that in cultural heritage countries in Asia, parents are more engaged in the academic development of their children. Research shows that Chinese American parents in this nation are less involved in school activities than White parents (Selolo, 2018). This indicates that parents from different ethnic groups are engaged in their children's education, but there does not appear to be any collaboration between the home and the school (Mavuso, 2022). In order to incorporate parents in education, Hong Kong devised the following levels, according to Shun Wing Ng and Hai Hoi Theodore Lee (2015): parenting, decision-making, volunteering, learning at home, communication, and collaboration.

AGE is a parental involvement initiative in Mexico that is aimed at parents of children attending primary schools. The programme's two main components are: (1) monetary awards to parent associations and (2) informational support for parents provided by parent associations. The grants' proceeds go towards building materials, activities, and school infrastructure. The AGE's informational component advises parents on how to assist their children's education and get more active in their children's schools (Barrera-Osorio et al., 2021).

2.3.2 African continent context of school-parental collaboration in education

Collaboration between educational institutions and parents seems to be improving in some African nations, while it is still very low in other nations. Many African countries recognise the importance of parents participating in their children's education (Murumwa, 2020). A study conducted by Mavuso (2022) found that parents in Ghana are frequently involved in their children's education; however, the overall collaboration is limited. According to Mantey (2020), most parents in Ghana's Ashanti region are not interested in their children's education. Additionally, research by Kwarteng et al. (2020)

showed that in the Upper West Akim District of Ghana, parents who make sure their children study at home, provide for their educational needs, talk to their teachers about how they are progressing, and regularly attend meetings have children who perform better academically.

Lara et al. (2019) claimed that research done in several nations, such as Israel, showed that wealthier parents there tend to support their children's education more than poor parents do. A study examining the motivational factors of Jewish and Arab parental involvement in Israel by Freund et al. (2018) revealed that, in general, both Jewish and Arab parents exhibit a relatively low degree of involvement in school, and teachers' invitations for family participation in school activities are likewise infrequent. However, the results also revealed that parents from the Israel-Arab parents exhibit a higher level of engagement in their children's education compared to Jewish parents.

A study on parents' involvement in school discipline that was carried out in Nigeria, according to Akpan (2014), revealed that parents were, to some extent, involved in school-based management practices. The research found that parents were actively involved in preserving school discipline by collaborating with school officials. Mwase et al. (2020) conducted a study that examined parental involvement in the education of their children as a conflict-resolution approach in certain secondary schools in Zambia, and the findings indicated that parents were not fully engaged in the education of their school-going children.

2.3.3 School-parent collaboration in the South African education context

In the school's tripartite structure, which includes learners, parents, and teachers, the government acknowledges and supports parent-school collaboration as a crucial tenet. This collaboration is primarily governed by the South African Schools Act, which mandates that parents be active in their children's education by serving on the school governing body (Sibanda, 2021).

According to Mncube and Harber (2015), parents and School Management Teams (SMTs) working together help learners achieve better academic results. Encouraging student progress and improved learning environments are supported by active parental involvement in school activities and decision-making processes. In school

governance, effective collaboration promotes increased accountability and transparency. Parent participation in school administration guarantees that the administration is receptive to the community's demands (Xaba, 2016). Naicker, Chikoko and Mthiyane (2017) assert that SMTs and parents have strong relationships that help create a supportive environment for learners. Makhasane and Chikoko (2016) postulated that a more efficient SMT-parent partnership results in better lines of communication between the parents and the school. These benefits make problem-solving easier and foster a more harmonious learning environment in South Africa.

However, many rural schools have numerous hurdles when it comes to implementing initiatives aimed at fostering collaboration between parents and teachers. For instance, unfavourable socioeconomic situations might lead to a disconnect between parents and instructors (Myende & Nhlumayo, 2020). Myende and Nhlumayo (2020) contend that the main discourse in South Africa and around the world about the lack of collaboration between parents and teachers is shaped mostly by the perspective of school-based stakeholders. This suggests that schools should continue to create and implement intervention strategies that are attentive to the specific circumstances and challenges experienced by parents.

Teacher-parent collaboration is not easy, according to research by Sibanda (2021) on the subject in a township in South Africa. Parents blame teacher incompetence, while teachers blame parental hopelessness for low academic performance (Sibanda, 2021). Similarly, Munje and Mncube (2018) found a discrepancy between policy and practice in terms of school-parent collaboration. According to a study by Malatji (2021), there is a lack of teamwork, parental involvement, shared accountability, and inadequate training to facilitate parent-teacher collaboration. Malatji (2021) discovered that some South African parents lack the knowledge necessary to participate in their children's schooling. Some parents expressed an interest in their children's education, but due to teachers' inadequate knowledge of parental participation, they were not allowed to be involved in their children's education (Malatji, 2021).

2.4 SOUTH AFRICAN POLICY AND LEGISLATURE ON SCHOOL-PARENTAL COLLABORATION

Following South Africa's democratic transition, various laws, regulations, and directives were enacted to address the need for schools to engage and collaborate with parents in the education of learners. A few of these were the White Paper on Education and Training (Department of Education, 1995), the South African Schools Act (Republic of South Africa, 1996), the implementation of Outcome-based Education (DoE, 1997), White Paper 6: Building an Inclusive Education and Training Systems (DoE, 2001), and Practical Guidelines: How parents can contribute meaningfully to the success of their children in schools (National Education Collaboration Trust, 2016).

The White Paper on Education and Training (DoE, 1995) provides for and encourages parental involvement in children's education through school ownership and governance systems. This prompted the need for parents to form part of the composition of school governing bodies. Schools are mandated by the South African Schools Act (SASA), 84 of 1996, to engage and collaborate with parents on school governance and matters pertaining to child education. The SASA also required schools to establish a School Management Team (SMT) to take charge of the school's daily operations and the execution of its policies (RSA, 1996).

Furthermore, the implementation of outcome-based education (OBE) in South Africa opened doors for parent-school collaboration at both the primary and secondary levels. To ensure the active promotion of the learning culture and the goal of producing educational outcomes of the highest standards, this approach to education mandates that parents partake in the responsibility of their children's education (DoE, 1997). The South African Council for Educators (Republic of South Africa, 2000) outlines in its Code of Conduct that teachers must acknowledge parents as partners in education and foster positive connections with them. This means that teachers have a responsibility to keep parents informed about the progress of the learners. Similarly, White Paper 6 promotes a community-based approach to assisting learners facing learning obstacles (DoE, 2001). According to the Department of Basic Education, everyone involved in the educational process—principals, instructors, parents, and learners—is responsible for the overall success of the learners (DBE, 2012).

The National Education Collaboration Trust (2016) contends that for children to receive a quality education and grow into successful young adults who can contribute to the development of the nation, parents and schools must collaborate. Teaching and learning in the classroom can be enhanced if parents take a proactive role in their children's education. Consequently, the SMT is required to play a key role in fostering the partnership between the school and the parents (Engelbrecht & Hay, 2018).

2.5 THE ROLE OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION IN SCHOOL-PARENT COLLABORATION

The SMT and parents cannot single-handedly support or enhance learner academic performance without the support of the education department and the district office. There are District-Based Support Teams whose main function is to assist schools in identifying and addressing barriers to learning and promoting effective teaching and learning (Fodo, 2020). This support can be in the form of on-going classroom and organisational support, providing specialised learner and teacher support, as well as curricular and institutional development and administrative support (Makhalemele & Nel, 2015). The key roles of District-based Support Teams are to support, equip and mentor teachers. It also includes encouraging parental involvement in schools.

Malatji (2021) noted that some parents are concerned because the Department of Basic Education (DBE) expects them to participate in schools but never gave them any training on working collaboratively with teachers. The district should work with the SMT to ensure that physical, material, and human resources are sufficient in schools to provide effective support through collaborative efforts. The provision of sufficient training and guiding frameworks that support collaborative practices should form part of the district's agenda in order to provide directives to the SMT on policy implementation regarding collaboration between the school and parents in promoting collaboration.

2.6 IMPORTANCE OF SCHOOL-PARENT COLLABORATION

Scholars have long recognised that when schools and parents work together to advance the educational system for the good of learners and society as a whole, learners' academic performance improves dramatically (Povey et al., 2016; Hampden-Thompson & Galindo, 2017; Paccaud et al., 2021). Parental involvement in children's

education is strongly linked to academic success, according to extensive studies conducted both nationally and abroad (Murumwa, 2020). A relationship between the school, family, and community should be established for various reasons, but the major one is to help learners succeed in their academics.

According to Pascua and Dulos (2020), schools seek to establish relationships with parents of learners because they believe that their support and collaboration will be extremely helpful to them in meeting all the academic needs of learners. Collaboration between these parties is crucial because, according to NECT (2016), the learner is at the foundation of the relationship between the school, parents, and community. Epstein's overlapping Spheres of influence model exterior structure (Figure 2.3) provides evidence of this relationship (Epstein & Shapiro, 2016). Basson and Mestry (2019) maintain that for schools to collaborate effectively with parents, there must be a supportive school atmosphere and effective school leadership. Murumwa (2020) further reiterates that school-parent and learners are the cornerstones of educational systems and that achieving the desired results requires close communication and cooperation between these stakeholders.

Many parents, according to Newchurch (2017), are not as involved in their children's education as teachers would want. As Okeke (2014) notes, parents' low levels of education and English proficiency make them hesitant to participate in decisions regarding the school. Additionally, some parents believe that teachers do not value their opinions and do not take them seriously (Malatji & Malatji, 2021). Many parents are concerned about their children and want to help them learn, regardless of ethnicity, cultural background, or socioeconomic status (Newchurch, 2017). This calls for a positive and supportive school climate. A supportive school climate makes it conducive for parents to engage in their children's learning experience.

For instance, parental involvement tends to be more noticeable in schools when parents regard teachers as having a relationship with the child, caring about the learner's academic performance, and being approachable and communicating regularly (Nkosi & Adebayo, 2021). As a result, the school's SMT should continually look for methods to enhance the school's atmosphere, working with all the stakeholders in the school community. According to Titiz and Tokel (2015), the school

management must prioritise relationships between parents and teachers if it aims to involve parents in the educational process.

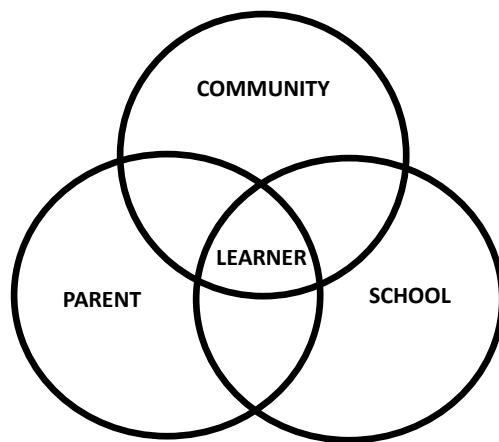
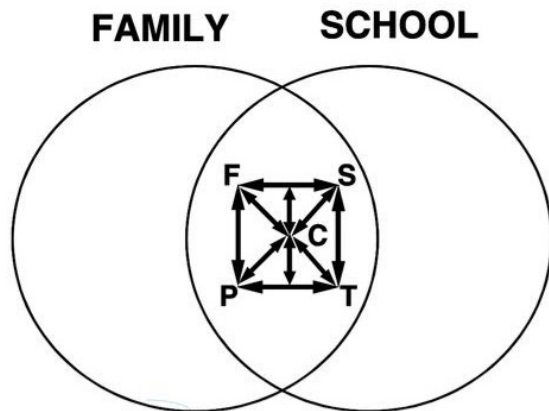


Figure 2.3 Epstein's Overlapping Spheres of Influence Model External Structure

According to Epstein's school-family-partnership theory, these stakeholders should collaborate in order to promote children's education and welfare. Figure 2.4 illustrates how this theory's internal organisation demonstrates the relationship that may result from stakeholder collaboration (Newchurch, 2017). This collaboration may occur at the school level with all parties involved or at the individual level with just one parent, child, teacher, or community member. In order to ensure the successful implementation of collaborative techniques, Epstein's theory contends that strong and sound working relationships between communities, parents, and schools should be established. Schools are supposed to establish committees and regulations governing parental involvement because parents and teachers are jointly responsible for a learner's academic performance (Malatji, 2021).



Inter-institutional interactions (in overlapping area)
 F = Family C = Child S = School P = Parent T = Teacher

Figure 2.4 Epstein's Overlapping Spheres of Influence Model Internal Structure

Among other tasks, schools are responsible for tackling the issues that arise when working together with external stakeholders, particularly parents (Bhengu & Myende, 2016). According to Sanders and Sheldon (2009), as mentioned in Murumwa (2020), research on effective schools has consistently indicated that these schools have strong and positive school-home interactions despite working in low social and economic neighbourhoods. Furthermore, to foster good teamwork, these effective schools have made a concerted effort to reach out to their learners' parents and build a positive school climate (Murumwa, 2020).

2.7 IMPORTANCE OF TEACHER-PARENT COLLABORATION

Improving learner academic performance requires collaboration and a strategic parent-teacher partnership (Parisi, 2017). According to research, children whose parents are engaged with their teachers perform better academically and are less likely to be suspended or expelled (Pascua & Dulos, 2020). The quality of education children receive can be greatly improved by collaboration between teachers and parents. According to O'Donoghue (2014), successful parent-teacher partnerships and children's learning require ongoing mutual collaboration, support, and participation of school personnel and parents.

Teacher-parent collaboration is a process in which parents and teachers interact to engage in activities aimed at enhancing children's learning (Myende & Nhlumayo, 2020). A key element in enhancing learner performance is collaboration between

parents and teachers to attain learning objectives (Abdullah et al., 2022). In an age characterised by the continual growth of class sizes, the limited personal attention that learners receive from teachers necessitates the need for parental collaboration (Santana, 2014). Teachers and parents must collaborate to foster a sense of belonging (Murumwa, 2020).

This type of collaboration can necessitate reports and time management, making it extremely challenging to implement. Unclear role descriptions between parents and teachers can impede the success of the teacher-parent collaboration process (Adams et al., 2016). Therefore, parents must understand their role and obligation in impacting and encouraging learners. In addition, it is important for educators to devise methods for facilitating parental involvement and ensuring that parents are well-informed about their children's academic achievement in the classroom. It is essential to clearly define the duties and responsibilities of teachers and parents to enhance the interdependence between them and student performance (Sibanda, 2021).

According to Nurmawanti et al. (2021), when teachers and parents work together, it removes the confusion parents could otherwise encounter while attempting to assist their children with the learning content. At every age and grade level, teachers must help parents to understand how their children are developing and to create home environments that will support learning (Feasley, 2017). When parents are more involved and help their children get ready for school on a mental, physical, and emotional level, teachers can work more effectively (Nkosi & Adebayo, 2021). Teachers and parents must cooperate with common aims and objectives since their collaboration can improve learners' academic achievement (Melegrito, 2015). Sibanda (2020) highlight how parental involvement in their children's education is crucial, as their support directly affects teachers' performance and behaviour.

Epstein (2018) asserted that when parents are actively engaged in their children's education, the principals and teachers are encouraged to extend collaborative efforts between the school and the community, which is crucial to guarantee that parents and learners are actively engaged as education stakeholders. Teacher-parent collaboration allows the parents to develop knowledge and skills to support their children through educational training programmes that ought to be conducted by the

schools (Derrick, 2017). By collaborating with parents, teachers can accomplish their objective of improving learners' performance through effective teaching and learning in the classroom.

2.8 ROLE OF THE SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAMS (SMTs) IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

School management teams (SMTs) supervise and guide South African public schools. The SMTs, as defined by the Personnel Administration Measures (1998), consist of the principal, deputy principal, and head of department. The SMTs are responsible for overseeing the daily operation of their schools in a professional, efficient, and successful manner (Maja, 2016). The school principal should provide leadership on how the SMTs carry out these daily operations. This is consistent with research by Sibanda (2020), which emphasised that the principal and the SMTs, including the professional administrators of the school, bear the responsibility for overseeing the educational processes and outcomes inside the school. Molefe (2014) asserts that the principal, in collaboration with the SMTs, is primarily responsible for prioritising teaching and learning in the school's strategic planning. This involves facilitating regular staff discussions on improving teaching and learning, as well as practical enhancements. Additionally, it involves promoting the involvement of the larger community to provide input and support for teaching and learning. Policies, rules, and regulations of the Department of Education mandate the principal and the SMTs to lead and manage schools together. The PAM document (1998) and the SASA are examples of such policies (1996). PAM asserts that the School Management Team (SMT) is responsible for organizing and directing daily directives to educators in order to ensure the smooth functioning of the school.

The SMT must make sure teachers develop instructional materials in accordance with the work schedule, evaluate, supervise, and provide feedback to students, as well as make sure classes are attended to ensure timely completion of work programs (Maphoke, 2017). Maja (2016) argued that close collaboration between the principal and the SMT would increase the SMT's effectiveness in its roles. According to Subramoney (2016), the SMT has dual responsibilities: one as a team member involved in duties including policy development and implementation, and the other as a team leader responsible for supervising teachers and subjects within a department.

The SMT is also accountable for using sound management to put the school's plans and policies into effect that are in line with those of the Department of Basic Education (Setlhodi, 2020). This accountability should include developing guidelines for parental involvement in schools. As a result, SMTs must develop trust with individuals in their environment in order to build collaborative relationships (Sethlodi & Lebeloane, 2014). SMTs, led by the principal, must unite teachers, parents, and other community members to collaborate as a cohesive unit in government, management, teaching, and learning (Molefe, 2014). One of the tasks of the SMTs is to facilitate communication and collaboration between the school and parents. To enhance the school's effectiveness and promote optimal learning outcomes, Maphoke (2017) argues that school administrators should actively encourage teachers, students, parents, and community members to engage in collaborative efforts. This implies that School Management Teams (SMTs) should establish environments in educational institutions that make parents feel valued and acknowledged. Lethoko (2019) asserts that the SMT should take the lead in examining its current programmes and ensure that policies and plans are created and disseminated to everyone in the school. This suggests that the SMT can help ensure that parents comprehend their significance and how they can collaborate to enhance learners' academic achievement.

2.8.1 Capacity building

Capacity building is necessary for SMTs to oversee the efficient administration of their schools (Van der Voort & Wood, 2016). This is supported by Lethoko (2019), who notes that SMTs must be given the necessary support to develop effective plans for enhancing collaboration with parents in their schools. Findings from the research conducted by Subramoney (2016) assert that the Department of Basic Education has shown a deficiency in providing constructive and practical support to the SMT. As a result, SMTs rarely engage parents in policy development and decision-making.

SMTs must receive managerial training to ensure that procedures and plans are properly positioned to raise the education's calibre. To ensure that academic performance improves, principals should assume the responsibility of being instructional leaders and provide continuous professional development to the School Management Team (SMT) and teachers (Ntshoe & Selesho, 2014). To establish an efficient collaboration between the school and parents, the SMT must be trained in

dealing with and understanding the uniqueness of each family (Lethoko, 2019). The SMT is responsible for enhancing the skills and knowledge of teachers to enable them to collaborate successfully with parents to enhance students' academic achievement (Subramoney, 2016). In order to achieve this objective, it is imperative for the School Management Team (SMT) to offer pertinent training to teachers, enabling them to proficiently engage in communication with parents (Maphoke, 2017). Lethoko (2019) suggests that the School Management Team (SMT) should establish clear standards to facilitate teacher-parent collaboration. This can be achieved by organising frequent professional meetings that prioritise effective communication between the school and parents. Parents must ensure they adhere to the hierarchical structure of the educational system while seeking help from the school, and it is also the responsibility of the SMT to set up communication channels and tell parents about it.

2.8.2 Role of SMT in ensuring collaboration with parents

The purpose of school management teams is to optimise learners' performance by collaborating with parents and the community and to support teachers in overcoming obstacles that could undermine a positive learning environment (Maphoke, 2017). The SMT and SGB are required by Section 16A of the SASA (1996) to educate and equip parents with a knowledge of educational laws and concepts. To ensure effective instruction and knowledge acquisition, school management teams should think about strategies to engage parents in their children's education as much as possible (Lethoko, 2019). Providing parents with the necessary information to engage in their children's education would enable them to comprehend their obligations in collaborating with educators to facilitate the holistic development of their children (Malatji, 2021).

The SMT can create an environment that is favourable for meaningful interaction and cooperation with parents. One way of creating a conducive climate is setting up a platform where parents may engage in dialogue and thoughtful reflection on matters that impact on learners' academic performance. In this regard, the School Management Team (SMT) can create a comprehensive database of all parents of the students in schools, which includes their home and work contact numbers. This database will enable the SMT to engage with parents at any given moment. In essence, the SMT needs to promote and model collaboration through communication,

feedback, conflict resolution and negotiation. According to Setlhodi and Lebeloane (2014), it is crucial for School Management Teams (SMTs) to provide in-service programmes for educators to enhance their skills in effectively communicating with parents, hence fostering strong connections. Hove (2015) agrees the primary responsibilities of the SMT include providing assistance to teachers, establishing an optimal learning and teaching atmosphere, and involving parents in the establishment and execution of policies. The provision of adequate support services by the SMT is crucial for improving learners' academic achievement, and such support also helps to increase the confidence of both teachers and parents in the education process (Lethoko, 2019).

2.8.3 The function and responsibilities of parents in the collaborative relationship with the SMT

Parents' most crucial role and duty is to provide an educational setting for their children to thrive. As their children's primary teachers, parents are responsible for fostering an interest in learning at home and school. Al Haddar and Azmi (2020) identified the function of parents in improving their children's academic achievement:

1. Parents as educators: this implies that parents may contribute to the educational process by helping children develop their moral character and providing the foundation for life skills.
2. Parents as teachers: parents can participate in learning activities such as reading and writing to help their children become prepared to engage in learning activities as desired in the classroom.
3. Parents as motivators: parents can both directly and indirectly encourage and motivate their children in order to develop an interest in schoolwork and learning.
4. Parents as support: parents must be able to give their children the emotional and financial support they need to participate in educational endeavours both at home and in school.
5. Parents as facilitators: all of the activities that children engage in as part of their growth and development should be supported by parents, who should be able to devote their time, effort, and skills to this task.

6. Parents as models: in order for children to mimic the good at home, parents must serve as exemplary models and role models in various aspects of their life skills and behaviour, both at home and in other domains.

Parental involvement is crucial for a child's education as it extends beyond the scope of the school's responsibilities (Sudipa et al., 2022). Parenting is an important factor that can help schools become more functional. Effective engagement between parents and the School Management Team (SMT) is crucial for learners to enhance their academic achievement.

2.9 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOLS

Collaboration in education cannot be discussed without linking it to parental involvement. These concepts are interrelated. Parental involvement is described by Sibanda (2020) as the engagement of significant parties with a vested interest, particularly parents, in the governance procedure of the school to guarantee that good academic performance through quality education is realised in schools. Similarly, Mmothlane et al. (2019) argued that the concept of parental involvement refers to the full and active involvement of parents and other important stakeholders in various school-related activities, including volunteering in classroom activities, attending open days, and participating in School Governing Body (SGB) meetings. When parents are actively engaged and provide consistent support to their children's education, both learners' academic achievement and school attendance demonstrate improvement (Garcia & Thornton, 2014). This indicates that when students have their parents' support, they are inspired to be dedicated to their academics. A key factor that can improve learners' academic achievement is parental involvement.

