A DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP COMMUNICATION STRATEGY FOR IMPROVED LEARNER ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

BY

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DECLARATION

I the undersigned, hereby declare that this dissertation a distributed leadership communication strategy to improve learner academic performance, submitted for the Masters in Education Management (M.Ed.) at the University of the Free State is my original and independent work and has not been submitted previously to another university. I further declare that all sources of information quoted are acknowledged by means of a comprehensive list of references.

Researcher name ……

Signature .....……..

DEDICATION AND ACKNOWLEGMENT

I wish to thank everyone sincerely who helped me and contributed to the completion of this study.

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ABSTRACT

Addressing the problem of learner academic performance at Lesotho high schools is a long-standing phenomenon. In this study, the researcher explored the influence of distributed leadership practice on improving the learner academic performance of high school learners and interpersonal communication needed for addressing learner academic performance at schools, in order to ensure how the principals could use distributed leadership practice and interpersonal communication to enhance the academic performance of the learners. In the study, a literature search was conducted focusing on applicable theoretical frameworks and on the outcomes of past research. In particular, literature from national and international studies on how distributed leadership can impacts functioning of learner academic performance was consulted.

The study employed a qualitative approach to what distributed leadership communication strategy may be effective in improving learners' academic performance. Individual, in-depth interviews were employed to collect data from participants. They comprised the principals of four high schools, Grade 10 teachers, parents, the chief and counsellor, as well as the chairpersons of the board chosen from four high schools in the Berea district of Lesotho.

A key finding revealed that distributed leadership practice is not adequately practised at the high schools. Leadership and communication strategies for principals need effective training sessions. Currently no workshops are provided by the Ministry of Education and Training for teachers and principals to attend because of insufficient funds. These are strongly needed in order to equip leaders with the necessary skills. Parent community partnership within the school seems limited, which leads to hampering learners' academic performance.

Key words Distributed leadership, Interpersonal communication, School-community partnership, Learner academic performance, Poor performance.

ABSTRAK

Die aanspreek van die probleem rakende leerders se akademiese prestasie in Lesotho hoërskole is ’n fenomeen wat al lankal bestaan. In hierdie studie het die navorser die invloed van die praktyk van gedeelde leierskap op die verbetering van hoërskoolleerders se akademiese prestasie in skole ondersoek, asook die interpersoonlike kommunikasie wat benodig word om leerders se akademiese prestasie aan te spreek, om sodoende te bepaal hoe skoolhoofde gedeelde leierskap en interpersoonlike kommunikasie kan gebruik om die akademiese prestasie van die leerders te verhoog. ’n Literatuursoektog, gefokus op toepaslike teoretiese raamwerke en die uitkomste van vorige ondersoeke is in die studie onderneem. Daar is in die besonder gekyk na nasionale en internasionale studies oor hoe gedeelde leierskap leerders se akademiese prestasie kan beïnvloed.

Die studie het ’n kwalitatiewe benadering gevolg na hoe ’n kommunikatiewe strategie by gedeelde leierskap effektief kan wees om leerders se akademiese prestasie te verbeter. Individuele, diepgaande onderhoude is gebruik om data van deelnemers in te samel. Dit het bestaan uit die skoolhoofde van vier hoërskole, graad 10-onderwysers, ouers, die hoof en berader, asook die voorsitters van die raad gekies uit vier hoërskole in die Berea-distrik van Lesotho.

’n Sleutelbevinding het aangedui dat gedeelde leierskapspraktyk nie voldoende by die hoërskole beoefen word nie. Leierskap- en kommunikasiestrategieë vir skoolhoofde benodig effektiewe opleidingsessies. Tans bied die Ministerie van Onderwys en Opleiding as gevolg van onvoldoende geld geen werkswinkels vir onderwysers en skoolhoofde aan nie. Hierdie is uiters noodsaaklik ten einde leiers met die nodige vaardighede toe te rus. Ouer-gemeenskapsbetrokkenheid by skole skyn beperk te wees, wat lei tot die belemmering van leerders se akademiese prestasie.

Sleutelwoorde Gedeelde leierskap, Interpersoonlike kommunikasie. Skool-gemeenskaps-vennootskappe, Leerders se akademiese prestasie, Swak prestasie.

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF ACRONYMS

COSC	Cambridge Overseas School Certificate
LGCSE	Lesotho General Certificate of Secondary Education
MOET	Ministry of Education and Training
HOD	Head of Department
PLC	Professional learning communities
PSLE	Primary School Leaving Examination
JC	Junior Certificate
ECoL	Examination Council of Lesotho

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CHAPTER 1
BACKGROUND AND ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the education system in Lesotho has experienced considerable changes, particularly with reference to policy and curriculum reforms. Notably, the Curriculum and Assessment Policy (CAPS) repositions the education system for schools into binary levels, in particular, basic education, which comprises the first 10 years of formal schooling from Grade 1 to 10, and the last two years of secondary education, Grade 11 and 12 (Ministry of Education and Training, 2009:1). Localising the Cambridge Overseas School Certificate (COSC) examinations was done in phases, and was renamed the Lesotho General Certificate of Secondary Education (LGCSE). Additionally, other changes has been in school governance and management executed through the enactment of the Education Act, 2010 and in terms of this Act, a school board comprises nine members: namely two members chosen by a proprietor, one of whom is the chairperson; three members nominated by parents, one of whom is the vice-chairperson; one teacher nominated by the teachers at a specific school; a gazette chief or his or her representative under whose jurisdiction the school falls; a member of the local council or his or her representative under whose jurisdiction the school falls; and the principal of the applicable school who is the secretary of the board and an ex-officio member.