Page (2016) asserts that parental involvement improves learner behaviour and academic performance as well as fosters good attitudes about school activities. It also lowers the likelihood of dropout. Like Mavuso (2014) said, effective parental involvement in a child's education has been connected to a range of positive outcomes, including improved learner performance in schoolwork and other school-related activities. The importance of parent engagement, according to Okeke (2014), encourages better cooperation between parents and the school, develops the home-school connection, and helps parents become better partners with the school as they

become more invested in it. It has been demonstrated that factors including parent expectations, parent obligations, school support, management, and the form and effectiveness of communication can improve parents' involvement in their children's education (Nkosi & Adebayo, 2021). The advantages of parental involvement in school activities and how they affect a child's education have been verified by other scholars in the field of parental involvement (Sibanda, 2020). The assumption has been that parents play a vital role in the effectiveness of a school and the learners' performance in their learning. Epstein (2009) has established a framework encompassing ways to assist parents in being active in their children's education at school and at home for effective parental involvement (Murumwa, 2020). The framework comprises six elements, namely parenting, learning at home, communication, decision-making and collaborating with the community. These elements are incorporated into the discussion of different ways that parents can get involved at school and at home, which are outlined under the following categories:

2.9.1 Home-based involvement

Home-based parental participation refers to parent-child interactions at home in connection to children's learning (Boonk et al., 2018). Parental involvement at home is vital because it fosters parent-child engagement, identifies the child's learning difficulties, and enables the parent to talk to the school about those barriers (Selolo, 2018). Parents can get involved through family values, supervising homework, communicating with children, and instilling discipline. These are covered in further detail below.

2.9.1.1 Teaching family values

Each family possesses a set of values that dictate the functioning of the family. These values form the basis for the family's rules, procedures, and tasks. Parents are responsible for teaching their children family values, the importance of upholding these values and their impact on the school work. According to Epstein (2009), this type of involvement is called **parenting**. The method attempts to educate and support parents with parenting skills, provide family support, understand teenagers, and facilitate learning for learners of all ages (Murumwa, 2020). It implies that parents must lay the foundation for successful learning at home by creating an environment that

encourages children to learn. This means that parents must provide a study area for their children and encourage them to make reading a habit (NECT, 2016). Teachers should educate parents and families about the school and its requirements. The significance of parental engagement and the questions of how parents may assist in their children's education can be addressed by teachers during parent-teacher meetings, as demonstrated by Epstein (2018). Additionally, it is thought that parents play a significant role in imparting morality so that their children will act appropriately in school (Nkosi & Adebayo, 2021). Maphoke (2017) proposes that the SMT can promote this level of participation by holding workshops to educate parents on the various stages of a child's development so that parents are better prepared to provide assistance for their children as they progress through these stages.

2.9.1.2 Supervising homework

Nkosi and Adebayo (2021) allege that parents with minimal or non-existent involvement in their children's homework and study routines may contribute to their children's underperformance in the classroom. Parents must ensure that their children finish their homework and verify its completion. This means letting the learners complete their own homework rather than doing it for them, as suggested by Cooper (2015), who found that parents frequently complete their children's homework rather than helping them. Al-Mahrooqi et al. (2016) highlight the importance of parents participating in reading programmes and overseeing homework activities. The NECT (2016) suggest that if parents cannot provide homework assistance to their children, they might collaborate with the school to establish homework clubs.

This type of involvement relates to **learning at home** area of parental involvement, as identified by Epstein (2009). This could entail the SMT teaching parents strategies and skills for assisting learners with homework and curriculum-related activities (Zenda, 2016). Parents bear a significant duty to cultivate a culture of efficient learning in their children, and this duty can only be fulfilled if parents consistently engage in and provide support for their children's education (Sibanda, 2020). By imparting fundamental time management skills to their children, parents can enable children to effectively schedule and prioritise their education, minimising the risk of missing deadlines (Malatji, 2021). Parents can identify and support their children's abilities when they actively assist learners with homework and school-related activities.

2.9.1.3 Promoting parent-child communication

Children acquire essential language abilities through auditory observation of their parents' and other relatives' speech patterns and by observing their verbal interactions. Before children can participate in formal school, parents must play a crucial role in teaching them how to communicate (Vandormael et al., 2019). Accordingly, one of the key factors in children's academic success is talking to them, listening to them, and engaging in physical activity with them. NECT (2016) states that parents should communicate with their children through verbal discourse, written correspondence, or the utilisation of a mutually understood system of signals or conduct. Communication with children should also be a two-way process. Children learn the value of listening when they feel their opinions are being heard. To communicate effectively with their children, parents must listen to them, offer them support and encouragement, and, when necessary, correct them. According to research cited in Selolo (2018), timely interactions between parents and their children are advantageous because they foster excellent communication and allow parents to coach and influence their children directly.

2.9.1.4 Instilling discipline

Enhancing learner discipline and academic performance depends heavily on the parental role in managing school discipline. Parents can impose discipline by helping their children develop skills for social and academic success (Lumadi, 2019). This also entails developing collaborative ties with the school and its teachers through effective and constructive communication.

When the focus of communication between the school and parents is on students' poor academic performance, inappropriate behaviour seems to occur. Still, when parents offer guidance and practice discipline, students perform better academically. Lumadi (2019) asserts that communication between parents and teachers improves on-task behaviour while reducing disruptive behaviour. Additionally, parental values and culture are among the elements that affect how learners behave (Kimaro & Machumu, 2015). Parents can improve learner discipline and reduce disruptive behaviour by supporting school-based disciplinary intervention programmes. Parents should also create good relationships with teachers through involvement in school

events and activities, since such collaboration improves learner discipline and enhances academic performance (Lumadi, 2019). Additionally, when teachers penalise learners who exhibit immoral behaviour, blame-shifting towards teachers must be avoided by parents (Onuegbu, 2022).

2.9.2 School-based involvement

School-based involvement is the umbrella term for all parental involvement initiatives that need communication with the school (Ma et al., 2021). Parental involvement at the school is important to enhance learner performance because it helps the school fulfil its mission and vision statements. Sibanda (2020) maintains that the school benefits from the successful implementation of parent engagement activities, as it leads to improved provision of teaching and learning resources, enhanced administration of financial services, and strengthened rapport between the school and the community. In the context of this study, this form of involvement includes communication with the school, participating in decision-making, volunteering, and community-school collaboration.

2.9.2.1 Communicating with the school

Despite attending school, it is still the parents' responsibility to care for children. The purpose of teachers is to instruct at a specific time, not to take the place of parents. According to research by Malatji et al. (2018), teachers generally communicate with parents primarily in cases where the child has displayed unacceptable behaviour or when presenting a progress report without any accompanying discussion. Motlhaka et al. (2020) allege that teachers are undertrained and lack communication skills to interact with parents effectively.

As a result, parents and the school must establish communication channels so that everyone is kept informed about each learner's progress in the classroom. This form of involvement is what Epstein (2009) refers to as **communication**. Thus, a system of two-way communication with parents at home must be developed and put into place by schools. Ndebele (2015) observed that parents' and teachers' respective languages can either help or hinder communication between them. When there is transparent and direct communication between teachers and parents, parents feel comfortable

bringing up developmental issues that might affect their children's academic achievement (Malatji, 2021). Malatji (2021) assert that there is also a need for parents to be trained on the importance of communication platforms that the school uses for the benefit of learners. Parents can monitor their children's progress at home and help and support them if they have knowledge of the learner's progress and are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge (Maphoke, 2017).

2.9.2.2 Participating in decision-making at school

Engaging in the process of determining decisions at their children's school can increase a parent's sense of ownership over the education of their children. This relates to Epstein's (2009) classification of parental involvement, which includes **decision-making**. This includes considering the opinions of all parents when making decisions about the school (Maphoke, 2017). Parents must receive training in schools to help them understand how the government's educational policies are to be interpreted and implemented. This will lead to the emergence of parent leaders and representatives who can uphold best practices. School meetings and governing bodies are two ways parents can participate in decision-making (NECT,2016).

Parent-teacher meetings and the school's Annual General Meeting (AGM) are viable options for conducting meetings. Attending the AGM is crucial for parents because they can learn about what is going on at the school, have their opinions heard, and get to know the members of the School Governing Body. Parent-teacher meetings allow parents to speak with the teachers and learn more about how their children are doing in class. Teachers should communicate with parents regarding their children's progress in school, and parents should be advised on strategies to improve learner performance (Nkosi & Adebayo, 2021).

The SASA No. 84 of 1996 enables parents to participate in school management and governance activities and to have a say in their children's education. Establishing School-Governing Bodies (SGBs) offers parents willing to help the school a platform to contribute their knowledge and skills. Nkosi and Adebayo (2021) contend that since parents are a vital component of the learning community, they should be involved in developing the operational framework of the school, such as SGBs. To have a voice in educational decisions, Selolo (2018) asserts that parents can participate in school

administration activities by communicating with the parent community through the SGB.

2.9.2.3 Volunteering at school

When parents engage in their children's education, it can inspire them with the sense that parents regard the school as important. According to Epstein (2009), parents can support their children's education by **volunteering**. Teachers should encourage parents to volunteer for school events and activities under the direction of the SMT (Malatji, 2021). The SMT can motivate parents to volunteer by offering them opportunities to participate in SGB elections, participate in fundraising initiatives, and accompany their children to sporting events or field trips. Parents can also assist teachers in areas where the school needs help, such as sports, prize giving, or other school events. Parents' participation in school volunteer programmes might inspire their children to become interested in extracurricular activities. Sports coaching or helping out on the playground are two examples of this. According to Okeke (2014), sports and games naturally unite people since they support the home-schooling community.

2.9.2.4 School-community collaboration

Given that a school is located within a community, it is imperative to establish a strong and cooperative relationship between the school and the community (Malatji, 2021). Parents are active community members and are better positioned to ensure that community members without children enrolled in the school contribute significantly to enhancing and safeguarding the school. Epstein (2016) mentions **collaborating with the community** in this manner. Depending on their level of expertise, the SGB may recruit community members to serve on SGB subcommittees (NECT, 2016).

Furthermore, Lemmer and Van Wyk (2010), as cited in Sibanda (2020), added that parents should not only be limited to participating in School Governing Bodies (SGBs), but should also be encouraged to engage in various other school-related activities where they can make a valuable contribution to support their children's education and strive to enhance the quality of education. Planning community service activities and expanding learning opportunities for learners helps to strengthen the support for the

school, learners, and parents (Maphoke, 2017). The collaboration between the school and the community calls for the creation of a supportive learning environment that enhances the academic performance of learners (Sibanda, 2020). Positive interaction between the school and the community fosters the growth of solid bonds that benefit both the school and the community. The efficacy of this collaboration relies on the modalities and mediums of communication that the school employs to disseminate information to parents and the broader community. In cases where communication is effective, parents and community members are allowed to engage in school activities.

2.9.3 Role of the School Governing Body (SGB) in parental involvement in schools

Increasing institutional capacity for monitoring, evaluating, and reviewing educational programs for optimal performance requires collaboration among stakeholders in school management and governance (Ayeni, 2014). The governance in a schooling environment is vested in its SGB by the SA Schools Act (No.84 of 1996). According to the Act, parent SGB members make up the majority of the SGBs. The School Governing Body (SGB) enables parental participation in the extracurricular activities of the school, ensuring continuous support for learners in matters and events pertaining to their academic work (Sibanda, 2020). Due to their lack of qualifications and skills, most parents hesitate to participate in the SGB. They often have insufficient training prior to taking on their duties on the SGB (Davids, 2018). As a result, many parents misunderstand their obligations and duties both in the SGB and in parental involvement. It is the responsibility of the schools to offer training to the SGB parents so that they are made aware of their authority and the value of their input, not just to the governing body, but also to the overall academic performance of learners through parental involvement.

2.9.4 Role of school Head of Departments (HODs) in SMT-PARENT collaboration

An HOD has a variety of responsibilities, including enhancing communication and, developing a working relationship with teachers, and ensuring timely communication between teachers and parents at the beginning of the school year to clarify class and homework protocols and gather information regarding their concerns, viewpoints,

abilities, interests, and availability (Bipath & Nkabinde, 2018). The initial contact must be followed up by continued communication through checklists, newsletters, informal notes, phone calls, private meetings, and parent discussion groups, among other means. Parents should be provided with updates on their child's academic achievement as well as information regarding past and future classroom activities, and teachers and HODs should be easily accessible to parents. Communication should also establish responsibilities and express expectations clearly, positively, and non-threateningly (Bipath & Nkabinde, 2018). By welcoming the parents into the school community, the HOD can help to forge connections between the community and the school.

2.9.5 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SMT-PARENT COLLABORATION

The School Management Team is normally expected to actively participate in decision-making, exert influence on the school's atmosphere and surroundings, and possess the capacity to influence learners, instructors, and parents (Lethoko, 2019). The scholar further suggests that SMT is obligated to establish relationships with parents that are founded on collaboration, trust, cooperation, accountability, effective communication, shared visions, values, and solutions. This means that the SMT and parents are required to establish and implement essential support systems to assist learners with barriers in improving their academic performance (Maphoke, 2017). SMT needs help from the parents to ensure that they devise plans and strategies that will accommodate the needs of learners (Maphoke, 2017). The South African Schools Act of 1996 (Act 84 of 1996) recognised parents as an essential component in education. To support this notion, the Act defines the concept of parenthood and fundamental parental responsibilities, establishes school obligations regarding parents' right to information, and ensures that parents and the community are represented in mandatory governing bodies (Lethoko, 2019). The attitudes held by parents and teachers can influence collaborative practices (Basson, 2021). Collaboration between the SMT and parents is significant because it positively impacts learners' academic performance, learners' conduct, school attendance, learners' and parents' motivation, as well as teachers and schools.

2.9.6 Significance of collaboration to learners' academic performance

The learners' academic performance is a vital component of education. It is the duty of teachers to ensure that learners perform to their ability and satisfy the academic standards established by the Department of Education. As a result, the SMT needs to ensure that teachers and learners are provided with the necessary resources to improve learners' academic performance. Collaboration between teachers and parents enhances the progress and performance of learners in their academics (Lethoko, 2019).

Parents can support their children's learning at home in various ways, including creating a routine for study, supporting and supervising homework, monitoring the child's performance as well as offering health and psychosocial support (NECT, 2016). However, the SMT may need to assist parents by educating them on the fundamentals of creating a helpful home learning environment. For instance, the SMT must meet with parents and provide them with advice regarding the school curriculum so that they can help their children select the appropriate subjects (Maphoke, 2017). When learners choose subjects they understand and enjoy, they are more likely to excel in them. Manamela (2015) asserts that regardless of their educational level or social class, research has shown that learners are more successful if their parents support learning at home and participate in school. Parents have a crucial role in their children's academic performance and positively impact their educational development.

2.9.7 Significance of collaboration to learners' conduct

Teachers in schools confront difficulties due to poor learner behaviour. Parents must assist teachers in upholding school discipline regularly without using corporal punishment. To prevent schools from becoming dysfunctional as a result of disruptive learners, parents must engage closely with the schools. (NECT, 2016). Teaching children to respect rules and to understand the repercussions of disobeying or breaking them is the responsibility of parents. Additionally, they should help their children learn discipline by setting schedules on when they can complete their schoolwork. As a result, teachers' jobs will be considerably easier because teachers will not be required to devote as much time to disciplining learners, often leading to a loss of teaching time. Ndebele (2015) argues that parents should provide a good

example for their children by maintaining appropriate boundaries and modelling good school behaviour. Collaboration between the SMT and parents can enhance the self-discipline that students must exhibit, increasing the effectiveness of teaching and learning. When SMTs involve parents in schools, learners will stop inappropriate behaviour, which will have an indirect effect on learners' academic performance (Maphoke, 2017).

2.9.8 Significance of collaboration to learners' school attendance

School attendance is mandatory. Learners who miss class frequently cannot perform well in their schoolwork. Poorly disciplined learners often skip class for no apparent reason. This necessitates the development of effective communication between the school and the parents. Lethoko (2019) states that children whose parents are actively involved in their education are more inclined to attend class regularly, indicating that they may have favourable attitudes towards learning and are motivated to attend class. Regular attendance ensures academic performance since learners participate in learning activities, according to Robinson et al. (2017) and Daka (2019). Results of a study by Daka et al. (2021) showed that strengthening parent-teacher associations (PTA) or parent-teacher committees (PTC) in schools could help reduce absenteeism among learners. This is consistent with UNESCO's (2018) findings, which stressed the value of parent and school collaboration in improving the academic performance and attendance of learners.

2.9.9 Significance of collaboration to learners and parents' motivation

Parents who are dedicated to their children's education and hold them to a high standard of achievement foster the kind of dispositions essential for academic success (Manamela, 2015). Parents may inspire their children to continue working hard and doing more things that make them successful by being attentive, displaying interest, and commending exemplary performance and behaviour (NECT, 2016). When inspired, parents strive even harder to become more active and have a favourable outlook on the school and its administration (Lethoko, 2019). Consequently, that mentality will influence the success and attitude of their children. The benefits of parental involvement in schools for students in a school setting are innumerable. In situations where teachers and parents collaborate and communicate frequently,

learners report more positive attitudes towards school, more consistent homework habits, a greater understanding between the school and family practices, greater familiarity between the teacher and their parents, and a higher percentage of homework completed on weekends (Mbatha, 2018). The same is true for students who lack their parents' support; they often have a negative attitude about their schoolwork and other school-related activities (Sibanda, 2020).

Lethoko (2019) asserts that when the School Management Team (SMT) communicates to parents that their input and viewpoints are highly regarded, it inspires them to actively engage in the decision-making procedures and collaborate with the SMT to develop effective methods to guarantee excellent teaching and learning outcomes.

2.9.10 Significance of collaboration to teachers

Parents are less likely to criticise the teacher and more inclined to positively contribute to their children's education if they are aware of the goals, nature, and functions of the school (Manamela, 2015). Lethoko (2019) adds that cooperation between the SMT and parents can help to rebuild mutual trust and confidence and foster a sense of constructive interdependence between parents and teachers. According to Epstein (2018), when teachers see parental support for their efforts to educate the child in a favourable setting for teaching and learning, they become more resourceful and innovative. Parents can provide insightful information on their children. According to Gwiazdowska (2014), parents must give teachers information about their children so that the teachers may more easily determine the learners' strengths, limitations, and areas of interest. Parent should invest time to get to know their children in order to be able to identify areas where they may need support and extra assistance.

2.9.11 Significance of collaboration to schools

The schools often run smoothly when parents actively engage in their children's education, ensuring that all actions encourage effective classroom teaching and learning (Sibanda, 2020). According to James (2014), when a school works with parents and other community members to gather ideas and expertise, and by including

crucial skills and competencies necessary for effective teaching and learning, the overall decision-making process within the school is enhanced.

2.10 BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE SMT AND PARENT'S COLLABORATIVE EFFORT

Research has demonstrated that parent-school collaboration can significantly and positively impact the academic performance of learners. Despite initiatives to promote collaboration between these two parties in South Africa, various obstacles impede success (Basson, 2021). For the purpose of this study, these barriers will be divided into two groups: parental barriers and school barriers. Understanding these barriers will help devise appropriate strategies that will assist in making collaborative efforts between the SMT and parents more effective.

2.10.1 Parental-based Barriers

2.10.1.1 Time Constraints

Parents must actively engage in every facet of their children's social, emotional, and academic development (Castro et al., 2015). Abdullah et al. (2023) discovered that parents who have full-time employment may experience difficulties in attempts to collaborate with the school because of work obligations. This makes it nearly impossible for them to attend school-related activities and meetings.

2.10.1.2 Family Structure

Certain family dynamics have a negative impact on learner performance (Mavuso, 2022). A supportive home environment in which parental behaviour is supported, physical affection is provided, and warmth and positivity are shown contributes to learners' academic performance (Sadiku & Sylaj, 2019). Different family structures and compositions pose difficulties as well because some families are child-headed, making it challenging for the school. In other instances, the children are staying with their grandparents, who may be illiterate and are physically unfit to engage with the school. Being a single parent, being a large family, or not having access to inexpensive childcare may limit participation in school owing to parental obligations (Basson,

2021). Children could also reside with relatives uninterested in supporting their education (Mavuso, 2022).

2.10.1.3 Gender

Research shows that mothers are more engaged in their children's education than fathers (Walker, 2017). A study conducted by Freund et al. (2018) in Israel found that mothers tend to be more involved in their children's education at home and in school than fathers in both investigated populations (Jewish and Arab). According to Murillo and Hernandez-Castilla (2020), mothers are more interested in their children's schooling than fathers. Mavuso (2022) argues that absent fathers are a defining characteristic of most South African homes, leaving mothers to bear the burden of responsibility. As a result, mothers cannot be actively involved in their children's education because of work obligations or family responsibilities.

2.10.1.4 Communication with the School

Communication with the school should be bidirectional. Parents are obligated to engage in direct communication with the school to acquire firsthand information regarding the school's services, the responsibilities of parents, and the expectations of the school (NECT, 2016). Some parents lack access to data or mobile devices, making it difficult for them to view any instant messaging conversations. Some parents struggle to read and comprehend written material from school because of their low educational level. Parents may also avoid invitations to the school if they are concerned about receiving bad news about their child (Basson, 2021).

2.10.1.5 Lack of understanding of parental roles

According to Basson (2021), parental attitudes and ideas about their competence, their academic past, and the talents of their children have an impact on how willingly they participate in their children's education. Because they have poor knowledge and are unsure that their thoughts are valuable, most parents lack the confidence to contribute to schools. This makes it difficult because parents feel intimidated by teachers and do not understand their role in education as outlined in the South African legislature. Nkosi and Adebayo (2021) emphasised that parents frequently fail to fulfil

their obligations to educate their children inside the confines of their own homes because they are unaware of this responsibility.

It is critical to understand how each parent views their role in their child's education and to encourage teachers to create plans based on particular situations and incidents (O'Donoghue, 2014).

2.10.1.6 Parents' educational background

The different levels of education that prevail make it challenging for the parents to understand the way the school is supposed to work and how they form part of the success or failure of the learners' academic performance. A study by Malatji (2021) revealed that most illiterate parents found it difficult to understand the concept of collaboration and how to contribute to their children's education. In general, educated parents have the financial means to build a strong foundation for education by giving their children more resources (Shells, 2015). Parents with lower levels of education are unsure about what kind of responsibilities they will have in schools (Titiz & Tokel, 2015).

2.10.2 School-based Barriers

2.10.2.1 Inadequate training

In order to adapt and meet the expectations made by the Department of Basic Education to improve learner performance, the SMT ought to work with and involve other stakeholders, including parents (Setlhodi, 2020). The success of any collaboration is contingent upon the training and how it is received by all parties (Jeynes, 2018). Most schools lack the necessary training to foster collaboration among the SMT, teachers, and parents (Malatji, 2021). Hornby and Blackwell (2018) also established that the absence of appropriate working relationships in schools resulted from a lack of training. Educators are highly qualified, yet their education did not adequately prepare them for parental school involvement. Therefore, the Department of Education should offer in-service teacher training that covers both the theoretical and practical aspects of parental participation.