The Lesotho education system is structured into three phases, notably, free, compulsory primary education secondary and high school (senior secondary phase). The primary education covers a period of seven years, after which learners write the Primary School Leaving Examinations (PSLE). The high school education includes junior and senior levels and covers a five-year period. Junior secondary education encompasses a period of three years, notably, Grades 8-10, called Form A-C. When learners reach the end of Form C, learners write the Junior Certificate (JC) examinations. The senior secondary phase or high school is a two-year programme, including Grades 11 and 12, called Form D and E. Learners sit for the Cambridge Overseas School Certificate (COSC) examinations. However, during the period 2012-2015, the COSC examinations were

localised in phases and renamed the Lesotho General Certificate of Secondary Education (LGCSE) in 2014, and are normally taken after 12 years of schooling. The national examinations in Lesotho are conducted by the Examinations Council of Lesotho (ECoL), an autonomous arm of the Ministry of Education and Training. Locally, the schools that offer junior secondary education (Form A to Form C) are called secondary schools, while those that offer both junior and senior secondary education are referred to as high schools. In this study, the focus will be on how the principals could use distributed leadership practices to improve learner academic performance at Lesotho high schools.

The academic performance of learners in the Senior Certificate examinations declined during the period 2009 to 2015 from 61% to 48%. Learners' poor academic performance may be indicative of a requirement to address factors within the school context that signify why they are not performing (Mokoqo, 2013:10; Matlejane Compilation of Ecol, 2009:23).

The World Bank (2008), as cited by Nzoka and Orondho (2014:86), reports that much research revealed that the quality of education is dependent on the manner in which a school's leadership and direction address the issues of teaching and learning and what their quality of leadership suggests (Nzoka & Orodho, 2014:86). Therefore, the leadership practices of school leaders seem to be the key component in the rise and fall of the academic and non-academic performance standards at schools. The Ministry of Education and Training (2006:3) has pointed out that some leaders at schools do not run the schools effectively, due to leadership skills lacking in some school principals. It further notes that some schools perform well, whereas others do not perform well (ibid).

Studies reveal that most principals in developing countries are unaware of their full responsibilities and lack leadership skills (Bush, 2011:314). Consequently, existing international evidence suggests that the principal should take responsibility for a school's learner academic performance. Morgan (2015:31) concurs that "leadership practices, i.e. those of teachers and principals can change the academic trajectory of a school". In support of this, Morgan (2015:39) emphasises "that change itself comes from the collective efforts of teachers, schools and communities". Lesotho schools and their leadership are not an exception. Hence, the current study objective is to investigate the influence of distributed leadership practices of school leaders, in creating conducive

relationships and sound communication between all stakeholders within the school and its community.

McGovern (2014:9) indicates that leadership sets clear academic and behavioural expectations and exhibit an authentic commitment to those expectations, using clear communication with teachers, learners and parents to arrive at a mutual understanding and ensure consistent feedback. These expectations are not rules for rules' sake; rather, a safe school environment with clear expectations are considered the foundation for learning and a means to the ultimate end, growth for every learner. In addition, Lekhetho (2013:382) states that leadership should develop an open, convivial and collaborative school culture that would enhance teacher commitment and learner success. Leithwood and Mascall (2008:529) note that leadership is not only the obligation of the principal, but that it necessitates all relevant stakeholders to collaborate and share the responsibility of leading schools to the goal of improving learner performance consistently.

The next section focuses on the theoretical framework proposed for this study.

1.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Numerous educational models and theories offer basic constructions that address leadership practice. These theories and models are based on certain paradigms from which they are developed.

This study foregrounds Activity Theory as its base. Engeström (2001:153) advances the concept of an activity system as indicative of the complex relationships between people, and facilitating objects and behaviours. In terms of Activity Theory, leadership is not only the terrain of the principal, and therefore provides the basis for distributed leadership practice. In essence, the study seeks to investigate the value of distributed leadership practices of leaders in order to create conducive relationships and sound communication between all stakeholders at the school and within the community, to improve learner academic performance. Harris (2008:11) posits that leadership is about the support and interactive atmosphere leaders create in their spheres when enacting their roles and responsibilities.

Leadership is fluid and emergent rather than fixed, and is related to collective problem solving and working collaboratively (Harris, 2009:72). Similarly, (Gronn, 2010:83, as cited by Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins, 2008:42) views distributed leadership as an “emergent property of a group of interacting individuals” where leadership is the product of “conjoint agency”. As leaders and followers collaborate in order to accomplish group tasks, the roles between leaders and followers begin to blur (Gronn, 2008:147). As such, distributed leadership promotes the establishment of a collegial atmosphere and highlights trust as an essential element in any working environment dedicated to practising distributed leadership and building interpersonal skills (MacBeath, 2005:349; Louis, Mayrowetz, Murphy & Smylie, 2013:33). Sound interpersonal relationships are constructed around individuals and the whole school community trusting one another in this relationship (MacBeath, 2014:349). Trust in organisations is the cornerstone for those essential elements necessary for positive distributed leadership, operating in a spirit of collaboration, communication, cooperative problem solving and authentic feedback (Smylie, Mayrowetz, Murphy & Seashore Louis, 2007:469).

This study is underpinned by the Activity Theory, which, according to Engeström (2001:133, as cited by Gronn, 2008:142), accentuates leadership as a shared practice, the importance of dividing the allocation of tasks, the interdependency of relationships and the idea of developing activities. In Activity Theory, “the potential for leadership is present in the flow of activities in which a set of organization members find themselves enmeshed” (Gronn, 2008:156, as cited by Harris 2008:163). Subsequently, Activity Theory focuses on precise and confined social practices, engaging collaboration with individuals and communities as a key aspect in the creation of participatory act.

The statement of the problem is outlined in section 1.3.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

More often than not, poor academic performance is associated with a lack of adequate leadership skills of school principals, including a lack of communication among the leadership team of a school, its teachers, parents, learners and community (Ministry of Education and Training, 2006:8).

Addressing the problem of learner academic performance at Lesotho secondary schools is a long-standing phenomenon, and the question remains who should take responsibility for poor performance. In separate studies on learner performance, (Mokoqo, 2013:1) discusses the poor academic performance of learners at the end of COSC and Lekhetho (2013:1) addresses the high failure rate of learners in COSC in Lesotho. They mention the presence of leadership practices and highlight its purpose as cultivating and entrenching school culture and shared commitment of teachers and learners as a vital approach that may improve learners' academic performance.