2.10.2.2 Insufficient guidance from teachers

Munje and Mncube (2018) assert that teachers appear to possess a more comprehensive comprehension of why parents are not actively engaged in the educational system; however, schools are not taking the necessary steps to address these obstacles and guarantee sustainable parental involvement. This results in teachers being unable to provide sufficient guidance on how parents can be actively involved because they need to be empowered by schools on school, family, and community partnerships. Muller and Kerbow (2018) contend that teachers must foster a friendly atmosphere for parents and make it clear how pivotal it is for parents to be involved in their children's education. This challenge can be overcome through ongoing training that can be offered by the school whereby teachers are equipped with the necessary skills and abilities to establish and carry out enduring parent-school connections that promote cooperation for the betterment of the school and the students (Mansfield-Barry & Stwayi, 2017).

2.10.2.3 Intolerance from teachers

The findings of the study by Sambo (2016) disclosed that teachers frequently make hurtful comments to students and their parents, especially when they fail to follow the rules of the school, such as when they do not wear correct school uniforms or exhibit academic difficulties in class. Lack of tolerance from the teachers makes parents reluctant to participate in school activities because they feel unwelcome. The programs that call for collaboration between parents and the school, according to Sibanda (2020), are ineffective because teachers maintain an adverse perspective toward parents, particularly those who endeavour to participate in their children's education efforts. Malatji (2021) concurs that teachers often lack sensitivity towards parents.

2.10.2.4 Poor communication channels and language

Parental notification of school activities is the school's obligation. Schools do not communicate frequently with parents. Parents claim that schools only get in touch with them when they need financial assistance or when there is an issue with their child,

according to Sambo (2016). It might be discouraging for parents when schools only invite them to a meeting when a learner has committed an offence (NECT, 2016).

According to Perez (2017), a lot of the information included in documents for parents, whether in English or another language, used jargon and lacked vocabulary that was well-known or defined. Parents with poor educational backgrounds often have a challenge with English, as it is often used in communication mediums. In most situations, schools use letters, parent/grade/class meetings, and parent days as communication strategies; nevertheless, it is necessary to broaden existing communication channels to accommodate the current generation of parents by using internet-based contact channels. Emails, messaging apps like WhatsApp, and home-school journals are some of them (Murumwa, 2020).

2.10.2.5 Absence of effective collaboration policies in schools

The DBE, Republic of South Africa (2019) asserts that schools that succeed adopt a collaborative approach to decision-making. A well-functioning collaboration between the school and parents can be achieved when a framework is established by the school to facilitate collaboration between the school and parents. This means that it is the schools' responsibility to establish policy guidelines and suggestions for collaborating with parents, and to provide resources such as time, place, and financial support for meeting and communicating with parents (Paccaud et al., 2021). This element serves as a barrier because (a) individual schools cannot equip teachers with the essential skills and methods required to effectively engage with parents, despite research demonstrating that such knowledge is cost-effective for schools (Epstein, 2018), (b) schools are unable to clearly distinguish between the roles of the school and the roles of the parents, resulting in conflict where collaboration should be the goal (Munje & Mncube, 2018), and (c) parents lack any management knowledge about the school. Lastly, (d) some policies may exist to encourage collaboration, but without meaningful guidance and buy-in from relevant stakeholders, collaboration cannot take place (Basson, 2021). Parents are not involved in creating school policies, and most schools do not have any that particularly encourage family involvement (Malatji, 2021).

2.10.3 Child-based Barriers

2.10.3.1 Age

Research indicates that parental involvement in supporting learning at home has a notable impact on children's education across various age groups, from preschool to 16 years old (Campbell, 2011). However, current studies suggest considerably more evidence of parental engagement in the early years of primary school compared to secondary schools (Murumwa, 2020). Younger children tend to have a more positive perception of their parents attending school, which may contribute to the propensity for parental participation to be higher for parents of younger children. Older children, however, are less enthusiastic about their parents participating in school events (Murumwa, 2020).

2.10.3.2 Learning difficulties and disabilities

The academic performance of a child facing barriers can hinder parental engagement. Perez (2017) revealed that educational professionals sometimes misunderstand and misinterpret parents of children with disabilities, which hinders successful collaboration with them. Many experts on special needs education, according to Ackermann (2015), believe that incorporating parents is a crucial component of providing effective education for children with disabilities or learning difficulties.

2.11 CONCLUSION

Collaboration between the school and parents is emphasised as an effective means of fostering learners' academic performance in a well-managed classroom and school environment. This chapter has outlined the concept of collaboration in education and the significance of SMT-parent collaboration to all educational stakeholders, including parents. Despite the fact that many academics around the world have recognised the advantages of parental involvement and collaboration, it is important to note that barriers to parental involvement in schools are still common. Among the barriers discussed are school-based barriers, parental-based barriers, and child-based barriers. The theoretical framework of the study has also been discussed. Studies have evidenced that when the parents and schools collaborate, all the stakeholders benefit: the academic performance of learners improves, school attendance and

learner behaviour improves, parents are more engaged and motivated to help in school activities, and schools gain a good reputation for improved academic performance. Finally, it should be emphasised that parent-school communication should be seen as a carefully thought-out strategy to enhance the academic performance of learners.

CHAPTER THREE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The preceding chapter provided a comprehensive and detailed examination of the literature review pertaining to the study's issue. This chapter specifically addresses the research methods and design employed in this study. An outline of the research paradigm and design is provided. Subsequently, the rationale for employing the multiple case study technique is provided, along with the argument for utilising semi-structured interviews and document evaluation as the research instruments for the study. This study provides an explanation of the sample population and the specific sort of sampling method employed.

3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

According to Babe (2016), a paradigm is a conceptual framework that influences our perception and interpretation of observations. This study is situated within the interpretivism paradigm to better understand how participants have improved learner academic performance in Thabo Mofutsanyana District by working with parents and the school management teams. Interpretive studies aim to understand events by examining the significance that individuals ascribe to them (Mbatha, 2018). The interpretivism paradigm enables the researcher to perceive the research setting and situation as unique, considering both the given conditions and the people engaged (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). This paradigm suggests that a relationship exists between the researcher and specific elements of the research process (Irshaidat, 2019). According to interpretivism, the world is multifaceted, and people construct meaning by explaining their actions, which are then influenced by context (Masha, 2017). Interpretivism, as identified by Briggs (2011) and cited in Masha (2017), recognises that reality is not a collection of external phenomena that are waiting to be discovered as facts, but rather a construct that individuals comprehend in their own unique manners. It is impossible to establish an objective reality that is accurate, irrespective of the interpretation that individuals assign to it (Masha, 2017). Because the narrators' life experiences are so detailed, studies in this paradigm can employ a variety of approaches (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022).

Researchers who pursue interpretivism should endeavour to comprehend the diverse perspectives and experiences of the world that are influenced by various contexts and cultures, as per Phan (2018). This paradigm is appropriate for the topic under research because participants were able to express their various interpretations and experiences related to the phenomenon of collaborative techniques employed by SMT and parents to improve student performance. The researcher collected diverse viewpoints from parents and school administration teams at the selected schools by employing this paradigm, which is noteworthy since it considers the experiences of parents and all levels of management. This study's research strategy took into account the principal's and head of department's (HOD) understandings as members of the school management team (SMT) and the parents' understandings of the collaborative strategies used to improve students' academic performance in their particular settings and circumstances since the interpretive framework aims to understand human behaviour.

3.3 RESEARCH APPROACH

According to Pacho (2015), the method of enquiry is the broad approach that the researcher adopts when conducting the study. By gaining knowledge of the participants' social and material conditions, expectations, viewpoints, and histories, the qualitative research approach offers a comprehensive and interpreted comprehension of the social world in which they belong. (Lethoko, 2019). According to Pacho (2015), human or social problems are explored through understanding qualitative research, which is found in several methodological traditions of inquiry. The scholar further asserts that qualitative research analyses specific instances from which broader principles and rules can be deduced while relying on social experience analysis to reflect everyday experience. As highlighted by Green, Camilli and Elmore (2020), qualitative research methods such as interviews and focus groups allow researchers to delve into the perspectives, emotions, and motivations of students, teachers, and other stakeholders, uncovering insights that quantitative approaches may overlook. Amos (2023) asserts that the following traits set qualitative research apart from other research methods:

- **Natural setting:** this suggests that the objects of the study are the lived experiences of real individuals in real settings. This means that the findings of

the study depict human behaviours in their natural settings. The researcher conducted interviews in the selected schools as part of this study to see how the participants perceive collaboration between SMTs and parents. Qualitative research, as defined by Patnaik and Pandey (2019), is characterised by a naturalist and interpretive method that endeavours to interpret events in accordance with the meanings that individuals assign to them.

- **Participant perspective:** qualitative research aims to comprehend the viewpoints of individuals who participate in it. The significance of the qualitative style to this study was attributed to the researcher's longing to comprehend the concepts that SMTs and parents attach to collaborative efforts and strategies and how they might be applied to improve student performance. Using this technique, researchers can get a thorough grasp of the social, cultural, and emotional factors that affect educational experiences.
- **Researchers as tools for data collection:** qualitative researchers collect data independently and directly. This means that the human abilities required for social interaction also allow qualitative researchers to interpret the behaviors, motives, and understandings of the subjects they are studying. In qualitative research, the goal is to develop a theoretical explanation for the event being studied through theory-building techniques, narrative interviews, and observation (Jain & Brokcova, 2022).
- **Flexibility and adaptability:** the study design and data collection techniques are frequently iterative and responsive to emergent themes and patterns. To keep the study grounded in the realities of the participants and the changing circumstances of the educational setting, researchers may adjust their strategy based on continuing analyses.

When designing and carrying out qualitative research, the research problem and the topic under investigation should serve as guiding principles, according to Cresswell and Poth (2016). The need for the researcher to use research to make significant changes in education also contributed to the decision to choose this approach. Qualitative research has become increasingly significant in the education setting, offering a range of advantages that enhance our understanding of the complex dynamics within educational environments. These advantages include:

- In-depth exploration: A thorough examination of educational phenomena can be accomplished through qualitative research. In contrast to quantitative procedures, which may overlook rich and complete insights, qualitative methods (e.g., interviews and observations) enable researchers to delve deeply into participants' experiences and perspectives (Peshkopia, 2021). This method of research lets the researcher comprehend the thoughts, feelings, and experiences of the parents and SMTs.

- Contextual understanding: the emphasis on context is a significant advantage of qualitative research. Researchers can research education in real-world context, considering cultural, social, and environmental issues. This contextual understanding is essential for appreciating the complexities of educational processes (Gill, Stewart, Treasure & Chadwick, 2022). This enabled the researcher to interpret the lived experiences of SMTs and parents' collaborative efforts in schools in Thabo Mofutsanyana District.

- Rich Data Collection: qualitative research produces data that is both rich and diverse. Researchers can understand the complexity of educational experiences through open-ended interviews and observations. This abundance of data makes it easier to spot trends and subtleties that quantitative methods could miss (Marshall & Rossman, 2020). The researcher employed semi-structured interviews and document analysis as data-gathering tools for this specific purpose.

- Theory Development: qualitative research contributes to the development and improvement of educational theories. According to a study by Creswell and Poth (2022), qualitative approaches help academics create ideas that are based on people's actual experiences. This advances the theoretical frameworks that guide educational practices. This enabled the researcher to underwrite the pool of knowledge to improve educational practices within the specified district so that improvements can be completed to the academic performance of learners. The insight gained from this study can inform the development of effective teaching methods, curriculum design, and student support services (Suter & Bowers, 2021).

While qualitative research offers valuable insights into the complex world of education, it also carries potential disadvantages that researchers and practitioners must carefully consider.

- Limited generalisability is one of the main drawbacks of qualitative research for its limited ability to generalise findings to a broader population. To counteract this, the researcher used open-ended questions to validate conclusions and improve credibility and generalisability, using various methods, data sources, investigators, and hypotheses (Yin, 2014).
- The in-depth nature of qualitative studies often involves small sample sizes, making it challenging to extend the findings beyond the specific context in which the research was conducted. Gathering data continuously until reaching saturation ensures that the sample size sufficiently addresses the research questions comprehensively (Saunders, Sim, Kingstone, Baker, Waterfield, Bartlam & Jinks, (2018).
- Subjectivity and bias are additional drawbacks of qualitative research, as it is extensively dependent on researchers' interpretation, which can introduce subjectivity and bias. The findings may be distorted because of the personal beliefs, perspectives, and experiences of the researchers that may influence data acquisition, analysis, and interpretation. As a researcher, I used member checking to reduce bias and boost credibility by sharing findings with participants to ensure correctness and relevance with their experiences (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell & Walter, 2016).

3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

Case study research is a methodical investigation of an event or a series of connected events. Its purpose is to describe and explain the phenomenon being studied (Maphoke, 2017). A case study is a type of research that focuses on understanding and interpreting information, where the researcher plays a crucial role in collecting and analysing data, as described by Merriam and Tidsell (2016). The utilisation of many sources and methodologies in the data-collecting process is a benefit of adopting case study research. The year 2017. Masha, according to Yin (2011), as referenced in Sibanda (2020), argues that a case study can examine situations when the intervention being evaluated does not have a defined set of outcomes and can provide

a deeper understanding of complex cause-and-effect interactions in real-world interventions. The practical setting of the intervention might also be highlighted.

The goal of a case study is to comprehend one circumstance thoroughly; for a predetermined amount of time, a specific person, program, or event is investigated in-depth (Pacho, 2015). This study utilised a multiple case study methodology to examine the commonalities and distinctions across the cases, with the aim of producing robust and dependable data (Gustafson, 2017). Multiple case study design enables the researcher to identify cross-case patterns and themes that can explain if a finding is consistent across multiple cases (Patnaik & Pandey, 2019). The researcher was able to critically evaluate the SMTs' and parents' experiences in relation to the collaborative phenomena, making a case study appropriate for this topic. Additionally, this strategy fits the interpretive paradigm of the current research investigation. The exploratory case study, descriptive case study, and explanatory case study are the three basic types of case studies (Subramoney, 2016).

This study utilised an exploratory case study approach to examine how a phenomenon is influenced by its surrounding context. Sibanda (2020) argues that a case study is an appropriate research approach for investigating "how" and "what" inquiries. The need for an exploratory case study design is justified by two research questions in this study. These questions pertain to the school management teams and parents' collaborative strategies used to enhance learner academic performance, as well as the challenges faced by these parties as a result of their collaborative efforts. The study sampled three secondary and two primary schools in Thabo Mofutsanyana District, and each school was treated as a case, hence the choice of a multiple-case research design.

3.5 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Semi-structured interviews and document analysis were the main data generation techniques employed by the researcher based on the nature of the topic researched. The data collection methods are outlined in the sections below.

3.5.1 Semi-structured interviews

An interview is a dialogue conducted to collect information (King et al., 2019). According to the researchers, a research interview consists of an interviewer who manages the conversation and poses questions and an interviewee who answers those questions. Interviews are beneficial in situations where participants cannot be observed, when participants possess valuable historical knowledge, and when participants have control over the direction of the study questions (Masha, 2017). Semi-structured interviews were used as a data-gathering method in the study. Interviews were employed to establish a direct rapport between the researcher and the respondents. As per Kallio et al. (2016), a semi-structured interview is a type of interview where a researcher asks open-ended and closed questions to prompt diverse and comprehensive responses. This gave the researcher a chance to get insight into the personal experiences of senior management team members (SMTs) who serve as managers and parents within the school governing body (SGB).

Semi-structured interviews elicit evocative stories that can transform the questions about a subject into storytelling (Mahat-Shamir et al., 2021). Jentoft and Olsen (2017) suggest that although follow-up questions like "why" and "how" are planned ahead of time for semi-structured interviews, how they are asked also depends on the flow of the conversation. According to Laforest (2009), as referenced by Masha (2017), key informants in a community being studied hold privileged positions, engage in relevant activities, or have specific tasks that provide them with a comprehensive awareness of the situation being investigated.

Baker (2018) states that semi-structured interviews necessitate the researcher's preparation of an interview schedule and questions and the availability of opportunities for interviewees to bring up additional topics relevant to the research topic that the researcher may not have specifically asked about. The researcher was able to ask participants free-form questions, which allowed for the collection of detailed information regarding how parents and SMTs work together to improve students' academic achievement. The interview schedule made it possible to standardise the interviews for consistency using pre-determined questions. A semi-structured interview schedule was used to answer both primary and secondary research questions. The data-gathering technique employed by the researcher was using open-

ended questions to collect detailed information on the collaborative strategies employed by parents and SMTs to improve academic learner

3.5.2 Document analysis

A document is a social construct that arises from a particular context, serves a specific intention, and is authored by distinct individuals inside a certain temporal and spatial framework. (Kari, 2019). According to Jeffry and Miller (2016), document analysis is the interpretation of written materials that independently existed before the study but are linked to the research's goal. Dalgish, Khalid and McMahon (2020) postulate that to gather data relating to research issues, document analysis is used as it involves carefully reading and assessing documents –document analysis is employed in conjunction with different sorts of research instruments. This methodology involves the examination of a diverse array of materials, encompassing books, scholarly publications, newspaper stories, institutional reports, and academic journal articles. According to Patton (2015), any document mostly composed of text can be used as a potential source for qualitative analysis. Texts such as the data a researcher gathers during an interview can be thought of as being found in books, journals, and other papers. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), these sources mirror peoples' beliefs in a manner comparable to the information gathered by researchers through observations and interviews. The permanence of the data makes it useful to analyse written materials like books and journal articles. The data remains unaffected when researchers undertake a document analysis using pre-existing texts (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) unlike other instruments, such as observations where researchers may influence participants. Merrim and Tisdell (2016) found fewer ethical concerns when using pre-existing materials as data in qualitative techniques. Anyone can view public records, and they are frequently anonymous.

Documents such as the South African School Act (SASA), School Improvement Plan (SIP), Self-School Evaluation (SSE), and Learner's Code of Conduct were analysed. From these documents, the researcher reviewed data that relates to the collaboration between SMTs and parents in schools. According to Haines (2012), referenced in Murumwa (2020), the researcher should only ask for the documents that answer the evaluation questions once access has been granted. Official departmental records, school records, and policies all supplied useful information that might support or

contradict what respondents reported in the interviews and the researcher's observation while gathering data. It was discovered that document analysis is somewhat inexpensive, but the procedure may take some time, and the information gathered may be incomplete, erroneous, or out-of-date (Murumwa, 2020). The process of finding documents for the study should consider four factors as mentioned in Flick's (2018) study: authenticity, credibility, representativeness, and meaning. The degree of a document's genuineness is considered its authenticity (Dunne et al., 2016). Concerns about the work's legitimacy can be allayed by checking its author, publishing date, and location. A reliable source is both accurate and free of bias (Dunne et al., 2016). Researchers need to check the credibility of the materials by seeing if the sources that created them are reliable (Flick, 2018). The degree to which a document is typical is called its representativeness. In the absence of content consistent with other texts on the same subject, a document is not representative if it has unique information. The significance of a document is established by its meaning, which considers the evidence's clarity and understandability.

3.6 RESEARCH POPULATION AND SAMPLING

The processes used to select the study's population and sample are described in the section below:

3.6.1 Population

The features of a certain group are referred to as the population in research methods (Pandey & Pandey, 2015). Flick (2018) asserts that the study population is fundamental to sample decisions, as it directly influences the validity of generalizing research outcomes. According to Bryman (2021), the population may be more tightly defined based on individual experiences or characteristics. Therefore, careful evaluation in populations with complex features, such as marginalized or underrepresented groups, may necessitate alternative sampling procedures or ethical considerations (Etikan and Bala, 2017). The focus of the population for the study was on parents, heads of departments, and principals in the Free State province. Therefore, the sampling was based on five schools in Thabo Mofutsanyana District in

Qwaqwa, Warden, and Bethlehem. That is a sample of people from whom we extrapolate broad conclusions based on their agreement with predetermined criteria.

3.6.2 Sampling

Sampling is the act of choosing a subset of the population to be studied (Lethoko, 2019). Bhardwaj (2022) asserts that sampling is a time-saving method that yields quicker findings. This is because the sample size is lower than the entire population and can be used when the researcher is confident that the target population meets their requirements. There are two distinct categories of sampling techniques: non-probability sampling and probability sampling approach (Shabalala, 2016).

Probability sampling is a method where each unit in a population has a known and equal chance of being selected for the sample, as explained by Bhattacharjee (2012) mentioned in Murumwa (2020). On the other hand, non-probability sampling is characterised as a method wherein not every person in the population has an equal opportunity to be chosen for a sample (Shabalala, 2016). Non-probability sampling is frequently employed in qualitative research, and deliberate sampling is a specific method within this category. The primary reason for adopting qualitative research methods is to concentrate on a small group of well-chosen individuals who can provide detailed information that will offer the best possible understanding of a relatively unknown subject (Murumwa, 2020).

This study employed purposeful sampling as the chosen sample method. Maphoke (2017) defines intentional sampling as the deliberate process of discovering and selecting individuals or groups with significant knowledge or expertise related to a specific topic of interest. The researcher deliberately selects the specific sources and locations to obtain data (Leedy & Ormrod, 2020). Jeffry and Miller (2016) state that sampling relies on individuals' voluntary disclosure of information that is pertinent to the research inquiry. The selection of principals, departmental heads, and SGB parents was based on a deliberate strategy, considering their knowledge and experience related to the subject being studied. The principals were chosen based on their position as the leaders of the school, with vast knowledge of the institution. The

departmental heads were selected due to their significant expertise in their respective fields.

Three (3) secondary schools and two (2) primary schools in rural and semi-rural areas of Thabo Mofutsanyana District were selected. The targeted population comprised the principal, one head of department, and two SGB parents from each of the five schools. The schools in the sample were selected using purposive and convenience sampling methods. The selection criteria were determined based on each school's capacity to contribute to the comprehension of the methods and protocols employed in gathering data across the entire building. A total of five (5) schools and twenty (20) participants were used in this study. Table 3.1 presents a comprehensive overview of the sampling procedure in this study.

Table 3.1 Sampling procedure

School sample	Sampling number
Two primary schools	One principal One Head of Department Two SGB parents
Three secondary schools	One principal One Head of Department Two SGB parents

3.7 DATA ANALYSIS

The data analysis stage is the phase in which the interviewer reinterprets the narrative within a different historical and socio-cultural framework (Maphoke, 2017). A technique for discovering, analysing, and making sense of recurring ideas (themes) in qualitative data, thematic analysis was used in this study (Clarke & Braun, 2016). According to the researchers, theme analysis can be employed in "experimental" research to identify patterns in participants' thoughts, emotions, actions, and perspectives in order to gain a deeper understanding of their lived experiences, attitudes, behaviors, and practices. Delahunt and Maguire (2017) state that thematic analysis is used to identify themes or patterns in data in order to address research questions or highlight problems. The analysis should include information about real-life experiences, such as interview data, as data-driven themes are produced from the analysis, meaning they are based on data and the participants' experiences (Lindberg, Nilsson, Palmér

& Sundler, 2019). The authors elaborate that the analysis commences with a phase focused on obtaining meaning and subsequently advances to the identification and correlation of several meanings. The study employed thematic analysis to identify recurring themes that would guide the assessment and comprehension of the data collected, informing the study's conclusions. The utilization of thematic analysis in this study resulted in the following advantages. Such benefits include:

- Ability to delve deeply into the data to spot patterns, linkages, and subtleties within the dataset (Nowell et al., 2017). This is helpful in educational research since it is essential to have a thorough grasp of learners' experiences, teachers' views, and classroom dynamics.

- Ability to prioritise the participants' voices, ensuring that the perceptions and experiences of individuals within the educational setting are accurately portrayed (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

According to Creswell and Creswell (2023) and Leedy and Ormrod (2023), six steps are used in interpreting qualitative data. The steps to be followed are:

- Preparing and organising the data for analysis.
- Exploring the data initially through the process of coding.
- Using the codes to develop a more general picture of the data
- Representing the findings through narratives and visuals.
- Interpreting the meaning of the results by personally reflecting on the impact of the findings and on the literature that may inform the findings.
- Interpreting the results.

In this study, the researcher followed the above steps in analysing data by gathering, arranging, and transcribing data collected from semi-structured interviews and the documents analysed. The data that emerged was classified according to themes and sub-themes, which allowed the researcher to interpret meanings and draw conclusions. In the end, the researcher thoroughly presented the study's results.

3.8 TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE STUDY

Trustworthiness is applied when multiple data collection methods are employed in the research development (Maphoke, 2017). According to Hadi and Closs (2016), triangulation is a common strategy for ensuring the trustworthiness and consistency of qualitative studies. Triangulation entails using at least two similar data sources, data-gathering techniques, or researchers. This study triangulated data gathering by using two data collection instruments, semi-structured interviews and document analysis, to enhance the trustworthiness of the data collected. However, triangulation was not used to judge the truthfulness of data or to categorize it as "true" or "false," but rather to evaluate the consistency of the conclusions drawn from a variety of data sources. Triangulation assists the investigator in reducing bias and cross-examines the integrity of participants' responses (Maphoke, 2017).

Furthermore, transcribed data was sent to participants for validation (Mbatha, 2018). Member checking, often referred to as participant or respondent validation, is a method used to assess the credibility of research findings, as described by Birt et al. (2016). According to the scholar, this approach is a method to enhance the precision of qualitative research and the trustworthiness of precise depictions or explanations of occurrences. Member checking involves informants verifying researchers' interpretations after the fact and can occur face-to-face (Stahl & King, 2020). Pre-publication copies of research write-ups were given to participants in order to get their input on the data's accuracy (Stahl and King, 2020). To promote validity and rigour, it is crucial to recognise and consider the principles of credibility and transferability throughout the study process.

3.8.1 Credibility

Credibility is determined by the importance of the results and the excellence of their delivery. To establish credibility, it is necessary to give the techniques and approaches thoroughly and clearly. Quotes must be used to support the themes being discussed to guarantee that the content and meanings are consistent (Sundler et al., 2019).

3.8.2 Transferability

Transferability assesses the accuracy of the findings and the degree to which the study contributes to current understanding. Important aspects of a study's transferability include the study's relevance, usefulness, and significance in various situations (Gunawan, 2015).

3.8.3 Dependability

Dependability pertains to the precision and uniformity of the results obtained from a research investigation (Subramoney, 2016). Triangulation was employed to ensure reliability. Triangulation is the process of using multiple sources of data to validate the findings of a study (Hadi & Closs, 2016). The process of triangulation was accomplished by conducting a thorough examination of the South African School Act (SASA), the School Improvement Plan (SIP), and the Self-School Evaluation (SSE) materials. This measure was implemented to guarantee reliability and bolster the validity of the results.

3.8.4 Confirmability

Confirmability, according to Murumwa (2020), is the degree to which facts and their interpretation reflect real events rather than the researcher's subjective impressions. The researcher conducted thorough interviews with the participants to guarantee confirmability, so learning more about and understanding their points of view on the cooperative methods and efforts between the SMT and parents in public schools. This was accomplished by asking participants additional questions to provide greater clarification on specific issues and to guarantee that the material used in this study represents participant interpretation rather than the researcher's perspective.

3.9 Research process

The evaluation committee of the University of the Free State approved ethical clearance upon my application. Permission to do research was also obtained from the Free State Department of Education, which was granted. Following the acquisition of the required documentation, I visited educational institutions to seek permission from the principals to carry out research and to deliver the written consent forms acquired

from the University of the Free State to the subjects before the interviews. On different days, I visited the principals of many chosen schools to let them know about my study. Denying me access, two secondary schools claimed a conflict of interest between the School Governing Body (SGB) parents and the School Management Team (SMT). I had to thus substitute two new schools for these ones that were not included in my initial research authorisation letter.

During my meetings with the principals, I had the opportunity to elaborate on my research topic and the types of participants needed for the study. All the principals approved my request and signed the forms granting permission to conduct the research. They also promised to disseminate the information discussed in the meetings to their staff members. I left the consent forms with the principals to be distributed to the relevant participants and requested their contact information so that interview sessions could be arranged. A week later, I called the principals to check on the progress. They gave me positive feedback, confirming that all participants agreed to participate and signed the consent forms. Through telephone communication, we agreed that the interviews would be conducted on the same day for each school. I prepared my interview schedule accordingly.

After conducting the interviews, I requested documents such as the School Self-Evaluation (SSE), School Improvement Plan (SIP), and other relevant materials for analysis. In schools D and E, however, the principals refused to provide these documents, claiming they were confidential. To protect participant confidentiality, the study used pseudo names thus, participants' names have been changed.

3.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In order to initiate this research, the researcher obtained ethical approval from the Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Free State, as well as permission from the Free State Education Department and Thabo Mofutsanyane District. These permissions were necessary to conduct the research at each of the five schools. Consent was also obtained from each of the five principals, and each individually assumed responsibility for assuring the participation of the Heads of Departments (HODs) and School Governing Body (SGB) parents. Every participant was obligated to complete and sign consent documents affirming their voluntary participation in the

study and their entitlement to withdraw at any moment. The parents and SMTs who took part were guaranteed complete anonymity and secrecy. Anonymity refers to the condition when the researcher or readers of a research study cannot link a specific respondent to their responses (Murumwa, 2020).

In this study, pseudonyms were used to protect the confidentiality of the parents, SMT members, and schools. To keep the material secure, the researcher used their own password-protected computer. Once the interviews were conducted using audio, they were transcribed into written form. The participants were then requested to read and confirm the accuracy of the transcriptions. This step was taken to guarantee that the findings were accurately reported without any misinterpretation or misleading details (Clark-Kazak, 2017). Honesty and transparency were applied in order to ensure that no form of deception took place at any stage in the research process. According to Wells and Molina (2017), the researcher will guard against misleading the participants through honesty and openness about the research.

3.11 CONCLUSION

This chapter sheds light on the study paradigm and design, as well as the research population and sample, and it also discusses the ethical aspects that were taken into account. There was a discussion on a qualitative study that used the interpretive paradigm, which is the paradigm in which this study is situated, along with its argumentation and relevance in relation to the study.

CHAPTER FOUR DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter focused on narrating the research's methodological process. This chapter presents the findings based on semi-structured interviews conducted with the target group and the analysis of documents. The chapter begins with a review of the research objectives and then discusses the demographic profile of respondents. The main results analysis is presented per theme, with four themes presented and discussed in the context of literature. The results are analysed in alignment with the following research objectives:

4.1.1 Main aim of the study

The study aimed to explore the collaborative strategies of SMTs and parents to enhance learners' academic performance.

4.1.2 Research objectives

- Explore how SMTs and parents collaborate to enhance learner academic performance
- Examine challenges experienced by the SMTs and parents as a result of collaborative strategies they use to enhance learner academic performance
- Determine effective collaborative strategies between the SMTs and parents to enhance learner performance

4.2 Profile of the Participants

4.2.1 Principals

Data presented were sourced from 5 schools, which were classified as schools A to E. Table 4.1 below presents the profile of principals.

Table 4.1 Biographical Data of Principals

Schools	Participants	Gender	Educational Qualification	Teaching experience	Management Experience
A	Letebele	Male	BSC PGCE	13	8
B	Rampone	Female	STD ACE	18	10
C	Msibi	Male	BA (ED) HONS	25	15
D	Tshwaela	Female	BCOM PGCE	15	7
E	Khumalo	Male	BA (ED)	32	13

Table 4.1 shows that the principals of 4 schools had more than 15 years of teaching experience and 1 principal had been in the field for less than 15 years. All principals had more than 7 years of management experience, suggesting they had most likely developed sound relations with parents and the community around their schools. Of the 5 principals, 3 were male, while 2 were female. In terms of distribution by educational qualifications, 3 had at least a bachelor's qualification, while 1 had a Secondary Teacher's diploma and an Advanced Certificate in Education.

4.2.2 Heads of Department (HoDs)

Only 1 HoD from each school was requested to participate in the study. A total of 5 HoD participants were interviewed by the researcher. Table 4.2 below shows the demographic profile of participants who are HoDs.

Table 4.2 Biographical Data of Heads of Department

Schools	Participants	Gender	Educational Qualification	Teaching experience	Management Experience
A	Rampai	Male	BCOM, PGCE, ACE	15	5
B	Chakela	Male	BCOM PGCE HONS	18	7
C	Mosikili	Male	B. ED HONS	8	5
D	Nkosi	Female	B. ED	7	3
E	Mngomezulu	Female	DIPLOMA	20	9

Almost all HoDs had more management experience, meaning they were well conversant with their school environment and understood working together with parents. Only 1 HoD had less than 5 years of management experience. Regarding their distribution by gender, 3 of the HoDs were male, while 2 were female. By gender, 3 HoDs were male, while 2 were female, similar to the distribution of principals. By educational level, 4 out of 5 HoDs had at least a bachelor's education, with others having postgraduate certificates, while 1 HoD from school E had a diploma as their highest qualification.

4.2.3 Parents

Table 4.3 shows the demographic profile of the 10 SGB parents who were interviewed in this study.

Table 4.3 Biographical data of parents

School	Parents	Gender	No. of children	Highest Education	Breadwinner
A	Nxumalo	Male	2	Grade 9	Yes
A	Kubheka	Male	4	Matric	Yes
B	Ntshangase	Female	3	Tertiary	Yes
B	Tlale	Female	2	Tertiary	Yes
C	Titi	Male	3	Tertiary	Yes
C	Morabe	Female	1	Matric	No
D	Magwaza	Female	2	Tertiary	Yes
D	Zulu	Male	2	Matric	No
E	Zuma	Female	1	Tertiary	Yes
E	Skhakhane	Male	4	Grade 10	Yes

Most parents were literate and did not have problems in understanding interview questions. Regarding gender distribution, there were 5 male participants and 5 females. Their number of children ranged from 1 child (2 parents), 2 children (4 parents), 3 children (2 parents) and 4 children (4 parents). Concerning the distribution by highest education level, 1 parent reached Grade 9, another one reached Grade 10, 3 parents had matric, and the remaining 5 had tertiary level qualifications. Lastly, the distribution by breadwinner status shows that 8 out of 10 parents were breadwinners in their households. The next section presents an overview of the themes that emerged during data analysis.

4.3 Overview of Themes

The researcher used thematic analysis to establish patterns and generated four themes for this study. Figure 1 visualises the study's main themes and emergent sub-themes.

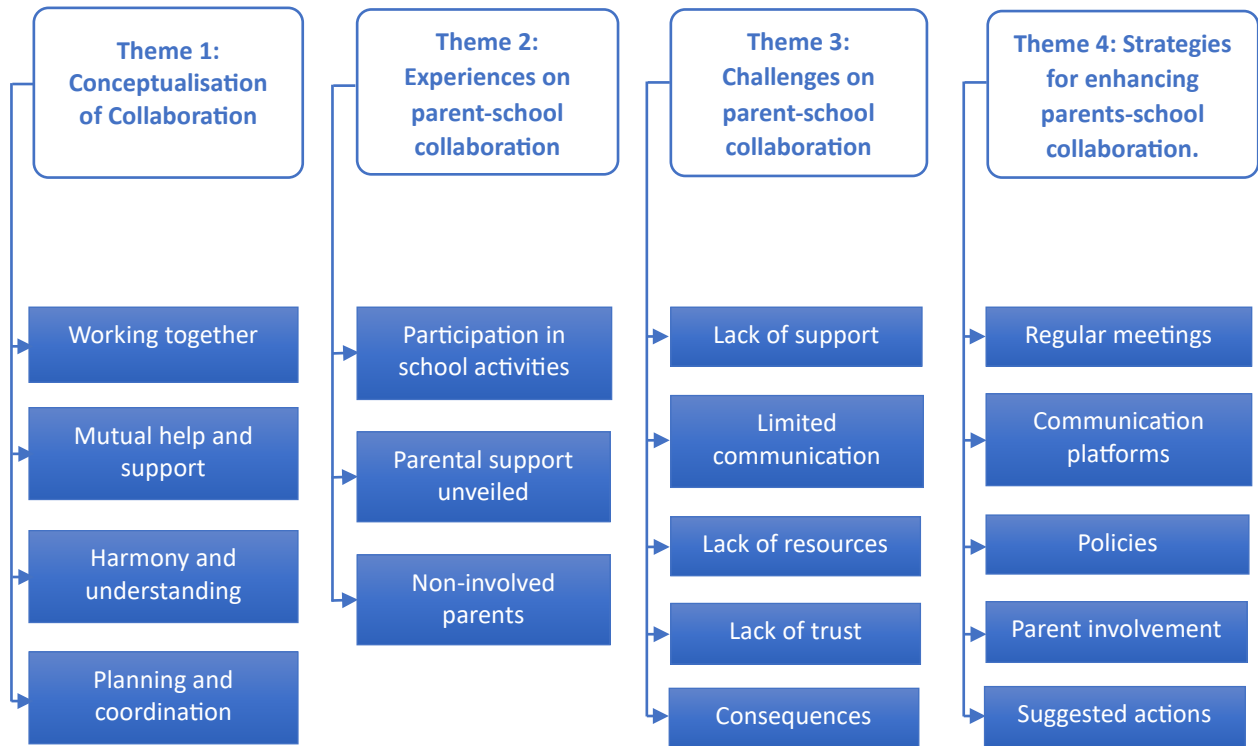


Figure 4.1 Summary of themes and sub-themes of the study

As shown in Figure 1, the following were the study’s main themes: (1) participants’ conceptualisation of collaboration, (2) participants' experiences of parent-school collaboration, (3) challenges facing parent-school collaboration, and (4) strategies for enhancing parent-school collaboration. These are discussed together with relevant subthemes in the next section.

4.4 Theme 1: Conceptualisation of Collaboration

The first theme that emerged from the data analysis related to the participants’ conceptualisation of collaboration. The interview question that elicited this theme was: “What do you understand about the concept of collaboration?” The responses from the three respondent groups (SGB parents, principals, and HoDs) revealed some sub-themes that reflected their understanding of collaboration. These sub-themes were working together, mutual help and support, harmony and understanding, and planning and coordination.

4.4.1 Working together

A common sub-theme across all the participants groups was an understanding that collaboration is about working together with other parties to achieve a common goal. Participants indicated that teamwork is important in the school context between the parents, SMTs, and other stakeholders to ensure excellent achievement and enhance learner academic performance. **Mosikili (HoD - school C)** shared that:

'It means working together in a school context so that learners can perform. This means parents, educators, and learners working together for the achievement of learners. The school is not governed by teachers only but also by SGB to function properly.'

This quote highlights the importance of a unified approach where all parties involved in the educational process contribute to learners' success. It underscores the idea that a school's governance and functionality are enhanced when there is active participation from both educators and the SGB. Such collaborative governance ensures that decisions are made with a comprehensive understanding of the needs and goals of the school community. Meanwhile, **Nkosi (Parent - school D)** added by incorporating collaboration with external stakeholders:

'Collaboration is when we work harmoniously with different stakeholders for a particular purpose. In our institution, we collaborate with different department officials, such as SAPS and Health Departments. It is when we work together with colleagues and understand each other.'

Nkosi's perspective broadens the scope of collaboration to include external stakeholders, such as the SAPS and Health Departments. This indicates that effective collaboration extends beyond the immediate school environment and involves various community and governmental entities. Such partnerships can provide additional

resources and support to enhance the educational experience and address issues affecting learner performance. Moreover, **Nxumalo (Parent - school A)** shared that:

‘Collaboration is teamwork, whether it's communication ideals and sharing of information. It means two parties working together hand in hand, helping each other as parents and teachers to benefit our children.’

The above quote relates to the importance of teamwork, communication and information sharing. This view reinforces the idea that collaboration is about working together and creating a culture of mutual support and understanding.

This sub-theme is consistent with the literature that views collaboration as a process of joint decision-making and shared responsibility among stakeholders with a common interest or goal (Engelbrecht & Hay, 2018; Lim, 2018). Collaboration in this context involves not only the school's internal stakeholders but also external community partners, which is essential for creating a support system for learners.

Further, in line with Selolo (2018), collaboration is also a key element of effective school improvement and student outcomes. The notion that multiple parties working together can substantially improve academic performance is supported by empirical evidence suggesting that collaborative efforts lead to a more motivated school community. When parents, teachers, and external stakeholders align their objectives and strategies, it creates a synergy effect that enhances the educational environment for learners (Mavuso, 2022).

The emphasis on shared goals and mutual support among stakeholders reflects that successful educational outcomes are not achieved in isolation. A collaborative approach enhances all stakeholders' accountability, ensuring efforts are directed towards common objectives. This aligns with existing educational theories that

advocate for inclusive and participatory governance models in schools as well as the importance of community engagement in achieving educational success.

Findings align well with the collaborative leadership theory, as outlined by Rubin (2009) and DeWitt (2016). The emphasis on working together to achieve common goals reflects Rubin's (2009) idea of collaborative leadership being intentional, strategic, and cooperative. The respondents' perspectives on collaboration reflect the elements of shared responsibility and collective decision-making highlighted in the TenKeys model (Jäppinen, 2017). Moreover, their recognition of external stakeholders aligns with the broader view of collaborative leadership that looks beyond the organisation (Maarlouf, 2018). This approach supports the notion that educational leaders must balance inspiring stakeholders to collaborate while co-constructing goals, ensuring that collaboration becomes a central component of leadership and school management (Modha, 2021).

4.4.2 Mutual help and support

Another sub-theme that emerged from the responses of the SGB parents was the aspect of mutual help and support between parents and teachers for the benefit of their children. In this sub-theme, participants highlighted the importance of reciprocity in supporting each other for the school's development. This includes support among parents, the SGBs, and the SMTs in ensuring that learners can succeed. For example, **Titi (Parent - school C)** attested:

'Collaboration means helping each other as parents and teachers for the benefit of our children.'

Titi's statement underscores the role of reciprocal support in a collaborative educational environment. This mutual assistance ensures that parents and teachers are actively engaged in the educational process, creating a supportive network that prioritises the students' best interests. In addition, participants emphasised the importance of pursuing common goals as an important characteristic of mutual help

and support within collaborative environments. **Rampone (Principal - school B)** shared as follows:

‘Two individuals trying to assist each other to achieve a particular goal and coming together to achieve a certain goal. Collaboration needs to be structured and driven towards a particular goal, so it does not happen haphazardly.’

Rampone discusses the necessity of a structured approach to collaboration. The quote shows that it is not just about working together but with a clear, shared objective in mind. This structured collaboration ensures that efforts are focused and coordinated, leading to more effective outcomes. Additionally, **Tlale (Parent - school B)** highlighted that:

‘Working together and having a common goal and ensuring achievement of the goal. It means working together to achieve a common goal, which is something that you can’t do alone as a person.’

Tlale’s perspective reinforces the idea that collaboration is essential for achieving goals that are beyond the capacity of an individual. By working together, parents and teachers can pool their resources, knowledge, and skills to overcome challenges and achieve shared objectives. This collective effort is vital for the success of educational initiatives and is also similarly supported by **Magwaza (Parent - school D)**, who concurred as follows:

‘Collaboration is working together to achieve a common goal.’

This sub-theme reflects the role of parents as partners in their children’s education and the importance of family-school relationships. The literature suggests that parental involvement and support can positively affect children’s academic achievement,

motivation, and social-emotional development (Mavuso, 2022; Myende & Nhlumayo, 2020). However, the literature also indicates many challenges and barriers to effective parental involvement, such as a lack of time, resources, and communication (Mavuso, 2022; Menzo, 2016; Sibanda, 2020).

Results strongly resonate with the principles of Collaborative Leadership Theory, as proposed by Hank Rubin (2009). This theory underscores the significance of intentional, strategic, and cooperative relationships to achieve shared outcomes. Participants' emphasis on structured collaboration and shared goals aligns with Rubin's idea that collaborative leadership involves deliberate activities to improve instruction and foster strong bonds (DeWitt, 2016). Moreover, the TenKeys model's attributes, such as interaction, expertise, flexibility, and commitment, are reflected in the participants' experiences of working together.

In the context of existing literature, the findings align with Mavuso (2022) and Myende and Nhlumayo (2020), who emphasise the positive impact of parental involvement on various aspects of children's development. Parental support enhances academic performance and boosts motivation and social-emotional well-being. This underscores the importance of ensuring strong family-school partnerships to support overall learner development.

However, the literature also highlights several challenges to effective parental involvement. Mavuso (2022) and Menzo (2016) point out that time constraints, limited resources, and communication barriers can hinder parents' ability to engage fully in their children's education. Addressing these challenges requires schools to implement strategies that facilitate better communication and provide support to parents for more active participation in the educational process.

Sibanda (2020) adds that overcoming these barriers involves creating a welcoming school environment and offering flexible involvement opportunities. By recognising

and addressing the needs and constraints of parents, schools can build a more supportive atmosphere that encourages active parental participation. This, in turn, can lead to improved educational outcomes for learners.

4.4.3 Harmony and Understanding

A third sub-theme that emerged from the principals' responses was the aspect of harmony and understanding among different stakeholders, including external agencies such as the police. Harmony, in this case, is related to the ability of all stakeholders to work with a single purpose: the development of children. For example, **Letebele (Principal - school A)** attested as follows:

'Collaboration is when we are working together harmoniously with different stakeholders. In our institution, we collaborate with different department officials, e.g., the police. It is when we work together with colleagues and understand each other.'

The quote above emphasises the importance of mutual relationships among various stakeholders. By working with external agencies, schools can create a safe and supportive environment for learners. This collaboration ensures that all parties support learner development. Additionally, **Msibi (Principal - school C)** highlighted:

'It means working together for a particular purpose. Collaboration needs to be structured and driven towards a particular goal, and it does not happen haphazardly.'

Msibi's note calls for effective collaboration, which requires clear objectives and a coordinated approach to ensure all efforts are aligned to achieve specific educational outcomes. The structured methodology further helps maintain coherence among the different stakeholders, preventing the collaborative process from becoming ineffective.

Overall, the third sub-theme reflects the role of principals as leaders and managers of the school and its environment. Scholars like Sibanda (2020) and Molefe (2014) assert that principals play a crucial role in facilitating and sustaining collaboration among

various stakeholders, both within and outside the school. Principals are pivotal in fostering an environment of mutual respect and understanding, ensuring that all parties work towards the same goals.