In particular, the problem of this study rests on the fact that the researcher has experienced first-hand the lack of sound leadership practices and the communication strategies needed for addressing learner academic performance at schools. It would seem that interpersonal communication strategies employed by the school leadership to ensure the participation of school management team, parents, teachers and school board members in their children's education are unsuccessful. A strong, community-school partnership is lacking, and this impacts on learners' academic performance.

Community participation at schools is a key component of promoting learner academic achievement (Anderson, Houser & Howland, 2010:31; Coleman, 1988:95; McAlister, 2013:35). Growing educational research reports about the fact that schools that hone solid community partnerships have an increased number of learners who perform academically well in each grade of their schooling (Frances &Turnbull, 2015:227; Valli, Stefanski & Jacobson, 2014:114).

The partnership model upholds that learners' educational outcomes will improve if parent and community members share in the school life of their children and attend to addressing the diverse needs of learners and the school.

However, there are other factors at play that account for learner academic performance like quality of teachers, school environment, school location and student selectivity. Hence, this study focuses on how the principal could use distributed leadership practices to improve learner academic performance at Lesotho schools.

The imperative for school leaders to have the ability to provide inspiration and direction,

while interacting and motivating collaboration throughout is a necessity (Mokoqo 2013:1). Cha and Ham (2012:643) suggest that principals' roles signify the creation of a collaborative working environment with their staff. Particular scholars have previously proposed that leaders and teachers should engage in a greater set of responsibilities where the formation of professional learning communities was a central component of their development (Jones & Harris, 2014:473; Louis, Dretzke & Wahlstrom, 2010:315).

Although there is evidence of teachers' collaborations to improve their practices and learners' academic performance, present-day confirmation from various countries emphasise the fact that the principal as the head of the school is still regarded as having the main responsibility for the school and whether its learners excel academically (Bush & Glover, 2012:34).

Harris (2009:11) contends that leaders have the ability to make a significant contribution to introducing and maintaining learners' academic performance. To be successful in such initiatives of creating effective collaborative working conditions, where teachers collaborate to improve their practices and to improve student learning outcomes, it is imperative that leaders communicate and collaborate with teachers and learners to achieve the goals of the school. Naturally, it becomes imperative for school-community interactions to be strengthened, where leaders and teachers share tasks and achievements, and parents and other community members collaborate to ensure the success of learners and the school (Hallinger, 2013:147; Leithwood *et al.,* 2008:27). In the same vein, Bush (2011:514) indicates that the role of leaders is generally considered as essential for promoting educational and learner academic achievement.

Ahmad, Salleh, Awang and Mahamad (2013:46) advance that educational institutions consist of their communities and these entities are dependent on one another. This interdependence is evident in the sense that a principal cannot lead a school without maintaining sound communication and interpersonal relationships with teachers. In turn, there is no single teacher who can perform his/her daily tasks without learners being present. Equally, learners' contribution to their educational success centres around their academic performance, which they are not able to achieve without their parents' support (Mahamad, Johdi, Jeeranan & Adnan, 2011:40). To this end, a distributed leadership

communication strategy will be proposed, which may contribute to the improvement of learner academic achievement at Lesotho high schools. This strategy would necessarily place emphasis on involving teachers, parents and the community in decision-making processes, developing team collaborations, ultimately in order to ensure that the school and its learners perform optimally (Park & Ham, 2014:20).

To address the problem outlined above, this study proposes a Distributed Leadership Communication Strategy to improve the learner academic performance at Lesotho high schools.

The primary aim and secondary objectives are outlined in section 1.3.1.

1.3.1 Primary aim and secondary objectives

In accordance with the problem stated above, the primary aim and secondary research objectives which guide the study may be formulated as follows:

1.3.2 Research aim

The primary aim of this study is to propose a distributed leadership communication strategy to improve learner academic performance at Lesotho high schools.

1.3.3 Secondary objectives

- To determine the nature and scope of distributed leadership practices.
- To investigate the extent to which interpersonal communication may contribute to the improvement of learner academic performance at Lesotho high schools.
- To establish the perceptions of school board members, teachers and community members regarding distributed leadership practices and interpersonal communication with regard to improving learner academic performance.
- To propose a Distributed Leadership Communication Strategy to improve the academic performance of learners at Lesotho high schools.

1.4 PRIMARY RESEARCH QUESTION AND SECONDARY RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In accordance with the problem stated above, the main research question that this study seeks to answer is formulated as follows:

1.4.1 Primary research question

What distributed leadership communication strategy may be proposed to improve learner academic performance in Lesotho high schools?

1.4.2 Secondary research questions

In order to address the primary research question, the following sub-questions are posed to guide the study:

- What is the nature and scope of distributed leadership practices?
- How does interpersonal communication contribute to improving learner academic performance at Lesotho high schools?
- How do members of school boards, teachers and community members perceive distributed leadership practices and interpersonal communication as contributing factors to the improvement of learners' academic performance?
- How can a Distributed Leadership Communication Strategy be proposed to improve the academic performance of learners at Lesotho high schools?

Section 1.5 discusses the research design and methodologies for the study.

1.5 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

1.5.1 Research paradigm

This study is based on the interpretivist paradigm. Interpretive researchers regard participants as central, focusing on their views' reality. Willis (1995:23) mentions that "interpretivists consider that a distinct route or specific method to knowledge does not exist". According to Walsham (1993:14), interpretivist practice neither contains precise

nor improper philosophies. As an alternative, what should be considered is whether they are interesting for the researcher as well as the participants in a study. The basic principle of the interpretivist paradigm is that knowledge is created informally by the participants of the research process. In engaging participants, researchers should endeavour to understand the complexities of their lived experience. In the final analysis, the main objective of interpretivists centres around the view that the aspect under study provides an understanding of how a certain group of people interpret the situation they encounter. Maree (2011:60) describes the work of the interpretive researcher as follows, “They want to know what meaning people attribute to activities … and how that related to their behaviour. These researchers are much clearer about the fact that they are constructing the reality” on the basis of the interpretation of data with the help of the participants who contributed to the data generation in the study.

1.5.2 Qualitative research methodology

This study utilised the qualitative approach. Hitchcock, Hughes, Denzin and Lincoln (2011:23, as cited by Manning, 2008:41) contend that qualitative research is a method that allows researchers to learn personally about the social world they are studying, though participation with a focus on the individual.

The qualitative method regards the researcher as an instrument in the data generation process. Moreover, the researcher’s connection and engagement in the altering, actual situation is indispensable, since the qualitative researcher is required to record those changes in the real-life context, oftentimes before, during and after the change occurs (Maree, 2010:79).

The qualitative approach is appropriate for this study because of its prominence in highlighting people’s lived experience as it strives to define the significance of an occurrence through explanation. The qualitative approach’s objective is to develop concepts that assist in the understanding of natural phenomena, emphasising the meaning and opinions of participants (Al-Busaidi, 2008:13).

1.5.3 Sampling

In this study, a purposive sampling method was adopted because sampling is done with a specific purpose in mind (Maree, 2011:280; Maree, 2010:78). This method means that those who are chosen to participate more or less share certain characteristics that are similar and can, therefore, provide the necessary data needed for the study. The chairperson of the board, principals and 10 teachers were selected to participate in the study because they have rich information on the topic. Three parents from the school board, the Chief and Councillor from each of the sampled four schools were chosen for this study, categorised as follows: two schools are high-performing schools and two are low-performing schools. This information is presented graphically in Table 1.1 below.

Table 1.1 Proposed study sample

Participant group school board	Data collection strategy	High - performing school (x2)	Low-performing school (x2)	Total
Chairperson	Interview	2	2	4
Chief	Interview	2	2	4
Councillor	Interview	2	2	4
Parents Representatives	Interview	6	6	12
Principal	Interview	2	2	4
Teachers	Focus Group	20	20	40
Total		34	34	68

1.5.4 Data collection

1.5.4.1 Focus-group interviews

According to De Vos, Strydom, Fouché and Delport (2007:99) focus groups explore ways of understanding better how participants experience and think about an issue or aspect. In addition, Kormla (2012:45) defines a focus group as a systematically planned sequence of discussions intended to acquire insights on a demarcated area of interest in an accommodating and non-threatening setting. In this study, focus-group interviews

were conducted with 10 teachers at each school. The researcher created an accepting atmosphere so that focus-group participants' interaction inspired and that they shared their views and practices and insights with one another from various backgrounds, without pressurising them to reach a consensus.

1.5.4.2 Semi-structured interviews

Rossman and Rallis (2012:298) are of the opinion that semi-structured interviews are "those organized around areas of particular interest, while still allowing considerable flexibility in scope and depth". Denzin and Lincoln (2011:34) further state that semi-structured interviews are particularly appropriate where the researcher mainly focuses on difficulty or procedure, as it basically defines the lines of inquiry (Maree, 2011:87). It is contended that this format of interview was well suited to the collection of data for this research.

In-depth individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with the following members at each designated school: the chairperson of the board, the chief and the councillor, the principal and three parents drawn from the school board of each participating school. The use of a semi-structured interview process was selected to provide some uniformity to each interview, thus ensuring that common themes were covered at all the researched schools.

1.5.4.3 Data analysis

Data were analysed using codes and thematic analysis. Coding involves carefully scrutinising the transcribed data, breaking it down into sections and then dividing it into significant analytical units (Maree, 2010:105). The coding process allows the investigator to gather all the data connected to a specific theme so that the identified parts may be divided and interpreted together, and dissimilar cases be compared (ibid). In this study, data emerging from interviews and focus groups conducted with principals, teachers, school board members and parents were safely stored and only be used for presenting, interpreting and analysing purposes.

1.6 THE VALUE OF THE STUDY

The current study is relevant to the discipline of education management and leadership as it addresses a distributed leadership as a leadership practice to improve learners' academic performance at high schools. A communication strategy for improved academic performance is proposed. An emphasis on sharing and partnership is central to achieving the study objective. This study might assist school principals, parents, communities, the school boards and the Ministry of Education and Training. In the SADC region, this study might also be of value to those countries that follow the same education system as that of Lesotho, like Botswana and Swaziland, modelled on the British system of education. The study has the potential to contribute to the existing literature on the factors that can improve learner academic performance.

1.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In any research project, certain ethical principles concerning the research participants need to be applied. Gray (20011:576) mentions the following ethical considerations that applied to this study:

- The researcher will not expose research participants to excessive bodily or emotional harm. With the consensus of the principal and School Management Teams of each school, the semi-structured interviews will be conducted at the school premises at the end of the school day.
- The researcher will respect all participants' right to confidentiality. Generally, the researcher adheres to the code of ethics by keeping the nature and significance of the participants' performance strictly confidential.
- The names of all schools and participants involved in the research remain confidential.
- The researcher will inform the participants about the aim of the study as well as about the duration of the interview. Participants will be free to withdraw their participation at any time.

- The researcher will report on the study findings in a comprehensive and truthful fashion without misinterpreting and misleading others as to the nature of the findings.
- All interviews will be audio-recorded so that accurate transcripts will be made and participants will be assured that their identities will not be revealed.

1.8 DEMARCATION OF THE STUDY

The scientific demarcation of the study is to propose a Distributed Leadership Communication Strategy to improve learner academic performance. The interpersonal communication strategies used at Lesotho high schools seem to suggest that the stakeholders, notably the school principal interacting with the school board, parents and teachers in learners' academic performance need attention. Research shows that the absence of parents and the community acting in partnership is lacking and this has a negative impact on learners' academic performance.