When viewed through a theoretical lens, the principals' focus on collaboration with external agencies such as the police underscores the essential elements of collaborative leadership outlined by DeWitt (2016), who highlights the importance of strong bonds with all stakeholders. This approach is also consistent with the TenKeys model, whose attributes like interaction, negotiation, and commitment are crucial for maintaining harmony and achieving common goals (Jäppinen, 2017). Additionally, the structured and goal-driven reflects the structural elements of Bolman and Deal's Four-Frame Model, which emphasises the importance of shared vision and agreed-upon implementation strategies (Padayachee, 2021).

However, empirical literature also acknowledges that principals face many challenges and pressures in their leadership role, such as accountability and workload, thus necessitating collaborative leadership (Dulos, 2020; Molefe, 2014; Sibanda, 2021). The role demands require principals to not only manage the school's internal operations but also engage effectively with external stakeholders. Consequently, this dual responsibility calls for collaborative leadership in managing these challenges and maintaining harmony within the school community. Effective collaboration under the guidance of the principal can mitigate the pressures and complexities of school leadership. Principals must actively engage with parents, teachers, and external agencies to build trust and ensure everyone is working towards the same objectives. By creating a culture of open communication, principals can facilitate more effective collaboration and drive positive outcomes for learners (Kwarteng et al., 2020; Myende & Nhlumayo, 2020).

4.4.4 Planning and coordination

A fourth sub-theme that emerged from the responses of the HoDs was the aspect of planning and coordination among colleagues at the school level. This also referred to the importance of each player in the school ecosystem: SMTs, SGBs, parents, and the broad community in playing their parts. **Mosikili (HoD - school C)** had the following to say:

‘Collaboration is about working together, planning everything together with each group playing its part. It means working together with stakeholders as a school and parents.’

The above quote relates to the need for collective planning and coordination in a collaborative educational environment. By involving all stakeholders (SMTs, SGBs, parents, and the community) in the planning process, the school ensures that each group understands its role and responsibilities. This comprehensive involvement promotes a sense of ownership and accountability, which is crucial for the successful implementation of school initiatives. Similarly, **Tshwaela (Parent - school D)** also said:

‘As colleagues at a school level, we have to make a contribution and work together in order to reach the mission and goal of the school.’

Tshwaela’s quote emphasises the collective responsibility of school staff in achieving the school’s mission and goals. It underscores the importance of teamwork and the need for each group to contribute actively to the school’s objectives. This collaborative effort ensures that all activities are well-coordinated and aligned with the school’s vision.

The sub-theme regarding planning and collaboration reflects the role of SMTs as coordinators and facilitators of the teaching and learning process. The literature discussed in Chapter Two suggests that SMTs play a vital role in promoting and

supporting collaboration among teachers, as well as between teachers and parents (Maja, 2016; Sibanda, 2020). As a result, it is crucial to ensure that all stakeholders play their part in providing an overall collaborative environment for supporting learner academic achievement (Murumwa, 2020; Povey et al., 2016; Hampden-Thompson & Galindo, 2017; Paccaud et al., 2021). Each stakeholder brings unique perspectives and resources that contribute to a holistic educational experience for students when effectively coordinated.

The role of SMTs in coordinating and facilitating collaboration among teachers, parents, and the community reflects key elements of the TenKeys model, which includes interaction, negotiation, and decision-making (Jäppinen & Ciussi, 2016). By emphasising collective planning and coordination, HoDs' insights manifest the collaborative leadership approach, which promotes mutual responsibility, shared authority, and accountability (Lim, 2018). Furthermore, Bolman and Deal's Four-Frame Model supports this perspective by highlighting the structural and human resource elements necessary for effective collaboration, such as inclusive decision-making processes and fostering an environment of mutual support (Padayachee, 2021).

While the overarching theme of collaboration was shared among all participant groups, the subthemes reveal some subtle differences between participant groups. For instance, SGB emphasised mutual help and support, principals highlighted the importance of harmony and understanding, and HoDs underscored planning and coordination. Overall, the sub-themes discussed in this section suggest that the respondent groups had several perspectives on collaboration, depending on their roles and responsibilities in the school. These differences could also imply that there may be some challenges and barriers to effective collaboration among the respondent groups, such as a lack of communication alignment of goals and values. The next theme discusses participants' perspectives on how they experience parent-school collaboration within their respective roles.

4.5 Theme 2: Experiences on parent-school collaboration

The second theme that emerged from the data analysis relates to the experiences of parents-school collaboration. This theme mainly emerged from the following interview questions: “Are you involved in school activities as a parent? If yes, how do you participate? If no, what hinders your involvement with the school?” The responses from the three respondent groups revealed four main sub-themes: participation, communication, support, and challenges.

4.5.1 Participation in school activities

A sub-theme that emerged from the responses of the SGB was the aspect of participation in various school activities, such as sports, meetings, projects, and committees. To begin with, parents explained how they get involved in school activities based on invitations and general event attendance. For example, **Ntshangase (Parent - school B)** said:

‘Yes, I attend SGB meetings, athletics, and educational or fun occasions. I am coaching the chess team in the school. As the SGB, we invite other stakeholders, such as health and police officers, to come and talk to our children.’

Ntshangase’s involvement shows the broad nature of parental participation. By engaging in SGB meetings and coaching the chess team, parents contribute to the decision-making process and support extracurricular activities that improve learners’ educational experience. Moreover, **Morabe (Parent - school C)** added:

‘Yes, I am involved in sports at school. We coordinate soccer, netball, and chess games in the school. In 2022, we were given a project for aerobics in Thabo Mofutsanyana and we involved the SMT on that project. We got kids tablets and empowered one of the teachers to work on the project by enrolling him at a certain university.’

SMT members further explained their roles as responsible for inviting other stakeholders to school events and administering them. They also acknowledged other forms of everyday parental involvement in areas such as homework assistance and transportation of learners. **Letebele (Principal - school A)** had the following to say:

'The majority of parents ensure that they assist learners in their homework, provide transportation on Saturdays during extra classes, and also ensure that parents come to school during meetings in numbers to interact with the teachers regarding curricular and cocurricular on what learners are learning at school and how to assist these learners. Parents support learners even if it is reading days; they come and listen to what the learners are reading.'

This statement underscores the importance of parental involvement in supporting learners' academic progress. By assisting with homework, providing transportation, and attending meetings, parents play a crucial role in reinforcing the school's educational efforts. This consistent support helps create a strong partnership between parents and teachers. **Chakela (HoD - school B)** underlined the involvement of SMTs in soliciting participation from parents through periodic invites:

'We normally give parents information about our expectations as a school. After examinations, we invite them to school to discuss learners' academic performance. In a case where we have learners who are struggling, we call parents to discuss with them the barriers; we do not make decisions on their behalf.'

While agreeing with Chakela, **Mngomezulu (school E)** added as follows:

'We invite parents to our meetings and they attend. Parents also come to support activities on the school calendar and other activities occurring in the school to support their children and the learners.'

Chakela's approach highlights the proactive steps SMTs take to engage parents in the educational process. By providing information and inviting parents to discuss academic performance, SMTs ensure that parents are well-informed and involved in addressing any challenges learners may face. Mngomezulu's statement reinforces that regular communication and invitations are key to encouraging parental participation.

Overall, the sub-theme on participation indicates that some parents were actively involved in the school and contributed to its improvement and development. As argued in the literature, parental participation in school activities can have positive effects on the school climate, culture, and learner academic performance (Al Haddar & Azmi, 2020; Garcia & Thornton, 2014; Mmothlane et al., 2019; Sudipa et al., 2022). However, parental participation can vary depending on factors such as the socio-economic and cultural background of the parents (Mavuso, 2022; Sadiku & Sylaj, 2019).

The findings of this study align with Al Haddar and Azmi (2020) and Garcia and Thornton (2014), who emphasise the positive impact of parental participation on school climate and culture. Active parental involvement creates a sense of community and shared responsibility, leading to a supportive environment that enhances learner academic performance. This involvement can take various forms, from attending meetings and events to participating in school projects and committees.

However, the literature also acknowledges the variability in parental participation based on socio-economic and cultural factors. Mavuso (2022) and Sadiku and Sylaj (2019) discuss how parents' ability to engage with the school can be influenced by their socio-economic status, cultural background, and available resources. Addressing these disparities requires schools to implement strategies that accommodate the varying circumstances of parents, ensuring that all families can participate in their children's education.

Moreover, Mmothlane et al. (2019) and Sudipa et al. (2022) suggest that schools can enhance parental participation by creating flexible involvement opportunities and fostering open communication channels. By understanding and addressing parents' barriers, schools can develop more effective engagement strategies that promote active and sustained parental involvement. This can lead to more improved educational outcomes and a more positive school environment.

The findings on parent-school collaboration align well with the theoretical framework of collaborative leadership, as articulated by Rubin (2009) and further expounded by DeWitt (2016) and others. The active participation of parents in school activities exemplifies the collaborative leadership elements. Furthermore, the proactive roles of SMT members in ensuring parental involvement through regular communication and structured invitations resonate with Bolman and Deal's (2008) structural and human resource elements, which emphasise the creation of supportive environments and the importance of inclusive decision-making. These findings support the collaborative leadership theory's premise that when leaders intentionally engage stakeholders in cooperative projects, it leads to enhanced educational outcomes, as noted by Al Haddar and Azmi (2020) and Garcia and Thornton (2014). However, the variability in parental participation due to socio-economic and cultural factors, as discussed by Mavuso (2022) and Sadiku and Sylaj (2019), shows the need for flexible strategies to ensure equitable involvement, aligning with the theory's emphasis on adaptability and responsiveness in leadership.

4.5.2 Parental support availed

A third sub-theme that emerged from the principals' responses was the aspect of support from parents for school activities, such as extra classes, disciplinary issues, and reading days. Parents mentioned several ways in which they provide support directly to their children and the school. Such support includes volunteering, cheering up sports teams, and evaluating learners' performance. The following quote from **Titi (Parent - school C)** attests:

'I am involved in sports at school. We coordinate soccer and netball games in the school. In 2022, we were given a project for aerobics in Thabo Mofutsanyana, and we involved the SMT on that project. We got kids tablets and empowered one of the teachers to work on the project by enrolling him at a certain university.'

By organising and supporting extracurricular activities, parents like Titi contribute significantly to the development of students. This involvement benefits the learners and empowers teachers by providing them with additional tools and opportunities for professional development. **Kubheka (Parent - school A)** further adds:

'Currently, I am volunteering to cook for Grade 12 learners since there is a camp. I attend sports activities and also assist in school cleaning projects.'

Meanwhile, **Tshwaela (Parent - school D)** had the following to say:

'Parents come to meetings when there are disciplinary issues. They check learners' books and how they perform. Parents support extra classes conducted at school, whether it's on Saturday or evening classes. They have given us their consent to carry on with these classes.'

The hands-on assistance by parents like Kubheka helps create a supportive environment for learners, contributing to their academic success. Similarly, Tshwaela's quote underscores the importance of parental involvement in addressing disciplinary issues and supporting academic activities.

It is evident from this sub-theme that some parents were supportive of the school and its initiatives to enhance the learners' outcomes and well-being. This is highly positive because, as Lethoko (2019) notes, active parental involvement has a significant

positive impact on the school climate and environment as well as the ability to influence parents, teachers, and learners. Parental support for learners can thus have knock-on positive effects which touch areas such as learner conduct (Ndebele, 2015; Maphoke, 2017), learner school attendance (Lethoko, 2019; Daka, 2019) and learners' academic performance (Lethoko, 2019; Manamela, 2015).

Lethoko (2019) supports the findings of this study, emphasising the positive impact of active parental involvement on the school climate and environment. When parents are actively engaged, they help create a supportive and collaborative atmosphere that benefits all stakeholders. This involvement can lead to improved learner conduct, as noted by Ndebele (2015) and Maphoke (2017), who highlight the role of parental support in promoting positive behaviour among students.

Furthermore, parental involvement has been shown to influence learner school attendance positively. Lethoko (2019) and Daka (2019) discuss how engaged parents can encourage regular attendance by emphasizing the importance of education and providing the necessary support for learners to attend school consistently. This contributes to better academic performance, which is in line with Manamela (2015), who notes that learners with supportive parents tend to achieve higher academic outcomes. However, the study found that parental involvement is far from smooth, and a number of parents did not participate. These issues are discussed in sub-theme three.

In terms of theoretical literature, the active involvement of parents in various school activities corroborates Rubin's (2009) collaborative theory, which discusses intentional, strategic, and cooperative relationships. Parental engagement further exemplifies the core attributes of the TenKeys model by Jäppinen and Ciussi (2016), such as interaction, commitment, and responsibility. Additionally, Bolman and Deal's Four-Frame Model (2008) argues for these collaborative efforts by highlighting the structural, political, human resource, and symbolic elements that collaborative leaders harness for a cohesive school culture. The positive impact of parental involvement on learner conduct, attendance, and academic performance, as documented by Lethoko

(2019), reinforces the collaborative leadership theory's emphasis on the significant outcomes that arise from shared responsibility and cooperative engagement.

4.5.3 Non-involved parents

A third sub-theme that emerged from both the SGB parents and principals was the limited involvement of some of the parents in the events at school. While SMT members mostly thought parents were at fault for their limited involvement, some parents pointed to the lack of information about school events. For example, **Zulu (Parent - school D)** argued as follows:

'No, as a parent, I do not get enough details about the activities that the school is implementing.'

The above quote shows a significant barrier to parental involvement, which is the lack of adequate communication from the school. Without sufficient information about school activities, parents may feel disconnected and unable to participate effectively. This underscores the need for schools to establish clear and consistent communication channels to keep parents informed and engaged.

On the other hand, many members of the SMTs had different views, arguing that uninvolved parents were not doing enough. For instance, **Msibi (Principal - school C)** argued as follows:

'No, some parents are not collaborating with the school. It's as if they're forced to send their children to school because when you invite them for a meeting when their children become disruptive, they don't come to school as they utter that they are not the ones who deal with the daily basis of the school. Parents don't support us during meetings to issue report cards.'

Msibi's perspective reflects the frustration felt by some school staff regarding the lack of parental involvement. The perception that parents are unsupportive or engaged can create tension between the school and families, potentially impacting the overall school climate. **Nkosi (HoD - school D)** was, however, more understanding of the challenges facing some parents, highlighting the following:

'Parents are partially involved because some work far from home and not staying with their children.'

Nkosi's note sheds light on some parents' practical barriers, such as work commitments and geographic separation from their children. These challenges can limit parents' ability to be present and actively involved in school activities despite their willingness and interest.

This sub-theme underscores some parents and principals' difficulties, such as lack of information, communication, attendance, and support. Such challenges can negatively affect the school-parent relationship, the school climate, and the learners' outcomes. Literature supports these findings by indicating that several factors often hinder effective school-parent collaboration, including inadequate communication, time constraints, and socio-economic challenges (Basson, 2021; Maphoke, 2017). According to Lethoko (2019), clear and consistent communication is critical for engaging parents and ensuring they are well-informed about school activities. Similarly, Basson (2021) emphasises the importance of understanding the barriers that parents face and addressing them through targeted strategies.

According to the TenKeys model of collaborative leadership, key attributes such as interaction, negotiation, and confidence-based control are critical for effective collaboration (Jäppinen, 2017). The lack of communication from schools, as highlighted by parents, points to a failure in systematic and continuous interplay essential for the consolidation of different opinions (Jäppinen, 2012). The structural

and human resource elements of Bolman and Deal's Four-Frame Model also support these findings, indicating that effective decision-making and an environment of mutual support are crucial for overcoming these barriers (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Vuori, 2015).

Overall, findings from Theme Two suggest that the respondent groups had different experiences and perceptions of collaboration, depending on their roles and responsibilities in the school. These experiences shed light on the strengths and weaknesses of collaboration among the respondent groups, such as participation, communication, support, and challenges. The next theme explores these challenges in greater detail, revealing the perspectives of parents and educators.

4.6 Theme 3: Challenges facing parent-school collaboration

The third theme that emerged from the analysis related to the challenges affecting parent-school collaboration. Participants were asked, "What challenges do you experience regarding parent-school collaboration?" From the analysis, the following sub-themes were identified: lack of support, limited communication, resource challenges, and lack of trust.

4.6.1 Lack of support

A notable discussion theme that emerged from the interviews with parents and HODs was the lack of support by some parents for the school and their children. Participants highlighted that they experience challenges that make it difficult for the SMTs and parents to collaborate properly, thus, affecting the school's basic functionality. One parent argued about the challenges in homework assistance as follows:

'Our children don't consider us as people who might assist them with curriculum activities, so it makes it difficult for a person to work well with the teachers.' **Nxumalo (Parent - school A).**

The quote by Nxumalo shows how the perception among children that their parents are incapable of assisting with curriculum activities can be a barrier to collaboration. This perception can undermine the potential for parents to support their children's education and collaborate effectively with teachers.

The HoDs were, however, mainly of the view that parents were not taking their responsibilities seriously. These include the responsibilities of supporting their own children and the SMT. For instance, **Chakela (HoD - school B)** had the following to say:

'Some of the parents do not support their children. They don't come to school when requested to attend meetings. They don't care; some of them share different perspectives because they are not educated.'

In agreement, another participant, **Khumalo (Principal - school E)**, contends:

'Some parents have dumped learners at school; they want nothing to do with their learners after enrolling them and want their children's problems to be ironed out by teachers only, so it is difficult for teachers to follow up on learners' behaviour. Some learners don't stay with their parents. They work far away and stay with distant relatives, and others rent rooms for learners to stay alone there and attend school.'

Nkosi (HoD - school D) also elaborated:

'We teach children of young people, and these parents don't want to assist their children in doing homework and claim that it is the teachers' duty.'

Chakela's perspective reflects a common frustration among school staff regarding the lack of parental support. The perception that parents are indifferent or uneducated can divide the school and families, making it difficult to foster a collaborative environment. Additionally, Khumalo and Nkosi's statements underscore the challenges teachers face when parents are disengaged. The lack of parental involvement can leave teachers solely responsible for addressing learners' issues, which can be ineffective.

Data also revealed that SMTs felt that parents who do not attend meetings remain an obstacle to schools and make it difficult for teacher-parent collaboration to work effectively. Parents, however, claimed that sometimes they do not get invitation letters to meetings, while others get letters and still do not respond. In other schools, there are child-headed families, resulting in no parental involvement. Moreover, some children stay with their grandparents, who struggle to come to school meetings because of sickness and general old age.

The challenges identified in parent-school collaboration align with theoretical perspectives on collaborative leadership, particularly Rubin's collaborative leadership theory. This theory emphasises the importance of cooperative relationships to achieve shared outcomes (Rubin, 2009). The findings are a significant barrier to the formation of these collaborative relationships. The theoretical framework by Jäppinen and Ciussi's (2016) model and Bolman and Deal's Four-Frame Model further underscores the necessity of key attributes like flexibility, commitment, and responsibility for effective collaboration. For instance, the TenKeys model stresses systematic and continuous interaction, as well as commitment and responsibility, which are currently lacking in the parent-school dynamic described. Similarly, Bolman and Deal (2008) emphasise structural and human resource elements that facilitate collective action, which are evidently deficient in this study's context. Theoretical literature by Basson (2021), Mavuso (2022) and Sadiku and Sylaj (2019) supports these findings by highlighting barriers such as time constraints, family dynamics, and educational levels, which inhibit parental involvement and effective collaboration.

Discussions in empirical literature have explored the importance of parental involvement while highlighting the pitfalls of low parental involvement in school

activities (Sibanda, 2020; Mavuso, 2014; Mmothlane et al., 2019; Nkosi & Adebayo, 2021). However, as Basson (2021) argues, there are several barriers which hinder parental participation, such as time constraints due to work (Abdullah et al., 2023), unfavourable family structures/dynamics (Mavuso, 2022; Sadiku & Sylaj, 2019) and parents' educational levels (Malatji, 2021; Titiz & Tokel, 2015).

This study aligns with Sibanda (2020) and Mavuso (2014), who emphasise the role of parental involvement in enhancing school functionality and learner outcomes. Active parental engagement is associated with a positive school climate and improved academic performance. However, the literature also highlights the significant barriers that can impede parental involvement.

For instance, Basson (2021) discusses how time constraints due to work commitments can limit parents' ability to participate in school activities. This is particularly relevant for parents who work long hours or have multiple jobs, making it challenging to attend meetings or support their children's education consistently. Schools need to consider flexible engagement strategies that accommodate parents' schedules and provide alternative ways for them to participate. Additionally, Mavuso (2022) and Sadiku and Sylaj (2019) note the impact of family structure and dynamics on parental involvement. Single-parent households, child-headed families, and situations where children live with grandparents or other relatives can create unique challenges for engagement.

Furthermore, Malatji (2021) and Titiz and Tokel (2015) discuss the influence of parents' educational levels on their ability to engage with the school. Parents with lower educational attainment may feel less confident in supporting their children's academic activities or communicating with teachers. Providing educational resources and training for parents can help bridge this gap and empower them to participate actively in their children's education.

4.6.2 Limited communication

Another sub-theme that emerged from the responses of participants was the lack of communication between the school and some parents. Principals and HODs were of the view that there were problems with communication breakdown, which were influenced by factors beyond their control. The causes of communication barriers highlighted include load-shedding, learner problems, and outdated contact information. In line with the communication problems, **Rampai (HoD - school A)** said:

‘When you need to contact parents, you encounter load-shedding problems, and you can’t send messages via WhatsApp. Dishonesty of parents not coming to attend meetings after receiving letters to discipline their children.’

Considering Rampai's quote, it is notable that there are both technological and behavioural barriers to effective communication. Loadshedding, a common issue in many regions, inhibits the timely delivery of messages, especially when relying on digital platforms like WhatsApp. Additionally, parents' reluctance to attend meetings even after receiving notifications indicates a further challenge in engagement and responsibility that needs addressing. Meanwhile, **Rampone (Principal - school B)** added as follows:

‘Some learners don’t give their parents letters and, if you try to call them sometimes, you’d find that parents have changed contact details, and the same parents don’t even bother to come to school and update their information. As an SMT we have to go to their neighbours and enquire about them just so that we can get hold of them.’

The above quote highlights the logistical challenges schools face in maintaining accurate contact information. The issue of learners not delivering letters to their parents further complicates communication efforts. This necessitates schools adopting multiple communication strategies and maintaining updated contact records to ensure parents are always reachable.

The challenge of poor communication was also noted in the literature, with scholars such as Murumwa (2020) arguing that poor parental communication can affect their involvement in school activities. On the other hand, scholars such as Sambo (2016) have argued that communication problems mainly arise from the school side, and schools need to do more to keep parents updated about their children's progress as well as other developments. In addition, Perez (2017) argued that school communication should be made available in mediums and languages that are easily accessible to the parents, such as the use of local languages and messaging platforms instead of formal letters.

Findings highlight significant barriers that align with the theoretical literature on collaborative leadership (Rubin, 2009; DeWitt, 2016), emphasising the importance of intentional and strategic cooperation. Furthermore, Bolman and Deal's Four-Frame Model (2008) emphasises the structural and human resource elements necessary for effective collaboration, including maintaining updated contact records and fostering an environment where parents are encouraged to engage meaningfully. The observed communication breakdowns suggest that schools may need to adopt more comprehensive and inclusive communication strategies, in line with the collaborative leadership theory's principles, to enhance parental involvement and improve learner outcomes (Kivistö et al., 2018).

From the theoretical and empirical discussion, the researcher deduced that communication is pivotal for supporting parent-school collaboration. Schools need to implement broad communication strategies that consider the differing circumstances of parents. This could involve the use of multiple channels such as SMS, phone calls, emails, and even home visits where necessary. Additionally, ensuring communication in local languages can bridge the gap for non-native speakers, making it easier for them to understand and respond to school communications. At the same time, parents also need to be responsive and engaged in the communication process.

4.6.3 Resource limitations

A third sub-theme that emerged from the responses of the SGB parents and the principals was the limited resources to facilitate and sustain collaboration. Under-resources SMTs have argued that sometimes they just do not have access to resources needed to communicate effectively, for instance, during load-shedding.

Letebele (Principal - school A) attested:

‘Sometimes the school doesn’t have money to use the communication channels mentioned above; WhatsApp and SMS require data.’

Letebele's comment underscores the financial constraints schools face, which can hinder effective communication with parents. The reliance on digital communication channels like WhatsApp and SMS necessitates a continuous data supply, which many schools may struggle to afford. **Zuma (Parent - school E)** further added that resource limitations at learners' homes also affected learners and parents' communication:

‘Problems are encountered during extra classes where you find that some learners don’t attend because they do not have food at home, so as SGB, we are expected to go an extra mile and provide meals for these learners so that all learners attend.’

The above quote explores the broader impact of resource limitations on learner participation in school activities. When learners lack necessities such as food, their ability to attend and benefit from extra classes is compromised. This places additional pressure on the SGB to provide support, showing how resource availability is closely related to the effective collaboration between parents and schools.

Overall, this sub-theme indicates that some parents and principals faced challenges and constraints due to the scarcity of resources, such as money, food, and data. This finding supports literature discussing the importance of resource support, especially for schools, to ensure they can communicate effectively with parents (Paccaud et al., 2021; Sibanda, 2020). Without resources, strategies have been put forward to

overcome this, including mobilising community support, seeking external funding, and implementing direct government intervention (Fodo, 2020; Makhalemele & Nel, 2015).

Paccaud et al. (2021) and Sibanda (2020) emphasise the critical role of resource support in facilitating effective school-parent collaboration. Adequate resources are essential for maintaining communication channels, supporting learner participation, and ensuring that schools can engage parents effectively. Fodo (2020) and Makhalemele and Nel (2015) suggest several strategies to address resource limitations. Mobilising community support can help schools access additional resources and create a support network for learners and their families. This can include partnerships with local businesses, community organizations, and volunteers who can provide financial or in-kind contributions.

Additionally, seeking external funding can be another viable strategy (Makhalemele & Nel, 2015). Schools can apply for grants, sponsorships, and donations from various sources, including government programmes, non-profit organisations, and private sector initiatives. These funds can be used to enhance communication infrastructure, provide essential supplies, and support extracurricular activities that benefit learners. Government intervention is also crucial in addressing resource constraints. Direct support from the Department of Basic Education can ensure that schools have the necessary resources to operate effectively and engage parents.

Viewed through the lens of theory, the findings also highlight critical challenges which resonate with Rubin's (2009) emphasis on the cooperative and strategic nature of relationships. In addition, the TenKeys model (Jäppinen & Ciussi, 2016) underscores the importance of flexibility and commitment within collaborative efforts, aspects that are hindered when schools lack the necessary resources for effective communication and support. Similarly, Bolman and Deal (2008) note how structural and human resource elements are integral to fostering collaborative environments within schools. The identified resource limitations underscore the need for schools to adopt collaborative strategies to mitigate these challenges, such as community mobilisation

for support and seeking external funding, as recommended by Paccaud et al. (2021) and Fodo (2020).

4.6.4 Lack of trust

The fourth sub-theme referred to the lack of trust among some parents and between some parents and the school. For instance, tensions between ordinary parents and parents who are part of the SGB can induce trust issues, which results in disengagement from school activities by ordinary parents. In relation to the issue of trust, **Magwaza (Parent - school D)** attested:

‘Some parents do not want to be fully supportive of the school, which makes some of the things not achievable as there is no unity among parents, especially where money is involved, they just complain.’

This quote notes how mistrust among parents can hinder effective collaboration within the school community. Issues related to financial transparency or decision-making can lead to divisions and reluctance among parents to fully support school initiatives. This lack of unity can create challenges in achieving common goals and impact the overall functioning of the school. However, some participants believed that communication challenges were exaggerated and that parents generally work well with SGBs and SMTs. For example, **Morabe (Parent - school C)** argued:

‘Challenges are not much except that in some cases you may find that there are few teachers bunking classes, and as SGB, we are expected to correct that behaviour ,which we did, and now everything is running smoothly.’

Morabe's perspective suggests that challenges can be addressed through collaborative efforts between the SGB and school management. This highlights a positive example of how trust can be fostered and issues can be resolved through effective communication and cooperation among stakeholders.

The finding in this subtheme reveals significant barriers to effective collaboration within the school community, reflecting concerns raised in the theoretical literature regarding the role of trust in fostering productive school-parent relationships (Sibanda, 2020; Mavuso, 2014). This finding underscores the relevance of collaborative leadership theory, particularly its emphasis on the intentional and cooperative nature of relationships aimed at achieving shared outcomes. Results further point to the need for schools to adopt collaborative strategies that build transparency, enhance communication, and address perceptions of unfairness, as recommended in the literature (Bantwini, 2017; Menzo, 2016).

The lack of trust reflects broader concerns within empirical literature regarding the importance of trust in fostering productive school-parent relationships (Sibanda, 2020; Mavuso, 2014). Trust is essential for building partnerships that support educational outcomes and overall school improvement efforts (Bantwini, 2017; Menzo, 2016). When trust is lacking, it can lead to increased conflict, reduced parental involvement, and a strained school climate (Abdullah et al., 2023; Basson, 2021).

4.6.5 Consequences of the Challenges

SMTs were further asked about the ways in which they think the mentioned challenges affect the school. Firstly, it was argued that parents who do not attend the meetings make it difficult for teachers to discuss learner disruptive behaviour and learner progress, especially when learners underperform in certain subjects. Similarly, SMT members argued that they fail to discipline learners because of absent parents who also fail to assist learners with homework. Issues such as truant learners and substance abuse by learners were noted as consequences of poor parental involvement. **Letebele (Principal - school A)** highlighted:

‘When parents are not involved in their children’s education, it is difficult for teachers to work peacefully. The learner repeats the same disruptive behaviour in class, and when parents are called, they don’t come.’

Lack of parental involvement can exacerbate disciplinary issues within the school environment, hindering effective teaching and learning processes. When parents are not engaged, teachers may struggle to address behavioural problems and provide the necessary support to students. This results in disruptions in classroom dynamics, which may compromise the overall learning atmosphere. **Chakela (HoD - school B)** added that poor parental involvement has direct negative consequences on learners' performance, as well as their behaviour:

'Normally, learners who are not supported or neglected do not do their work. They arrive late at school, absent themselves without valid reason, engage in illegal substances such as drugs and have a problem with bullying. Their performance is affected because there's no support at home.'

Chakela's observation points to the broader implications of poor parental involvement. Learners who lack support at home are more likely to exhibit negative behaviours such as substance abuse and bullying. These behaviours affect their academic performance and negatively impact their peers and the overall learning environment. In corroboration with other SMT members, **Mosikili (HoD - school C)** emphasised:

'The results dropped for NS and Technology for Term 2 because, with some learners, parents were called but did not attend the meeting to encourage them to assist learners with homework.'

The quote above illustrates the direct link between parental involvement and academic performance. When parents do not attend meetings or support their children's homework, it can lead to a decline in academic results. This shows the importance of parental engagement in reinforcing the educational efforts of the school and supporting learners' academic success.

Overall, the above discussions demonstrate that parents and SMTs encounter challenges during parent-school collaboration. The consequences of such lack of

parent involvement are well documented in the literature, highlighting the need for interventions to improve communication between parents and schools. Sadiku and Sylaj (2019) and Castro et al. (2015) similarly found that active parental engagement is associated with improved academic performance, better behaviour, and higher levels of student motivation. When parents are involved, they provide essential support that complements the efforts of teachers and enhances the overall educational experience. The consequences of limited involvement can, however, bring significant negative impacts. For instance, Basson (2021) argues that a lack of parental engagement can lead to increased behavioural issues, higher dropout rates, and lower levels of student well-being. Schools need to implement strategies that build a supportive environment that encourages parents to become active partners in the educational process. The next section discusses interventions already in place as well as proposed interventions for enhancing parental involvement.

4.7 Theme 4: Strategies for enhancing parents-school collaboration

The fourth theme that emerged from the data analysis entailed the strategies for enhancing parent-school collaboration. This theme emerged from the responses to the following question: “What strategies does the school use to influence parent-school collaboration?” Results highlighted a host of existing and proposed interventions important to enhancing parental school involvement. The emergent sub-themes were regular meetings, communication platforms, policies, and the deliberate actions of parents.

4.7.1 Regular meetings

One key discussion point from the interviews with all respondent groups was the usage of frequent meetings as a strategy to influence parent-school collaboration. With frequent meetings, it was argued that greater trust and transparency between SGBs and parents are nurtured, leading to overall improvements in parental involvement. For example, **Tiale (Parent - school B)** attested:

‘There are teacher-parent meetings conducted at school, and as SGB, we fully participate in them. We discuss budgeting for the following year and allocate the

monies accordingly e.g., funds for LTSM. The school has strategic meetings with the SGB so that we may have an insight into what teachers are planning and also give our input.'

This quote underscores how regular meetings facilitate collaborative decision-making processes between SGBs and parents, ensuring that decisions and policies are made with collective input and agreement. Such meetings enhance transparency and strengthen the partnership between parents and school authorities in shaping educational priorities. Similarly, **Mosikili (HoD - school C)** also said:

'We ensure we have meetings with parents both on general and on curricular activities, allowing them to visit teachers in classes and directly converse with them.'

This approach allows parents to interact directly with teachers, gaining insights into their children's academic progress and classroom dynamics. By facilitating open communication channels, such as these meetings, empower parents to actively support their children's education and collaborate effectively with educators. Adding on how they ensure parental involvement in their school, **Chakela (HoD - school B)** had the following to say:

'We involve parents through quarterly meetings, and in case a learner needs to be disciplined, we call them to school to monitor the progress of their children.'

The proactive engagement ensures that parents are informed about their children's behaviours and academic performance, enabling them to provide necessary support and guidance. As a result, meetings are important for maintaining parental awareness and participation in school affairs and creating a conducive learning environment.

The above discussions show that meetings were seen as a common and effective strategy to influence parent-school collaboration, as they provided opportunities for

information sharing, decision-making, and feedback. This corroborates existing literature, which has argued that frequent meetings between schools and parents have positive effects on trust, understanding, and partnership between stakeholders (Epstein, 2018; Lethoko, 2019; Maphoke, 2017). Frequent meetings provide an important platform for idea sharing and debate, giving all participants a sense of ownership of the resultant decisions.

4.7.2 Communication platforms

The SMTs revealed that another strategy they use to ensure parental participation is the flexibility of using several communication platforms to stay in touch with parents. Examples of communication platforms used include electronic media, cell phone applications, correspondence letters, SMSes, and phone calls. The following quote from **Letebele (Principal - School A)** attests:

'We send WhatsApp messages because we have a group where we communicate, and we also send them letters to come and discuss the performance of learners. The school also has a Facebook page.'

This statement suggests the school has a proactive approach to leveraging modern communication technologies such as WhatsApp and social media platforms like Facebook to disseminate information and engage with parents. While utilizing these platforms, schools are more likely to reach a broader audience and ensure timely communication, which is useful in enhancing transparency and collaboration. In addition, other SMT members posited that they use cell phone applications as platforms for managing school-parent engagement. **Khumalo (Principal - School E)** said the following:

'Our school has a 'Motswadi le ngwana' cell phone application where parents can get instant messages on what is happening at school. Parents can access their children's performance and access homework if posted during school hours and during strikes when we cannot go to school.'

The use of a mobile application provides parents with real-time updates on school activities and academic progress while facilitating the interaction between parents and teachers regardless of physical barriers. Such technological solutions contribute to strengthening parent-school partnerships and developing a supportive learning environment. Similarly, **Mngomezulu (school E)** highlighted:

‘On the school’s ‘Motswadi le ngwana app’, parents can assess their children’s performance and homework if posted during school hours and during strikes when we cannot go to school. Lastly, we use SMSs that go straight to parents.’

In relation to the use of correspondence letters, SMSes, and phone calls, **Khumalo (Principal - School E)** pointed out that:

‘We involve parents by sending them letters as we conduct quarterly meetings, and in case the learner needs to be disciplined, we call them directly from their cell phones to come to school. We also send SMSes as reminders for meetings.’

The following quotes relate to the usage of additional mixed media for parental communication, including radio:

‘We call parents using different media platforms and via EYETHU FM radio to ensure that all parents get invited to the meetings, e.g., when issuing reports.’ **Rampone (Principal - school B)**

‘We call parents using different media platforms, such as WhatsApp, electronic SMSs, issuing letters, and EYETHU FM radio, to ensure that all parents get invited to the meetings, e.g., when issuing reports.’ **Rampai (HoD - school A)**

The multi-media approach ensures that communication reaches all parents, including those who may not have access to digital platforms. This promotes inclusivity in communication and enhances parental engagement in school activities.

As revealed in this sub-theme, communication platforms were a diverse strategy used to influence parent-school collaboration by enabling quick and easy communication between the school and the parents. Communication platforms between schools and parents are noted as crucial in the information access, engagement, and involvement of all stakeholders (Lumadi, 2019; Ma et al., 2021; Epstein, 2009; Ndebele, 2015). The lack of effective communication, as discussed in previous sections, can have detrimental effects on parental involvement, hence the importance of multi-media usage (Malatji, 2021; Maphoke, 2017).

Lumadi (2019) and Ma et al. (2021) support this study's findings, noting the importance of diverse communication platforms in enhancing parental engagement. Effective communication keeps parents informed, involved, and engaged in their children's education. Epstein (2009) and Ndebele (2015) also highlight the role of communication in building strong school-parent partnerships. Regular and clear communication helps establish trust, promotes collaboration, and ensures that parents are aware of their children's progress within the school. However, Malatji (2021) and Maphoke (2017) warn about how the lack of effective communication can lead to misunderstandings, disengagement, and a breakdown in the school-parent relationship. To address these challenges, schools need to adopt a multi-media approach that includes digital platforms, traditional methods, and community-based channels. This ensures that most parents can stay informed regardless of their preferences or access to technology.

4.7.3 Policies

Another sub-theme was the employment of policies as a strategy to influence parent-school collaboration. The usage of policies was seen as a crucial strategy for enhancing communication, but also as an intervention for standardising practice across different schools. Moreover, policy effectiveness was highlighted in ways such

as enhancing the accountability of all players and providing baselines for performance measurement. For example, **Skhakhane (Parent - school E)** said:

‘Transparency, we can support the school because we are informed about all activities happening at a school. The school and the SGB have developed policies that guide our involvement as parents and working with them.’

Skhakhane’s quote highlights the importance of clear policies in ensuring that all parties, including parents, SMTs, and SGBs, are aligned and informed about their roles and responsibilities. By establishing guidelines for parental involvement and outlining expectations, policies create a structured framework that enhances communication and trust while promoting meaningful engagement in school activities.

The use of policies was further corroborated by document analysis, which established guiding documentation for parental, SMT, and SGB roles. For example, in the learners’ code of conduct document, parents are responsible for ensuring that learners adhere to established rules when outside of school, while educators are responsible for enforcement within school times. The presence of such guiding documents highlights the role of policies in creating a clear framework for collaboration. Defining the specific roles of parents and educators ensures that such policies support consistency and accountability.

The literature discussed in Chapter 2 further suggests that policies between schools and parents can positively affect the clarity, consistency, and accountability of all stakeholders. Paccaud et al. (2021) and Malatji (2021) argue for the importance of clear policies in enhancing parent-school collaboration. They believe that policies provide a structured approach to communication and engagement, enabling all stakeholders to understand their roles and responsibilities. This clarity helps prevent misunderstandings and conflicts. Moreover, policies standardise practices across

different schools, which is useful in ensuring that all schools operate under the same framework for consistency and fairness purposes.

4.7.4 Parental direct actions

In relation to the actions that parents take to ensure continual participation in school activities, parents argued that they were involved in a host of curricular and extra-curricular activities. Participants shared that they were involved in curricular activities such as disciplining learners, assisting with homework, attending reading days, being involved in decision-making during meetings, and becoming members of school committees such as SBST. **Rampone (Principal - school B)** shared the following:

'The most important activity for parents to be involved in is academics because that's why their children are at school in the first place and assist with discipline.'

Rampone's quote discusses the primary role of parents in supporting their children's academic studies. By focusing on academics and discipline, parents can directly contribute to their children's educational success and overall development. This involvement ensures that learners receive consistent support both at home and at school. **Ntshangase (Parent - school B)** also emphasised:

'I am an SBST member. In this committee, we assist learners with different problems because they come from different socioeconomic backgrounds.'

Ntshangase's involvement in the SBST shows how important it is to address the differing needs of learners. Participating in committees supporting students facing various challenges allows parents to provide targeted assistance and ensure that all learners succeed. The participants further highlighted the importance of parents being involved in educational activities, resulting in better academic achievement. Additionally, participants attested to being involved in non-academic activities to boost learner confidence and enhance academic performance. Those activities include

fundraising, sports, excursions, cleaning projects, and cooking for grade 12 camps. For instance, **Kubheka (Parent - school A)** shared:

'I attend athletics and excursions. I am coaching the chess team in the school. As members of the SGB, we invite other stakeholders, such as the health department and police officers, to come and talk to our children.'

Magwaza (Parent - school D) also contended:

'I normally volunteer to cook for Grade 12 learners during school holidays.'

Some parents added that they are differently involved in school. Parents from school C indicated that the school invites them to teacher-parent meetings to discuss learner behaviour and request parents to assist learners with homework and learner discipline. Parents from A and E postulated that the school invites them to meetings once per term to discuss budgeting for how monies will be utilised on Learner Teacher Support Material. Meanwhile, parents in school D indicated that they hold meetings with the SMTs to discuss learner performance and request parents to assist the school with donations. Lastly, parents in school B indicated that they develop policies that guide their involvement as parents and how these policies can be used to benefit the school.

The findings show that parents are willing to assist the schools and are involved in various activities, which shows collective power to ensure parent-school collaboration. The school and parents work together as a team as parents show interest in school activities. The importance of parental involvement is highly corroborated with existing literature, which has advocated for parents' roles in supervising learners during off-school times (Lethoko, 2019), providing learners with advice and psychosocial support (Maphoke, 2017; NECT, 2016), supervising learner attendance (Lethoko, 2019; Robinson et al. 2017), and working as role models for good behaviour (Ndebele, 2015).

4.7.5 Participants' suggested strategies

When asked about the strategies for enhancing parental involvement, participants also discussed interventions they want implemented, including those that already exist but are poorly implemented. Identified strategies include communication, parent workshops, lawful cases against parents, learner discipline, constant parental motivation, development of learning programmes, strategic meetings, and effectiveness of subcommittees. In line with the enhancement of communication, **Rampai (HoD - School A)** argued as follows:

'Effective communication with parents should be a key factor; communicating every piece of information assists the school in getting full support from parents. Communication should be a two-way street.'

The above suggestion underscores the need for transparent and regular communication channels between schools and parents, ensuring that parents are well-informed and engaged in school affairs. Another significant suggestion was the implementation of parental workshops aimed at educating parents about the importance of their involvement in their children's education. **Mosikili (HoD - school C)** advocated for such workshops:

'There should be a workshop to develop parents on the importance of being fully involved in their children's academics and attending school whenever they are called. This will assist the school in performing better and enhance learner performance. These strategies must be developed at a school level.'

These workshops are envisioned to inform parents and empower them to actively support their children's studies. However, SMT members who thought the limited parental involvement was mainly parents' fault suggested harsh interventions to punish detached parents. For instance, **Nkosi (HoD - School D)** argued that:

'The DOE must give the school powers such as when parents don't come to school as invited, the school needs to open a case against such parents for not taking their children's school matters seriously. There should be channels developed to open such cases and the DOE should initiate this process and get lawyers for the school.'

This viewpoint reflects parents' desire for accountability and responsibility in fulfilling their roles in their children's education. On the other hand, **Tshwaela (Parent - School D)** had a tamer view of what interventions should be instituted, focusing more on enhancing learner discipline:

'We need to educate learners about fairness when given letters, these need to be delivered to parents. Parents should teach their children discipline.'

This suggestion above acknowledges the importance of instilling values and discipline in learners, which are crucial for their academic success. Similarly, **Letebele (Principal - School A)** was of the view that constant motivation of parents would be more effective, as shown in the quote:

'There must be constant motivation for parents to ensure that they buy into the story and understand the need for them to participate effectively in their children's learning. We need to work together with the parents as professionals to win them forever and enhance learner academic performance.'

This approach ensures a supportive environment where parents are motivated to contribute to their children's educational journey actively. **Skhakhane (Parent - School E)**, meanwhile, called for strategic meetings that can be used to transparently discuss the issues facing parents and schools facing parents and SMT members. Such meetings could then help steer the conversation into how each group can be supported to work together for the sake of learners:

'The SMT and parents must develop strategic meetings where all aspects affecting the school and their children can be discussed thoroughly and the importance of Batho-pele principles which can help us achieve more.'

These strategic meetings are envisioned as forums for discussing challenges, sharing ideas, and collectively developing solutions that benefit parents and schools. Lastly, another key argument was the importance of strengthening existing sub-committees to effectively perform their roles. **Zulu (Parent - School D) attested:**

'Sub-committees should function properly so that communication is clear to everyone. Parents and schools should develop strategies to improve learner performance, such as having extra classes. In terms of discipline, SGB can visit sister schools where discipline is highly maintained and ask for strategies that can be copied as a good practice on their own school.'

This underscores sub-committees' role in promoting effective communication, collaboration, and sharing best practices among stakeholders. Overall, the results above show the importance of collaboration between the SGB, the SMTs, and teachers to ensure parents are involved in school activities. These strategies corroborate existing literature on parental involvement in education, particularly in South Africa. Studies such as those by Fodo (2020) and Malatji (2021) highlight the critical role of SGBs and SMTs in fostering effective parental engagement. These studies emphasise that capacitating SGBs and SMTs is crucial for enhancing communication, implementing policies, and promoting parental involvement in school activities.

The call for parental workshops, legal measures against non-compliant parents, and the emphasis on communication platforms support empirical findings that effective communication channels are essential for bridging gaps between schools and parents (Malatji, 2021). Moreover, strategies that enhance learner discipline and motivation

reflect broader educational goals of instilling values and building a conducive learning environment (NECT, 2016).