Lewis (2003:33, cited in Humphrey, 2013:53) comments that a solid community spirit at the school is based on four principles, namely building secure, supportive relationships within and between children, school staff and parents; in addition, encouraging children to collaborate and cooperate with others, allowing learners to exercise influence and autonomy.

Henke (2011:38) advises that schools operating with a parent-community partnership intact show a narrow margin between learners who perform academically well, as opposed to those who do not. The author mentions that this variance may be between 10% and 20%. In addition, parents' outlook of their children's performance also increased.

The research will be conducted at four schools in the Berea district in Lesotho. The study will be confined to accessible schools for the research sample due to time limitations, travel and resources. Interviews will be conducted with school board members and other identified participants.

1.9 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions will apply to the key concepts of the study.

1.9.1 Distributed leadership

Distributed leadership signifies that not only the leadership of principals is pivotal, but that the parts deputy principals, teachers, members of school councils and governing bodies play, counts (Gronn, 2012:655). In this study, distributed leadership acknowledges that leadership of the school cannot belong to the principal alone, but should be team-based and thus collaborative (Bush & Glover, 2012:44). As a result, school boards, teachers and the community-partnership should work together towards a common, shared vision that encourages the principles of teamwork, support and confidence in one another's ability to contribute positively to the working relationship to improve learner academic performance.

1.9.2 Interpersonal communication

Wood (2010:19) describes interpersonal communication as discerning, universal, exclusive and ongoing relations that permit people to reflect and build individual awareness of one another and create mutual connections and understandings. It therefore signifies the process by which people trade information, emotional states and meanings through spoken language and gestures.

1.9.3 Parent community partnership

Parent-community partnerships signify partnerships that strengthen connections among the various service agencies (such as schools) and improve efficiency (Valli *et al.*, 2014:110).

1.9.4 Learner academic performance

Learner academic performance is described as the consequence of education – the extent to which a learner, teacher or school has achieved their learning goals or how well

a learner meets the set academic standards (Ward, Stoker & Murray-Ward, 1996:5).

1.9.5 Poor learner performance

In this study, poor learner performance refers to scores below 50% (which is the benchmark determined by the Ministry of Education). Thus, 50% signifies the average mark a learner should obtain in an exam to pass.

1.10 DIVISION OF CHAPTERS

Chapter 1 Background and orientation to the study

Chapter 2 The nature and scope of distributed leadership practices

Chapter 3 The role of interpersonal communication in improving academic performance

Chapter 4 Research design and methodology

Chapter 5 Data presentation, interpretation and analysis of results

Chapter 6 Findings, recommendation and conclusion

Chapter 7 Distributed leadership communication strategy

1.11 SUMMARY

In this chapter, the background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose, primary aim and secondary objectives, research methodology demarcation of the study, clarification of concepts and the division of chapters were provided.

The background established that improving learner academic performance is still a matter that many schools grapple with and that there is a gap in the literature on issues pertaining to how distributed leadership may contribute to improving learner academic performance at high schools. In addition, communication and community partnerships are deemed as necessary ingredients to address the issue of learner academic performance to ultimately produce successful learners and schools.

In addition, it is noteworthy that although studies address the distributed leadership as a necessary tool in the arsenal of a leader, a combination of communication strategies and community partnerships to address the problem of poor learner academic performance has not be addressed at Lesotho schools.

The current study therefore proposes a distributed leadership communication strategy to improve learner academic performance at high schools.

CHAPTER 2
THE NATURE AND SCOPE OF DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the literature that will be reviewed for this research. It will address the following aspects in detail: approaches to school leadership practices, distributed leadership at secondary schools, school leadership and learners' academic performance, communication, and community partnership interaction. The relevant national as well as international literature will be reviewed to address the above central issues.

In section 2.2 the theoretical framework for the study is outlined.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study is grounded in Activity Theory, which is the basic unit of analysis used to understand individual actions. Activity Theory regards the activity as the unit of analysis, breaking it down into its basic parts of subject tool and object. In this instance, the subject relates to the person as study unit, the object signifies the activity and the tool is the arbitrating method executing the action (Hasan, 1998:19).

In educational research, Activity Theory may be considered as a theoretical lens through which data are understood and used in interpretive data analysis (Engeström, 2015:63).

Engeström's (2001:133) adaptation of Vygotsky's (1978:34) original theory suggests two additional units of analysis, which have an unspoken effect on school activities. The first unit of analysis signifies a set of circumstances that exists and helps to control how and why persons may act; a result of social training. The second unit of analysis indicate the divisions of labour that lays sufficient grounding for separating activities and processes among those who share in the activities of a school. Working in unison, the identified elements influence the community and, through this, teamwork is strengthened (Hyland, 1998:93; Verenikina, 2001:23).

These concepts are illustrated in Figure 1.

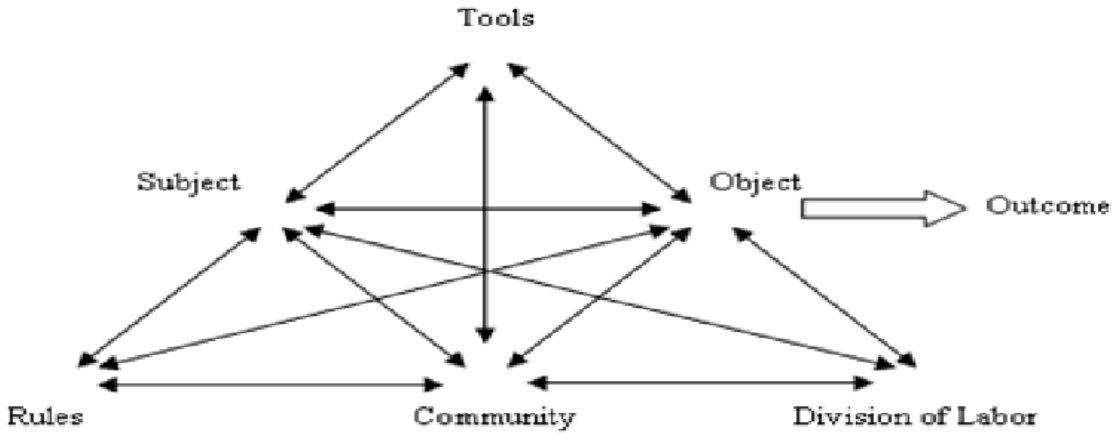


Figure 1. Engeström's Expended Activity Theory Model (Engeström, 2001).

Activity Theory may be associated with the qualitative research approach that presents an alternative way for analysing educational practices and results. The theory focuses on the actions of human beings, notably in the areas of education. In addition, Activity Theory favours the core within a dialectic process between bias and impartiality, knowing and doing, personal and group, practical and communal, as well as implied and obvious information (Crawford & Hasan, 2006:29).

In a study conducted by Crawford and Hasan (2006:23), the researchers used several methods of communication and collaboration to show the significance of Activity Theory in an information system situation.

Engeström (2001:9) contends that the process of social transformation stands central and includes the structure of the social world in analysis, taking into account the conflictual nature of social practice. Randomness (internal tensions) and divergence are seen as the reason for change and advancement, and the changes and reforms within and between activity systems as part of the development of the practice. "Consequently, it is not only the subject, but the educational setting that is transformed through mediated activity." Engeström views the philosophical assumption of progressive models and tools as means out of inner conflicts that result in new action structures (Cole & Engeström, 1993:40).

Engeström (2001:9) has advanced theoretical tools to comprehend discourses, numerous viewpoints, and systems of interconnecting action structures. Therefore, the

study was based on Engeström's third generation that was used as a lens to determine factors that affect the overall learner academic performance of Grade 12 learners at Lesotho high schools. In this study, the notion was that teaching and learning take place effectively when learners see themselves as members of a team.

Hence, this study required the principal, school boards, teachers, parents and community members to collaborate and share responsibilities of leading the school towards improved learner academic performance. These collaborative acts include sharing leadership at the school, ensuring that communication between entities in terms of school activities are sound so that the actions of these parties may contribute positively to improving the performance of learners at schools. It is these activities then, that this study highlighted as central acts that stakeholders are responsible for and engage in to activate their schools' goals.

It is therefore important that school boards, parents, principals, teachers and communities organise activities and experiences in such a way that they improve learners' academic performance. In the classroom, teachers play an important role in reflecting learners' performance (Marishane, 2013:96). For instance, teachers should make use of constructive feedback to develop learners' achievement and cooperative learning as well as develop their ability to interact socially with all stakeholders. It becomes increasingly clear that improving learners' academic performance cannot be located with the leader alone; it should be dispersed among stakeholders (Spillane, 2008:28).

Parents' contribution as mentors for their children in a productive learning environment frequently needs ongoing support and continuing communication with teachers to help their children improve and excel academically (Bouffard, 2008:309). As a result, the school board and the principal should formulate a school development plan in such a way that parents, teachers and the community are involved in decision-making and provide feedback on the implementation (David, 2009:229). The involvement of the community plays an essential role in school activities to improve academic performance. It provides financial support and security. Working collaboratively helps the school to meet its educational goal (Boot, 2011:20).

Equally important to consider is the fact that learners' academic achievements relate to

the nature of the connection and communicative interaction among stakeholders and the school (Ngidi & Qwabe, 2006:534; Van Deventer & Kruger, 2008:24; Lemmer, 2013:53).

2.3 APPROACHES TO SCHOOL LEADERSHIP PRACTICE

School leadership has become a priority in education policy agendas in a global context. It plays a great role by improving school and learner outcomes by influencing the motivation of teachers, parents, community and stakeholders in education (Pont, Nusche & Moorman, 2008:328).

The leadership approaches applicable to this study are as follows: distributed leadership practice, transformative leadership and instructional leadership, as the researcher understands that they resemble common characteristics of school leadership practices at schools. In addition, literature in countries such as the USA, England, Singapore, China and Canada reveals that leadership practices as practised in the past are no longer appropriate (Steward, 2013:52). These countries have developed a new standard to redefine the work structure of school leaders, with a special emphasis on leadership for learning. This means the role of school leaders has changed from administrational to instructional leadership.

Section 2.3.1 outlines instructional leadership practice.

2.3.1 Instructional leadership

Based on instructional leadership, the principal's approach to curriculum and instructional development is strong and directive, displays behaviour focused on control, coordination and supervision of all teaching and learning activities (Marishane & Botha, 2011:7). Therefore, the principal's instructional leadership has been taken to be the most noticeable factor in enhancing learner academic performance (Park & Ham, 2016:452). For instance, Robins and Judge (2012:655) report that "the average effect of instructional leadership on learner academic performance was three to four times that of transformational leadership".

The idea of instructional leadership can be observed as the influence of the principal to

motivate and inspire teachers with the end goal of strong effect on instructional practices and finally learner performance (Quinn, 2012, cited by Park & Ham, 2016:453).

Instructional leadership fosters teacher's teamwork in order to improve learner academic performance that leads to successful leadership practices to be collaborative inquiry communities (Louis, Dretzke & Wahlstrom, 2010:316). However, Meirink, Meijer, Verloop and Bergen (2009:89) emphasise that a principal who is an instructional leader takes part in facilitating and sustaining teachers' development to improve learner performance. The role of an instructional leader is to motivate teachers to understand that learning content should be related to learners' real-life situations. The classroom should be lively, learner-centred and conducive to learning, while teaching aids should stimulate learner's activity (Tong, 2010:19). Hence, school leadership practices with capabilities requires transforming their school to develop more transformational leadership.

2.3.2 Transformational leadership

With transformational leadership the principal's approach is to join hands with teachers, setting clear collective visions and accepted missions and purpose to improve learners' academic performance (Marishane, 2013:10). In addition to that, Botha (2015:211) indicates that the principal is a role model, envisions the future, and strives to communicate effectively and inspire teachers to work towards goals of the school.