In analysing the strategies for enhancing parent-school collaboration within the study's findings, it is evident that the results align with the principles of collaborative leadership theory. The emergence of strategies such as regular meetings, communication platforms, policies, and direct parental actions reflects a deliberate effort to improve cooperative relationships between schools and parents (Rubin, 2009; Lim, 2018; Maarloof, 2018). The emphasis on frequent meetings as a strategy reflects the importance of transparency and mutual trust, which are highlighted in collaborative leadership literature (DeWitt, 2016; Padayachee, 2021).

Furthermore, diverse communication platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, and SMS align with collaborative leadership's emphasis on continuous and meaningful interaction among stakeholders (Bolman & Deal, 2008). These platforms facilitate timely communication, enhancing transparency and ensuring parents remain informed about school activities and their children's progress, thus promoting shared learning and understanding (Jäppinen & Ciussi, 2016).

Policies emerged as another critical strategy discussed in the findings, highlighting their role in providing clear guidelines and fostering accountability among all parties involved. Collaborative leadership posits that effective policies contribute to structured decision-making and alignment of efforts towards common goals (Lim, 2018). By establishing policies that delineate roles and responsibilities, schools create a framework that supports consistent and coordinated action, essential for building trust and maintaining collaboration (Bolman & Deal, 2008).

Moreover, the active involvement of parents in various school activities, as detailed in the study, reflects collaborative leadership's principle of shared responsibility and collective action (Rubin, 2009). Parents participating in curriculum-related activities,

disciplinary processes, and committee engagements demonstrate their commitment to supporting their children's educational journey, contributing to a collaborative educational environment (Jäppinen, 2017).

4.8 Document Analysis on parent-school Collaboration

In addition to the interviews, document analysis was conducted to understand the extent to which collaboration is defined and conceptualised in the schools' documentation. In line with this goal, the researcher requested for key documentation from each of the five schools wherein the roles of stakeholders (SMTs, SGBs, parents) are specified in some way. The following documents were received from at least one of the schools: SGB constitutions, School Improvement Plans (SIPs), School-Self Evaluations (SSEs), and Learner codes of conduct. Schools A, and B provided their SSEs, B and C provided their learners' codes of conduct, and Schools A – C supplied their SGB constitutions and SIPs. However, Schools D and E declined to supply their documents, arguing that they are confidential.

The analysis of documents revealed that all schools explicitly mentioned the roles of all stakeholders in at least one document. Data analysis focused on reviewing whether each piece of documentation mentions the roles of SMTs, SGBs, and parents, as well as how they collaborate to achieve school goals. Additionally, the analysis sought to discover how these roles are defined and articulated (including the clarity of roles) and how collaboration among players is conceptualised. Table 1 shows whether the documents provided clarify the roles of all players and their collaborations.

Table 4.4 Document analysis to review school-parent collaboration roles

	Do the documents specify the following:			
	SMT roles	SGB roles	Parent roles	Collaboration
SGB constitution				
School A	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
School B	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
School C	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
School Improvement Plan				
School A	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
School B	Yes	No	Yes	No
School C	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Learner code of conduct				
School A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
School B	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
School C	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
School self-evaluation				
School A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
School B	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
School C	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

NOTE: N/A – means documents were not provided.

In Table 4.4, it can be noted that all SGB constitutions clarify the roles of SMTs and SGBs, and how these should collaborate. However, only the SGB constitution for School C was found to have a section specifying the role of parents. Otherwise, SMT roles were well clarified mostly because of their direct cooperation with their respective SGBs. All three constitutions focused (as expected) heavily on the roles of SGB members. However, the roles of SMTs were also made clear as SGB members conduct the majority of their activities in support of, or with the support of SMTs. The following quoted excerpts from the three constitutions show how the roles of different actors and their collaboration are conceptualised:

‘(SGB’s role) ...to determine, in collaboration with the SMT, the extra curriculum of the school and the choice of subject options in terms of the provincial curriculum policy.’ **(School B).**

‘Keep close communication and set up meetings with the SMT and parents when deemed necessary.’ **(School A).**

5. FUNCTIONS

5.1. In terms of the SASA, the governing body shall:

- (a) Promote the best interest of the school and strive to ensure its development
- (b) Adopt a constitution
- (c) Develop a mission statement

- (d) Adopt a Code of Conduct for learners
- (e) Support the principal, educators and other staff of the school in the performance of their professional functions
- (f) Determine the times of the school day consistent with any applicable conditions of employment of staff
- (g) Administer and control the school's property, and building and grounds
- (h) Encourage parents, learners, educator and other staff to voluntary
- (i) Recommend the appointment of Educators to the secretary (of the provincial department), subject to the educators' employment Act 1994, and the labour relations Act 1995 (No,66)
- (j) Recommend the appointment of non-Educator staff to the secretary, subject to the Public services Act 1994 and the labour Relations Act 1995
- (k) Allow the reasonable use, under fair conditions of the facilities of the school for educational programs not conducted by the school
- (l) Meet at least every 3 months
- (m) Keep minutes of the meeting
- (n) On request, make the minutes of meetings available for inspection by the HOD
- (o) Prepare an annual budget
- (p) Establish and administer a school fund into which all money received by the school must be paid
- (q) Raise revenues including voluntary contributions to the school in cash or in kind
- (r) Open and maintain a bank account
- (s) Prepare an annual financial statement
- (t) On request by an interested party, make annual financial statements available for inspection
- (u) Annual report to parents, learners, educators and other staff
- (v) Convene annual meetings respectively with parents, educators, learners and other staff

5.2. This SGB has the following functions in terms of Section 21 of the SASA

- (a) To maintain and improve the school's property, and building and grounds occupied by the school, including school hotels, if applicable.
- (b) To determine the extra-mural curriculum of the school and the choice of subject options in term of provincial curriculum policy.
- (c) To purchase textbooks, educational material or equipment for the school.
- (d) To pay for service to the school.
- (e) To provide an adult basic education and training class or center subject to any applicable law.

Figure 4.2 Example of SGB Constitution

The constitutions, however, mostly referred to parents passively, with SMTs and SGBs having most responsibilities, then consulting parents where needed. Parental roles were made clearer in the SIPs and learner codes of conduct. The SIPs, for instance, were structured in a format to highlight areas of limitations, define objective statements, and assign responsibility to relevant players. The following excerpts show how the roles and collaborations are conceptualised within the SIPs:

'To curb the late coming of learners, the principal has developed a late come register that will record all learners who arrive late at school, and parents will be involved so that solutions can be found' **(School C).**

'Implement safety measures including conducting a workshop for all stakeholders on fire drill and evacuations (role assigned to SMT, SGB, parents).' **(School A).**

'Learners do not have calculators. Educators encourage parents to purchase calculators, and parents to play their part.' **(School B).**

SECTION A : INTERVENTIONS THAT LEAD TO IMPROVED LEARNER PERFORMANCE

No.	FOCUS AREA	OBJECTIVE	DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES	START DATE	FINISH DATE	BUDGET	PROGRESS REPORT	STATUS
1	General School policy Review	To develop policies that regulates usage of school infrastructure and assets, and all other policies	Developing policies that will regulate usage of school infrastructure and assets e.g policies that will regulate hiring of school hall for event by community members and stake holders.	15/01/2024		R500.00		
2	Period registers	To make sure that every subject time allocation is adhered to by educators from grade R -5	Period registers will be signed by educators before and after the lesson has been delivered for a certain subject to make sure that all subjects are taught accordingly.		ongoing	N/A		
3	Late coming register for learners	To curb late coming of learners	Principal has developed a late come register that will record all learners who arrive late at school and parent will be involved so that solution can be found		ongoing	N/A		
4	Educator attendance	To regulated and maintain the percentage of educators who are always late due to ill health	Our educator attendance in each term is not at the satisfactory level and this is because of ill health but even though intervention measures will be implemented to curb absenteeism	15/01/2024	ongoing	N/A		

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No.	FOCUS AREA	OBJECTIVE	DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES	START DATE	FINISH DATE	BUDGET	PROGRESS REPORT	STATUS
5	Class size	To regulate overcrowded classrooms specific in grade 4 & 5	More classes in grade 4 and in a new added grade 5 will be overcrowded in 2023 and there is a shortage of educators specifically in intermediate phase that we have recently introduced.	15/01/2024	Ongoing	N/A		
6	Record of school-based support team	To maintain a good record keeping of referred learners	After educators have identified and referred learners to SBST, good filing of SNA 1 & SNA 2 forms will be safely kept and used as point of reference on a continuous basis	15/01/2024	ongoing	N/A		
7	Functional School based team	To enhance a good referral system of learners between educators and SBST, and between SBST and DBST	SBST have developed a year plan activities that will be performed in 2023 to make sure that the committee is functional and supportive to learners and educators	15/01/2024	ongoing	N/A		
8	Record of continuous professional development points for educators	To motivate educators to take part in professional development activities in 2023	Educators will be encouraged and motivated to take part in different forms of developmental activities that will form part of continuous professional development points and evidence will be submitted to principal on quarterly basis	15/01/2024	Ongoing	N/A		
9	Record of extra-curricular and co-curricular activities	To make sure that time allocation assigned for these activities is adhered to and there is learner participation	There is a rooster that is developed, and time has been set aside to make sure that extra-curricular and co-curricular activities takes place at school and learners are encouraged to participate massively in those activities to enhance the curriculum performance	15/01/2024	Ongoing	N/A		

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Figure 4.3 Example of SIP

Similarly, the two learner codes of conduct submitted had explicit sections specifying the crucial role played by parents. The roles of SMTs and SGBs were clarified as enforcers of the codes of conduct and providers of appropriate punishments for contraventions. Analysis of the learner codes of conduct further revealed that collaboration was encouraged, since learner misconducts have different levels based on severity, and those responsible for discipline/punishment change as the level of misconduct rises. Specifically, School B's learner code of conduct mandates that Levels 3 and 4 misconduct be reported by the SMT to the SGB, while School C calls for the involvement of the SGB in "serious misconduct" cases. Meanwhile, both codes of conduct highlight parents as crucial stakeholders with responsibilities such as ensuring learner discipline off-school, participating in all meetings, monitoring learners' academic performance, and curbing absenteeism, among other roles.

OFFENCES WHICH MAY LEAD TO THE SUSPENSION AND OR EXPULSION OF A LEARNER

The following offences may lead to the suspension and or expulsion of a learner.

- 10.1 Conduct which endangers the safety and violates the rights of others.
- 10.2 Possession, use, transmission or visible evidence of narcotic or unauthorized drugs, alcohol or intoxicants of any kind.
- 10.3 Possession, threat or use of weapons.
- 10.4 Fighting, assault or battery
- 10.5 Immoral behavior or profanity
- 10.6 Falsely identifying oneself.
- 10.7 Harmful graffiti, hate speech, sexism, and racism
- 10.8 Theft or possession of stolen property including test or examination papers prior to the writing of the test or examination.
- 10.9 Unlawful action, vandalism, destroying or defacing school property.
- 10.10 Disrespect, objectionable behaviour and verbal abuse directed at educators or other school employees or learners.
- 10.11 Criminal and oppressive behaviour such as rape and gender based harassment
- 10.12 Repeated violation of school rules or code of conduct.
- 10.13 Victimization, bullying and intimidation of other learners.
- 10.14 Infringement of examination rules.
- 10.15 Knowingly and lawfully supplying false information or falsifying documentation to gain an unfair advantage at school.

PARENTS

- 11.1 They shall be involved and play a vital and pivotal role in the education of their children
- 11.2 They shall be eligible for and participate in the election of various committees
- 11.3 The School Governing Body shall be the main committee to deal with and monitor the affairs of the school.
- 11.4 The Cultural Day shall be held every year
- 11.5 A Parents Day shall be held every year during which a written school report shall be distributed
- 11.6 Parents shall create opportunities for learners to study at home
- 11.7 They must check the work of their children regularly
- 11.8 They must ensure that their children attend school regularly and remain there until the end of the school day. Absenteeism of any kind must be reported personally by the parent
- 11.9 They should listen to the problems of their children and contact the school authorities if needs be
- 11.10 They should take care of departmental books supplied to their children
- 11.11 They shall encourage their children to take care of the school buildings and property
- 11.12 They shall avail themselves for involvement in any activity of the school, including meeting with subject educators to discuss their children's work
- 11.13 They shall meet their financial obligations to enable the school to function normally and smoothly

Figure 4.4 Example of Code of conduct

In addition to the other documents discussed, SSEs were also found to be crucial documentation for clarifying the roles of all players. An analysis of the two SSEs revealed that schools use these documents to examine their performance based on several criteria. These criteria cover internal performance (roles of educators, HODs), strategic performance issues (to do with SMTs and SGBs), and issues to do with parents and the community. For each criterion, documents provide an analysis and report of whether “core indicators” are being achieved in line with the roles of different players. The following excerpts show some of the core indicators relating to the responsibilities of different players:

‘Parents are involved in school activities.’

‘The school engages with parents on curriculum matters.’

‘The members of the SGB have undergone training.’

‘Educators have lesson and assessment plans for their allocated subjects.’

‘The SMT monitors lesson planning of educators.’

‘The SMT undertakes lesson observations.’ (School A, School B).

2.2 CORE INDICATORS

CRITERIA	CORE INDICATORS	PHASE	RESPONSE	COMMENTS/REASONS	VERIFICATION (For officials use)
		IP	5 - ATPs are available and are accurately dated for all subjects	ATPs are available and aligned with CAPS. ATPs are used by all educators.	Choose an item.
		SP	5 - ATPs are available and are accurately dated for all subjects	ATPs are available and aligned with CAPS. ATPs is used by all educators.	Choose an item.
		FET	Choose an item.		Choose an item.
	iii.) Educators have Lesson Plans for their allocated subjects.	FP	5 - Lesson Plans are available and are accurately dated for all subjects	All educators have lesson plans and submitted every Monday to their DHs.	Choose an item.
		IP	2 - Lesson Plans are available for some subjects	Some educators have lesson plan and submitted every Monday to their respective DHs.	Choose an item.
		SP	4 - Lesson Plans are available for all subjects and mostly accurately dated	All educators have lesson plans and submitted every Monday to their DHs.	Choose an item.
		FET	Choose an item.		Choose an item.
	iv.) Educators have Assessment Plans for their allocated subjects.	FP	4 - Assessment Plans are available for all subjects and mostly accurately dated	All educators are provided with assessment plans for their allocated subjects.	Choose an item.
		IP	4 - Assessment Plans are available for all subjects and mostly accurately dated	All educators are provided with assessment plans for their allocated subjects.	Choose an item.
		SP	4 - Assessment Plans are available for all subjects and mostly accurately dated	All educators are provided with assessment plans for their allocated subjects.	Choose an item.
		FET	Choose an item.		Choose an item.

Figure 4.5 Example of SSE (School A)

9. PARENTS AND COMMUNITY (PC)			
PURPOSE: To evaluate the extent to which the school encourages parental and community involvement in the education of the learners and how it makes use of their contributions to support learners' progress			
9.1 RECORDS			
DOCUMENT	STATUS	COMMENTS (if any)	VERIFICATION (For officials use)
a) Notice, agenda and minutes of parent meetings	Available, with all aspects in order		Choose an item.
b) Attendance register of parent meetings	Available, with all aspects in order		Choose an item.
c) Correspondence to parents (Letters, diaries, emails and SMS)	Available, with all aspects in order		Choose an item.
d) Minutes of Quality of Teaching and Learning Campaign (QLTC) meetings	Not available	No minutes because meetings are not conducted.	Choose an item.
e) Parent acknowledgement of the academic work of learners	Not available	Need to be developed	Choose an item.
f) Newsletters	Not available	Need to be developed	Choose an item.
g) Correspondence pertaining to partnerships with the community	Not available	Need to be developed	Choose an item.

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9.1 RECORDS			
DOCUMENT	STATUS	COMMENTS (if any)	VERIFICATION (For officials use)
h) Acknowledgement of progress reports of learners	Not available	Need to be developed	Choose an item.

9.2 CORE INDICATORS				
CRITERIA	CORE INDICATORS	RESPONSE	Details	VERIFICATION (For officials use)
a) Parental involvement	i.) The school communicates once a quarter with parents on general school matters.	Yes	<u>If YES provide a list, if NO indicate reasons</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discipline • Security • School attendance • Maintenance • Procurement 	Choose an item.
	ii.) The school engages with parents on curriculum matters.	Yes	<u>If YES provide a list, if NO indicate reasons</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learner progress • Learner attendance • Extra classes • LTSM 	Choose an item.
	iii.) Parents are involved in school activities.	Yes	<u>If YES provide a list, if NO indicate reasons</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural activities • Sport activities • Letsema activities • Learner assessment • Learner discipline 	Choose an item.
	iv.) The school uses local services to benefit the school		<u>If YES provide a list, if NO indicate reasons</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional council 	Choose an item.

Figure 4.6 Example of SSE (School B)

Overall, the analysis of documents revealed that school documentation was explicitly clear about the roles of all players and how they relate to each other. While the educators and the SMT bear most of the direct responsibilities, SGBs have several overseer responsibilities regarding the schools' strategic direction. On the other hand, parents are mandated to play their part and support SMTs, SGBs, and learners to enhance overall school success. One might then wonder if the documentation clarifies all roles and responsibilities and where the collaboration challenges emanate from. The next theme (Theme 2) discusses how participants experience parent-school collaboration in real life, and Theme 3 explores the reported challenges faced in line with this collaboration.

4.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the findings of semi-structured interviews conducted with 20 participants from 5 schools to explore collaborative strategies between SMTs and parents to enhance learner academic performance. The chapter discussed themes such as the conceptualisation of collaboration, experiences of parent-school collaboration, challenges faced, and strategies for enhancing parent-school collaboration. Key sub-themes included regular meetings, communication platforms, lack of trust, resource limitations, and planning and coordination. The findings underscore the importance of effective communication, trust-building, resource support, and coordinated efforts among SMTs, parents, and stakeholders to improve parental involvement and learner performance. Recommendations suggested by participants to enhance parental involvement were also discussed, and include strengthening sub-committees, mobilising community support, and government intervention to address challenges. The next chapter concludes the research and provides the researcher's own recommendations.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented and analysed data collected from participants and provided detailed discussions from semi-structured interviews and document analysis. This chapter summarises the findings of the study, provides a conclusion to the research, and suggests recommendations as well as areas for further research. The explored the collaborative strategies that SMTs and parents can implement to enhance learner performance. The following were the specific objectives of the research:

- Explore how SMTs and parents collaborate to enhance learner academic performance.
- Examine challenges experienced by the SMTs and parents as a result of collaborative strategies they use to enhance learner academic performance.
- Determine effective collaborative strategies between the SMTs and parents to enhance learner performance.

5.2 Main findings of the study

This section summarises the study's main findings in line with the study's objectives and themes that emerged from Chapter 4.

5.2.1 Conceptualisation of Collaboration

The study revealed several key insights into understanding and implementing collaboration among SMTs and parents to enhance learner academic performance. To begin with, all participant groups (SMTs, educators, and parents) emphasised the importance of working together to achieve common goals in the school context. Collaboration was seen as essential among parents, educators, learners, and other stakeholders to ensure academic success. This finding supports existing literature that views collaboration as a process of joint decision-making and shared responsibility among stakeholders (Engelbrecht & Hay, 2018; Lim, 2018).

In addition, participants, particularly SGB parents, highlighted the importance of mutual help and support between parents and teachers for the benefit of their children. This underscores the significance of parental involvement and support in enhancing academic achievement, which is in line with scholars such as Mavuso (2022) and Myende and Nhlumayo (2020). Similarly, principals argued for harmony and understanding among different stakeholders, including external agencies, to work towards a common purpose. This reflects the crucial role of principals in facilitating and sustaining collaboration within and outside the school (Sibanda, 2020; Molefe, 2014). Meanwhile, HoDs advocated for planning and coordination among colleagues at school level, emphasising the involvement of all stakeholders in the collaborative process. As noted by Maja (2016) and Sibanda (2020), planning at school level underscores the role of SMTs as coordinators and facilitators of collaboration among all stakeholders.

The analysis of documents provided further insights into how collaboration is conceptualised and articulated within the schools. Specifically, it was evident that school documentation was clear about the roles of all players and how they relate to each other. Educators and the SMT bear most of the direct responsibilities, while SGBs have several overseer responsibilities, and parents are mandated to play their part in providing support to SMTs, SGBs, and learners to enhance overall school success.

5.2.2 Experiences in parent-school collaboration

The second theme discussed how parents, SMT members, and principals experience and perceive collaboration within the school context. Active involvement in various school activities was observed among some parents, including attendance at meetings, sports events, and educational projects. Parents reportedly played various roles, from coaching sports teams to coordinating projects and providing support in other forms. Their active participation underscores the positive impact of parental involvement on school climate, culture, and learner academic performance (Al Haddar & Azmi, 2020; Garcia & Thornton, 2014; Mmothlane et al., 2019; Sudipa et al., 2022).

However, participation varied among parents and was influenced by factors such as socio-economic and cultural background (Mavuso, 2022; Sadiku & Sylaj, 2019).

Many parents reportedly supported school activities and initiatives to enhance learner outcomes and well-being. They volunteered, provided resources, and actively participated in school events. Support from parents is crucial for creating a conducive learning environment and promoting positive outcomes for learners, as noted in the literature (Lethoko, 2019; Ndebele, 2015; Manamela, 2015). However, despite efforts to encourage parental involvement, some parents remained non-involved in school events and activities. Reasons for limited involvement included lack of information about school events, work commitments, and distance from the school. Lack of engagement can challenge the school-parent relationship, school climate, and learner outcomes.

5.2.3 Challenges facing parent-school collaboration

Theme 3 concerns the challenges facing parent-school collaboration. These challenges include the lack of support, limited communication, resource limitations, and trust among stakeholders. Regarding the lack of support, some parents exhibited disengagement and indifference towards school involvement, impacting collaboration efforts. Challenges such as limited parental support for their children's education and school activities were highlighted by both parents and school staff. Factors contributing to this lack of support included parental attitudes, socio-economic constraints, and competing priorities. Empirical studies also acknowledge barriers to parental involvement, including time constraints, family dynamics, and educational levels (Sibanda, 2020; Mavuso, 2014; Basson, 2021).

Another challenge regarded communication breakdowns between schools and parents. Participants cited load-shedding, outdated contact information, and learner-related problems as barriers to effective communication. This lack of communication can hinder parental involvement in school activities and impact learner outcomes. Scholars advocate for improved communication strategies tailored to parents' preferences and circumstances (Murumwa, 2020; Perez, 2017).

Moreover, constraints related to resources, including financial, technological, and logistical resources, were also identified as barriers to collaboration. Schools faced challenges in accessing resources needed for effective communication and engagement with parents, while parents encountered difficulties due to economic constraints. Addressing resource limitations requires community support, external funding, and government intervention (Fodo, 2020; Makhalemele & Nel, 2015).

In addition, trust issues among parents and between parents and schools posed additional challenges to collaboration. Tensions from perceived inequalities or conflicts within parent bodies can undermine unity and cooperation. However, some participants expressed confidence in parent-school relationships, suggesting that trust issues may not be pervasive. Overall, the challenges identified had tangible consequences for schools, learners, and the broader community. These included disruptions in classroom management, poor learner performance, and behavioural issues. As participants further noted, the lack of parental involvement exacerbated existing problems and hindered efforts to address them effectively.