Moreover, Naseer (2011:411) states that empowering teachers is important, because they are allowed to take risks. As a results, they are confident in trying new instructional techniques without fear of failing, because the principal encourages them to learn from previous encounters and discuss options for the future (Botha, 2015:273). This feeling of safety serves as comfort and motivation, as teachers discover ways in which they can improve learner performance.

Principals in transformational approach stimulate teachers to be creative, by building unity with them around a clear, collective vision and accepted mission and purpose, behave as role models, strive to communicate effectively and inspire them to become committed to the goals of the school (Tassiopoulos, 2010:50). In order to sustain teachers' readiness to take part in teacher-initiated collaboration and learning, leading to growth in classroom

practices and enhancing learner performance, the transformational leader should encourage change (Sun & Leithwood, 2013:440). As an essential ingredient for improving learner academic performance, transformational leadership necessitates anticipated changes in the performance of school leaders' and teachers' practices if learners' academic performance is to improve. Moreover, transformational leadership delivers on skills such as critical thinking and problem solving to improve learner academic performance.

Without reservation, to improve learner performance would seem to require what transformational leadership delivers, such as new skills consistent with 21st-century competencies are required, for example, including creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving and collaborative learning (ibid).

In the United State of America, the direct effect of classroom instruction that is provided by teachers is very important in the process of enhancing learners' performance within each district (Jones & Harris, 2014:477).

Providing learners with a developed curriculum of 21 competencies, maintains high standards in traditional examinations practice of teaching and curricular practices, unlike previous models (Louis *et al.*, 2010:320). Thus, a transformational approach in practising teaching and curriculum, requires teachers who are receptive to innovatory pedagogical practices; not only who are actively and continuously involved in curriculum development and innovation (Bush, 2011:515).

Transformational leadership have common characteristics like instructional and distributed leaderships such as fostering teachers' teamwork development as belief that a "group could solve problems better than a principal alone" (Naidoo & Botha, 2012:9212). Transformational leadership emphasises a collaborative approach, whereas distributed leadership focuses on the goals of a group, rather than the action of one (Jones & Harris, 2014:477).

2.3.3 Distributed leadership

A distributed leadership approach acknowledges that leadership of an organisation can

not belong to an individual person, but it should be team based and, therefore, collaborative (Bezzina & Vidonia, 2006:64), even though research suggests that distributed leadership practice is more likely to have a great impact on improving learner performance than traditional, top-down approaches of leadership (Spillane, 2008:9). Indeed, distributed leadership practices increase interaction with communities, parents, and teachers in decision-making, which leads to the improvement of learners by emphasising others to lead and distribute leadership responsibilities throughout the school. Naseer (2011:414) emphasises the professional development of teachers and involvement of parents and the community in the process of school improvement that leads to learners' performance.

This kind of leadership approach demands school principals, teachers and the community to collaborate and share the responsibility of leading schools towards achieving certain goals and objectives (Leithwood & Mascall, 2008:556). Moreover, Park and Ham (2014:18) report that distributed leadership practices involves stakeholders in participating in decision-making and foster teamwork. The leadership practices of school principals seem to be the key component in the rise and fall of the academic and non-academic standards in schools. The Ministry of Education and Training (2006:3) pointed out that some of the leaders at schools do not run the school effectively, due to weak leadership practices of the school principal. Thus, in order to improve learner performance at Lesotho schools, parents and community members may assist the school in creating an optimal learning environment by working collaboratively with teachers and the school board, emphasising distributed leadership in the process of school improvement (Harris, 2009:33).

Spillane (2006:47) discusses distributed leadership within the context of the establishment of relations between school leaders and teachers and their conditions centred on knowledge and skill. However, Mayrowetz (2008:424) states that distributed leadership provides school leaders with diverse ways to support teaching and learning. To build a learning community, the aforementioned contextual framework highlights a collective approach to leadership, while the school leadership determines the set, formal school structures at schools.

The World Bank (2008) reports that research indicates that the quality of education delivered is dependent on the way in which schools are managed and that the ability of schools' leadership practices in terms of classroom practices is strongly influenced by the quality of leadership provided (Nzoka & Orodho, 2014:86). The principal "plays an essential role in distributed leadership as he or she must ensure that the teachers are empowered to lead, and they can provide necessary skills for change and development" (Harris, 2009:17), in order to improve academic performance

In addition to that, principals seem to play an important role in enabling distributed leadership by creating a favourable school climate and promoting schools' circumstances that are necessary for distributed leadership to flourish (Harris, 2008:45). Such circumstances include the restructuring of power and authority as well as the promotion and maintenance of trust relationships (Jones & Harris, 2014:477).

Equally important, distributed leadership would enable participative decision-making. An activity system is characterised by "multi-voicedness" where the views, traditions and interests of teachers as well as all members of the school community are regarded as important (Beatty & Feldman, 2009:17).

It is important that the principal of the school should encourage teachers and learners, parents and the community to address the problems of the school in order for all its systems to work cohesively (Harris, 2009:18).

2.3.4 Types of leadership distribution

Gronn (2003:312) proposes that leadership is a socially constructed activity in which the activity joins the organisational structures with the activity and the participants. Organisational impact may be described as frequently mutual. He explains it in terms of the division of labour. Intrinsic to the division of labour is a contradiction between specialty and interdependence. This implies that tasks are dissected, distributed and then executed by the different individuals. As tasks are fragmented, it creates room for individuals to depend on each other to complete it. Unpredictably, labour has to be integrated and differentiated, which generates a cooperative effort (Gronn, 2003:330).

Influenced by building on Gronn's (2003:311) socially distributed activity principles and MacBeath (2005:349) social distribution perspectives of leadership, Spillane (2006) identifies two categories of leadership practice distribution: collaborated distribution and collective distribution. These descriptions of distribution leadership were developed as part of a study involving 15K-5 and K-8 schools in Chicago, Illinois using a mixed-methods procedure to unpack distributed leadership in practice. The categories assist to clarify important practices in a distributed perspective and, more essentially, help in setting this conceptual framework apart from other types of leadership.