5.2.4 Strategies for enhancing parents-school collaboration

The fourth theme explored the various approaches employed and suggested by schools to foster better engagement between parents and educational institutions. Some of these strategies include regular meetings, the use of communication platforms, the implementation of policies, and direct actions from parents.

Frequent meetings were identified as a common strategy to promote collaboration between schools and parents. These meetings provide information sharing, decision-making, and feedback opportunities, ultimately nurturing trust and transparency. Both parents and school staff emphasised the importance of regular meetings in enhancing parental involvement, which corroborates literature advocating for frequent communication between stakeholders (Epstein, 2018; Maphoke, 2017).

Regarding communication, it was found that schools utilise diverse communication platforms, including electronic media, cell phone applications, correspondence letters, SMSes, and phone calls, to stay in touch with parents. These platforms enable quick and easy communication, ensuring parents remain informed and involved in school activities. Effective communication is crucial for enhancing parental engagement and fostering a supportive school environment (Lumadi, 2019; Ma et al., 2021). In this study, it was evident that SMTs put a lot of effort into multimedia to ensure they stay in touch with parents.

Furthermore, implementing policies emerged as a crucial strategy for standardising practices and enhancing communication between schools and parents. Policies provide guidelines for parental involvement, promote transparency, and hold stakeholders accountable. As Paccaud et al. (2021) and Malatji (2021) note, establishing clear policies can help streamline collaboration efforts and improve the effectiveness of parental engagement initiatives.

Parents also reported playing an active role in supporting school activities, and participating in curricular and extracurricular initiatives. They assist with homework, attend meetings, serve on committees, and engage in fundraising activities, demonstrating their commitment to supporting their children's education. Participants also proposed additional strategies for enhancing parental involvement, including parent workshops, legal actions against uninvolved parents, learner discipline initiatives, constant parental motivation, and strategic meetings. These interventions aim to enhance parental awareness and strengthen collaboration between parents and schools, which is in line with existing evidence (Fodo, 2020; Malatji, 2021).

5.3 Conclusion

The primary aim of this study was to explore the dynamics of parent-school collaboration in the context of South African schools, focusing on experiences, challenges, and strategies for enhancing collaboration. This was achieved through a qualitative research approach involving interviews with stakeholders, including parents (SGB members) and SMTs (principals and HoDs). The findings shed light on various aspects of parent-school collaboration, including what works and areas with challenges. Notably, active participation from parents in school activities was highlighted as beneficial for fostering a positive school climate and improving learner outcomes. However, limited parental involvement, communication breakdowns, resource constraints, and lack of trust were identified as barriers to effective collaboration. Despite these challenges, the study revealed a range of strategies employed by schools to enhance collaboration, including regular meetings, diverse communication platforms, policy implementation, and direct actions by parents.

In conclusion, the findings underscore the importance of building meaningful partnerships between parents and schools to support learner success. Effective collaboration requires transparent communication, mutual trust, and active engagement from all players. While the interviews brought up several challenges inhibiting collaboration, document analysis and other interview responses also suggested that the policy framework governing collaboration exists, and the desire to cooperate was evident among all players. What most likely require attention are collaborative strategies, communication channels, and enhancing trust among parents, SMTs, and SGBs. The next section presents suggested recommendations for enhancing parent-school collaboration.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are suggested:

- ***Promoting regular and transparent communication:*** A key challenge that emerged is maintaining communication with parents. In line with this, it is

recommended that schools establish regular channels of communication with parents, utilising diverse platforms such as WhatsApp groups, SMS messages, emails, and school websites. Transparent communication about school activities, policies, and learner progress can foster trust and engagement among parents.

- **Addressing Resource Constraints:** Resource constraints were also blamed for the challenge in maintaining communication with parents, including problems with electricity and internet connectivity. In rural schools especially, the provincial department of education should ensure that, at minimum, schools are well-capacitated with well-running electricity and internet connectivity. Meanwhile, schools can also consider collaborating with community stakeholders and local businesses to help mitigate resource challenges and support school initiatives.
- **Strengthening policy implementation:** Document analysis and some interviews revealed that the school policy landscape was robust in outlining the roles of all players and how they collaborate. However, implementation challenges can be mitigated by further clarification of roles and putting effort into getting involved (especially by parents). Additionally, schools should prioritise efforts to build trust and partnerships with parents and SGB members. Open dialogue, transparency, and mutual respect are essential for building positive relationships and collaboration for the good of the learners.
- **Providing training and support:** Another inhibitor to healthy school-parent collaboration was the issue of limited policy knowledge. In this regard, schools and the Department of Basic Education should offer training and support programs for parents, SGB members, and educators to enhance their capacity for effective collaboration. Workshops, seminars, and resource materials can empower stakeholders with the knowledge and skills needed to engage constructively in school activities.

5.5 Areas for further research

Future studies should consider the following areas:

Investigating how cultural and socio-economic factors influence parental involvement in school activities. As this study found, parents had differing participation levels, but the study did not dig deep into the socio-economic factors affecting participation. Understanding the unique challenges different communities face can inform targeted interventions to promote collaboration.

Another possible area of interest could be evaluating the implementation of existing policies and guidelines for parent-school collaboration. As noted in the study's findings, policy implementation is generally weak across schools. It could be interesting to assess the effectiveness of policy enforcement mechanisms and identify barriers to policy implementation at school level.

A third possible area of interest might involve exploring the possible cultural beliefs, values, and practices that shape parent-school collaboration in different communities. The study found trust challenges between parents, the SGB, and the SMT, which could be affected by various factors, including cultural or language issues. Examining cultural perspectives can provide insights into effective strategies for engaging parents from different backgrounds.

5.6 Chapter Summary

Chapter 5 of this dissertation summarised the findings and implications of the study. Key findings highlighted the role of collaboration in achieving educational goals, and challenges such as communication breakdowns and resource limitations were identified as barriers to effective collaboration. Despite these challenges, the study identified several strategies employed by schools to foster collaboration, including regular meetings, diverse communication platforms, and policy implementation.

Recommendations for enhancing collaboration were then suggested, including promoting transparent communication channels, addressing resource constraints, and strengthening policy implementation. Areas for future research were also outlined, suggesting further investigation into socio-economic influences on parental involvement and the cultural dimensions of collaboration in diverse community settings.

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Appendices

Appendix A GHREC Ethics Approval_Signed



GENERAL/HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (GHREC)

23-Jun-2023

Dear Ms Philile Radebe

Application Approved

Research Project Title:

School Management Teams and parents' collaborative strategies to enhance learner academic performance

Ethical Clearance number:

UFS-HSD2022/2063

We are pleased to inform you that your application for ethical clearance has been approved. Your ethical clearance is valid for twelve (12) months from the date of issue. We request that any changes that may take place during the course of your study/research project be submitted to the ethics office to ensure ethical transparency. Furthermore, you are requested to submit the final report of your study/research project to the ethics office. Should you require more time to complete this research, please apply for an extension. Thank you for submitting your proposal for ethical clearance; we wish you the best of luck and success with your research.

Yours sincerely

Dr Adri Du Plessis

Chairperson: General/Human Research Ethics Committee

Adri
Du
Plessis

Digitally
signed by Adri
Du Plessis
Date:
2023.06.26
08:36:52

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Park West
Bloemfontein 9301
South Africa

P.O. Box 339
Bloemfontein 9300
Tel: +27 (0)51 401 9337
duplessisA@ufs.ac.za
www.ufs.ac.za



Appendix B Interview Schedule RADEBE

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Research Title:

School management teams and parents' collaborative strategies to enhance learner academic performance.

MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION

What are School Management Teams' and parents' collaborative strategies to enhance learner academic performance?

SECONDARY QUESTIONS

1. How do SMTs and parents collaborate to enhance learner academic performance?
2. What challenges do SMTs and parents experience with the collaborative strategies they use to enhance learner academic performance?
3. What can be done to enhance effective collaborative strategies between the SMTs and parents?

School Management Teams (Principal & Departmental head)

1. What do you understand about the concept of collaboration?
2. Do you experience parent-school collaboration at your school?
 - If yes, how?
 - If no, what in your experience, what do you think hinders parent- school collaboration?
3. In your experience why is it important to for school to collaborate with parents?
4. What aspects of a learner's and school's activities do you think parents should be involved in?
5. What strategies do you use as SMT to ensure that parents collaborate with school? / How does the SMT collaborate with parents to enhance learner academic performance at your school?

6. What challenges do you experience regarding the strategies you use to enhance parent- school collaboration?
7. In what ways do the challenges affect the school?
8. What should be done to enhance effective collaborative strategies in schools?
(By whom? How?)

Parents

1. What do you understand about the concept of collaboration?
2. Are you involved in school activities as a parent?
 - If yes. How do you currently participate?
 - If no. What hinders your involvement with the school?
3. What areas of learner's and schools' activities do you think parents should get more involved in?
4. What strategies does the school use to influence your involvement? / How does the SMT enable you to participate and work together with them?
5. What challenges do you experience when collaborating with the school?
6. What strategies should be implemented to improve your collaboration with school? (By whom? How?)

Appendix C P RADEBE Research permission letter

Enquiries: M.Z. Thango
Ref: Research Permission: P. Radebe
Tel. 051 404 8808
Email: MZ.Thango@fseducation.gov.za



2380 Mashiloane Street
Ezenzeleni Township
Warden
9890

Dear Ms. P. Radebe

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE FREE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION: THABO MOFUTSANYANA DISTRICT

This letter serves to inform you that you have been granted permission to conduct research in the Free State Department of Education within the Thabo Mofutsanyana Education District. The details in relation to your research project with the University of the Free State are as follows:

Topic: School Management Teams and parents' collaborative strategies to enhance learner academic performance.

1. **List of schools involved:** [REDACTED]
2. **Target Population:** Five Principals and five Departmental Heads at the selected schools.
3. **Period of research:** From the signature of this letter until 30 September 2023. Please note that the department does not allow any research to be conducted during the fourth term (quarter) of the academic year. Should you fall behind your schedule by three months to complete your research project in the approved period, you will need to apply for an extension. The researcher is expected to request permission from the school principals to conduct research at schools.
4. The approval is subject to the following conditions:
 - 4.1 The collection of data should not interfere with the normal tuition time or teaching process.
 - 4.2 A bound copy of the research document should be submitted to the Free State Department of Education, Room 101, 1st Floor, Thuto House, St. Andrew Street, Bloemfontein or can be emailed to the above-mentioned email address.
 - 4.3 You will be expected, on completion of your research study to make a presentation to the relevant stakeholders in the Department.
 - 4.4 The ethics documents must be adhered to in the discourse of your study in our department.
5. Please note that costs relating to all the conditions mentioned above are your own responsibility.

Yours sincerely,

Mr. MZAMONI JACOBS
DIRECTOR: QUALITY ASSURANCE, M&E AND STRATEGIC PLANNING

DATE: 04/04/2023

Appendix D Request for permission to conduct research

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH FROM PRINCIPAL

Dear Sir/Madam

I am doing research and would like to request permission to conduct research at Thabo Mofutsanyana District schools

DATE

.....

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

School Management Teams and parents' collaborative strategies to enhance learner academic performance

PRINCIPLE INVESTIGATOR / RESEARCHER(S) NAME(S) AND CONTACT NUMBER(S):

PHILILE RADEBE

2011115736

0646543385

FACULTY AND DEPARTMENT:

Name of Faculty: Education

Name of Department: Curriculum education and Education department

STUDYLEADER(S) NAME AND CONTACT NUMBER:

Name of Study Leader (UFS staff member): L. Mdoana-Zide

Contact number: 0588641510

WHAT IS THE AIM / PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

The focus of the study is on the collaborative strategies School Management Teams and parents can implement in order to enhance learners' academic performance. The research aims to achieve the following objectives:(1) Explore collaborative strategies used by the SMTs and parents to enhance learner academic performance. (2) Examine challenges experienced by the SMTs and parents because of collaborative strategies they use to enhance learner academic performance. (3) Determine effective collaborative strategies between the SMTs and parents to enhance learner performance.

WHO IS DOING THE RESEARCH?

The researcher is a professional educator working for the Free State Department in Thabo Mofutsanyane district. I am doing the research because of the challenges one encounters almost

daily in the school environment because there is a lack of parental involvement and strategies to enhance learner academic performance.

HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICAL APPROVAL?

This study has received approval from the Research Ethics Committee of UFS.

Approval number: *UFS-HSD2022/2063*

WHY ARE YOUR INSTITUTION/ORGANISATION/COMPANY INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT?

You are chosen as a participant in this research for your professional role in the school, as well as your involvement in decision making and the implementation of innovative teaching practices to improve the teaching and learning experience. Principals are charged with the responsibility of managing and governing the school in a manner that promotes excellent academic performance of learners by making the environment conducive for learning and teaching.

We aim to capture a diverse range of perspectives and experiences in our interviews, which include principals, heads of department (Hods), and parents. The approximate number of participants includes five principals, five heads of department as well as ten SGB parents.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?

You are invited to participate in the study by being interviewed by the researcher. The interview will be semi-structured in nature and will take approximately 45-60 minutes. The purpose of the interview is to obtain your views and experiences in relation to our study topic. The interview will comprise of questions that are outlines as follows:

How do SMTs and parents collaborate to enhance learner academic performance?

What challenges do SMTs and parents experience with the collaborative strategies they use to enhance learner academic performance? What can be done to enhance effective collaborative strategies between the SMTs and parents?

The interview will be audio taped and later transcribed. The overall research study will last for the duration of one year: planned to commence in ...and be completed in... Interviews will be conducted and completed all at once, therefore it will not be necessary to invite you to give your views at a later stage

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

As a research participant in the study, you may benefit from the opportunity to reflect on educational practices and their impact on learners' academic performance. Furthermore, there is an opportunity to express opinions in a private setting. While there may be no other immediate benefits to you as a

participant, the study's findings will contribute to a better understanding of collaborative strategies that can be implemented by the SMT and parents to improve learners' academic performance. Ultimately it will contribute to improving the teaching and learning practices as well as parental involvement in schools for the benefit of the learners and overall society.

WHAT IS THE POTENTIAL RISKS TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

The study holds no potential risk or any discomfort to participants.

WILL THE INFORMATION BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

Your confidentiality and privacy will be our number one priority. If the information you provide is reported or published, it will not be identified as coming from you. To ensure the highest level of confidentiality, your signed consent forms will be stored separately from your interview notes and personal data. The information will only be available to the study's researcher. In addition, interview notes and personal data will be saved in a computer that only the researcher has access to. Your responses may be reviewed by people in charge of ensuring that research is done correctly, such as the transcriber, external coder, and members of the Research Ethics Committee. Unless you give permission for other people to see the records, records that identify you will be available only to those working on the study. The study's report may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identified. If participants request it, data can be withdrawn and destroyed. Except for data retained for future comparative studies, all data will be destroyed five years after the study's completion. Your privacy is essential. This study's data will be kept strictly confidential.

HOW WILL THE INFORMATION BE STORED AND ULTIMATELY DESTROYED?

The researcher will keep hard copies of your answers for five years in a locked filing cabinet at the researcher's home office for future research or academic purposes; electronic information will be kept on a password-protected computer. Future uses of the stored data will be subject to additional Research Ethics Review and, if necessary, approval. All hard copies will be shredded, and electronic copies be wiped out of the computer.

WILL THERE BE PAYMENT OR ANY INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?

There is no additional cost or payment for your participation in this study.

HOW WILL THE INSTITUTION / ORGANISATION / COMPANY BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS / RESULTS OF THE STUDY?

If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact Philile Radede on 0646543385 or 201111@ufs4life.ac.za. The findings are accessible for three years. Should you require any further information or want to contact the researcher about any aspect of this study, please contact the researcher. Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact Dr Mgodana Zide, L on 058 718 5176 or MgodanaZideL@ufs.ac.za

Yours sincerely

Philile Radede

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the initials 'PR' with a stylized flourish underneath.

Consent to grant permission to conduct research

I,

(principal full names)

Grant permission to Philile Radebe to conduct research at

(Name of school)

Signature of Principal:

Signature of Researcher:

SCHOOL STAMP

Appendix E Written consent form final parent

Research study information leaflet and consent form

Date

.....

Title of the research project

School Management Teams and parents' collaborative strategies to enhance learner academic performance

Principle investigator / researcher(s) name(s) and contact number(s):

Researcher: Philile Radebe

Student Number: 2011115736

Contact Number: 0646543385

Faculty and Department:

Name of Faculty: Education

Name of Department: Comparative Education and Education Department

Study leader(s) name and contact number:

Name of Study Leader: Dr Mgodana Zide, L.

Contact number: 058 718 5176

What is the aim / purpose of the study?

The focus of the study is on the collaborative strategies School Management Teams and parents can implement in order to enhance learners' academic performance. The research aims to achieve the following objectives:

- Explore collaborative strategies used by the SMTs and parents to enhance learner academic performance
- Examine challenges experienced by the SMTs and parents as a result of collaborative strategies they use to enhance learner academic performance
- Determine effective collaborative strategies between the SMTs and parents to enhance learner performance

Who is doing the research?

The researcher is a professional educator working for the Free State Department in Thabo Mofutsanyane district.

Has the study received ethical approval?

Yes.

Why are you invited to take part in this research project?

You have been selected to be participants because principals are charged with the responsibility of managing and governing the school in a manner that promotes excellent academic performance of learners by making the environment conducive for learning and teaching.

We aim to capture a diverse range of perspectives and experiences in our interviews, which include principals, departmental heads (hod), and parents. The approximate number of participants includes five principals, five HODs as well as parents.

What is the nature of participation in this study?

You are invited to participate in the study by being interviewed by the researcher. The interview will be semi-structured in nature and will take approximately 45-60 minutes. The purpose of the interview is to obtain your views and experiences concerning the study topic. The interview will comprise of questions that are outlined as follows:

How do SMTs and parents collaborate to enhance learner academic performance?

What challenges do SMTs and parents experience with the collaborative strategies they use to enhance learner academic performance?

What can be done to enhance effective collaborative leadership strategies between the SMTs and parents?

The interview will be audio-taped and later transcribed.

Can the participant withdraw from the study?

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and there are no penalties or loss of benefit for non-participation. You may withdraw consent at any time and request us not to use your data. If you are willing to become a participant, you will be given this information sheet to keep and to sign a consent form.

What are the potential benefits of taking part in this study?

What is the anticipated inconvenience of taking part in this study?

This study poses no physical risks or discomfort to you. Inconvenience may arise as a result of lost time or the inability to find suitable or convenient time schedules for individual interviews. Because all collected information will be de-personalized and kept confidential, the risk of identity disclosure will be kept to a minimum. Only the researcher will have access to the data. There are no special compensation arrangements if you are harmed as a result of your participation in this research project. If you are harmed as a result of the researcher's negligence, you may be able to file a lawsuit. Regardless, if you wish to complain or have any concerns about any aspect of how you were treated during the interview, please contact the study leader on the details provided on this form.

Will what I say be kept confidential?

Your confidentiality and privacy will be our number one priority. If the information you provide is reported or published, it will not be identified as coming from you. To ensure the highest level of confidentiality, your signed consent forms will be stored separately from your interview notes and personal data. The information will only be available to the study's researcher. In addition, interview notes and personal data will be saved in a computer that only the researcher has access to. Your responses may be reviewed by people in charge of ensuring that research is done correctly, such as the transcriber, external coder, and members of the Research Ethics Committee. Unless you give permission for other people to see the records, records that identify you will be available only to those working on the study. The study's report may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identified. If participants request it, data can be withdrawn and destroyed. Except for data retained for future comparative studies, all data will be destroyed five years after the study's completion. Your privacy is essential. This study's data will be kept strictly confidential.

How will the information be stored and ultimately destroyed?

The researcher will keep hard copies of your answers for five years in a locked filing cabinet at the researcher's home office for future research or academic purposes; electronic information will be kept on a password-protected computer. Future uses of the stored data will be subject to additional Research Ethics Review and, if necessary, approval. All hard copies will be shredded, and electronic copies be wiped out of the computer.

Will I receive payment or any incentives for participating in this study?

There is no additional cost or payment for your participation in this study.

How will the participant be informed of the findings / results of the study?

If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact Philie Radede on 0646543385 or 2011115736@ufs4life.ac.za. The findings are accessible for three years. Should you require any further information or want to contact the researcher about any aspect of this study, please contact the researcher. Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact Dr Mgodana Zide, L on 058 718 5176 or MgodanaZideL@ufs.ac.za

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.

Consent to participate in this study

I, the undersigned,

confirm that I voluntarily agree to participate in the research study referred to as the '**School Management Teams and Parents' Collaborative Strategies to enhance learner academic performance**' conducted by **Philile Radebe**

I, the undersigned Participant, further confirm that-

1. the Researcher has explained the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of my participation in the Study;
2. I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the Study as explained in the attached information sheet;
3. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the Study;
4. I understand that my participation in the Study is entirely voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable);
5. I voluntarily provide the UFS and the Researcher with my personal information and consent to the UFS and the Researcher collecting, disclosing and processing my personal information in order to conduct the Study and any related activities in relation thereto;
6. I hereby acknowledge and confirm that I understand the purpose for which the UFS and the Researcher may collect, store, use, delete, destroy, outsource, transfer or otherwise process, as the context and circumstances may require and as contemplated in terms of POPIA, my personal information as set out herein;
7. I am aware that the findings of the Study will be anonymously processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings and that my personal information will be aggregated and deidentified at such stage;
8. I also give the UFS permission to share, without notification, the collected data with other researchers at the UFS or other Higher Education Institutions. This permission is dependent on the same principles of ethical research practices, anonymity/confidentiality, safekeeping of information, and other issues listed above applying.

I, the Participant, agree to the recording of the <insert specific data collection method>.

Full Name of Participant: _____

Signature of Participant: _____ Date: _____

Full Name(s) of Researcher(s): PHILILE RADEBE



Signature of Researcher:

Date: 07 FEBRUARY 2023

Appendix F Turnitin Report

Philile Radebe

ORIGINALITY REPORT

10%

SIMILARITY INDEX

7%

INTERNET SOURCES

6%

PUBLICATIONS

3%

STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

1	researchspace.ukzn.ac.za Internet Source	1%
2	scholar.ufs.ac.za Internet Source	<1%
3	Greenhalgh, Tanya Lee. "Management of Parental Engagement Amongst Lower Income Families in a Gauteng Primary School", University of Pretoria (South Africa), 2023 Publication	<1%
4	hdl.handle.net Internet Source	<1%
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Appendix G Language certificate

Registered with the South African Translators' Institute (SATI)

Reference number 163760817

19 July 2024

**SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAMS' AND PARENTS' COLLABORATIVE STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE LEARNER
ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE**

This confirms that I edited substantively the above document, including a Reference list. The document was returned to the author with various tracked changes to correct errors and clarify meaning. It was the author's responsibility to attend to these changes.

Yours faithfully



Dr. K. Zano

Ph.D. in English

kufazano@gmail.com/kufazano@yahoo.com

+27631434276