2.3.4.1 Collaborated distribution

Collaborated distribution is characterised by two or more leaders collaborating in the same space and time to accomplish the same leadership routine. This approach "involves a reciprocal interdependency, in which the actions of different leaders involve input from one another in co-performing a leadership routine. Reciprocal interdependencies involve individuals playing off one another" (Spillane, 2006:61). An indispensable consequence of cooperative distribution is the possibility for leaders to limit or facilitate through the actions, inspiration, capacity and action of those interacting with them. Similarly, the contrary is valid, due to the shared interdependent nature of this type of delivery. Spillane notes that cooperative distribution is generally found in routine school activities such as the professional development of staff, grade meetings and curriculum committee meetings, rather than in evaluative types of leadership tasks. This type of distribution enables cooperation and interaction among leaders and teachers.

2.3.4.2 Collective distribution

Collective distribution signifies a shared leadership strategy in a distinct manner, although their activities are interdependent and not confined to a common place or time. This type of distribution has unlimited prospects to offer a theoretical lens into the leadership motivation, capabilities and action of teachers. Notably, teachers' independent activities contribute towards a unified mission and objectives of the school culture. Group dissemination of leadership equals many of the organisational practices enacted by teachers daily, including curriculum evaluation, analysis and assessment of learners'

performance, as well as involvement in various school-level management committees (MacBeath, 2005:349; Spillane, 2006:26; Spillane & Diamond, 2007:28).

The application and importance of distributed leadership at high schools are discussed in section 2.4.

2.4 DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP AT HIGH SCHOOLS

Distributed leadership is a shift from an individualistic focus on the 'leader' towards more widespread notions of leadership and processes of leadership (Harris, 2009:11). This type of leadership does not seek to remove formal leadership structures, but assumes that a relationship exists "between vertical and lateral leadership process" and that the focus of leadership is on interaction between these processes (Leithwood & Reihl, 2013:46).

Similarly, Leithwood and Reihl (2013:47) regard distributed leadership as a social activity where leadership is distributed or shared by virtue of the leadership function, including more individuals; therefore, the task may easily be accomplished through this interaction. In this instance, leadership is concerned with interdependency rather than dependency and embraces a variety of leaders in diverse roles who share leadership responsibility (Harris, 2009:168).

In addressing the purpose of the study, namely the development of a distributed leadership communication strategy to improve learner academic performance, the researcher proposes that distributed leadership could be beneficial to improving learner performance, because it is premised on the sharing of leadership responsibilities where leaders are defined by their abilities to build strong and functional collaborative teams (Harris, 2009:37; Spillane, 2006:22). In addition to that, distributed leadership involves stakeholders in the decision-making processes, fosters teamwork and creates a collaborative work culture to improve learner performance (Park & Ham, 2014:17).

Moreover, as the pressure of accountability grows and the demand for educational excellence increases, it is increasingly clear that improving learner performance cannot be located with the leader alone; it should be dispersed (Jones & Harris, 2014:474). This type of leadership requires school principals, teachers, parents, school boards and

communities to collaborate and share the responsibility of leading schools towards particular goals and objectives. In brief, Larson (2009:51) notes that the world is changing rapidly; therefore, leaders should lead in ways that inspire all stakeholders with the school to work together towards new goals. This implies that leadership may no longer be the prerogative of one individual at a school, but should be distributed among members of the school.

Distributed leadership has been researched extensively in the United States, England, Scotland and Ireland, and it has been linked to rapid success in improving school performance through responsive leaders' approaches and supportive interactions with followers (Harris & Spillane, 2008:34).

Spillane (2008:26) provides his interpretation of distributed leadership as the collaborative interaction of multiple individuals at different levels at the school. A distributed perspective offers an alternative way of thinking about leadership at schools by foregrounding leadership practices and suggesting that leadership is constructed in the interaction between leaders, followers and their situation.

For instance, the typical Lesotho high school has the following management hierarchy: a school board, principal, deputy principal, heads of departments, teachers and school perfects. The aim of the school should be to produce well-rounded students of good academic quality, who are socially well adjusted and who have high moral standards. To ensure realisation of this aim, it is important for the management structure to work as a team (MOET, 2006:5).

Consequently, distributed leadership offers a framework for thinking about leadership differently (Harris, 2009:9). Equally important, Engel-Silva (2009:2) states,

> distributed leadership has emerged as an alternative democratic style of leadership, it challenges traditional style of the past autocratic and fits in with the educational entities of twenty first century.

Distributed leadership emphasises learner-centred, rather than teacher-centred approaches to a school that has professionally highly trained staff with certain expertise who are therefore entitled to participate in decision-making. Sound relations between all

stakeholders, taking part in reaching the schools' objectives, while maintaining a positive attitude towards the school board, principal, parents, teachers and the community, becomes all -important (Marishane & Botha, 2011:7).

A growing trend of international literature on distributed leadership suggests that it is the one of the most popular leadership models of the 21st century (Harris, 2009:55). This is grounded in the sharing of leadership responsibilities, which requires school principals, teachers and community members to collaborate. Inevitably, this implies that stakeholders are involved in the decision-making process, teamwork is fostered and stakeholders are encouraged to participate and share their views and ideas, as well as empower others to lead and distribute leadership responsibilities throughout the school. A strong community partnership with the school is a key feature of a distributed leadership model. As a result, these are key features that lead to improved learner academic performance and enhance distributed leadership as a collective social process (Jones & Harris, 2014:356).

2.4.1 Distributed leadership as a collective social process

A principle of distributed leadership is to value individual expertise, skills and knowledge to work collaboratively with other members of the organisation to solve a problem or complete a task (Baloğlu, 2011:127). Many studies infer that distributed leadership has the potential to improve teaching and increase learning; thus, ultimately improving social process by valuing. In addition, evidence suggests that distributed leadership is a contributor to positive change at schools as spreading decision-making authority throughout the school as well as creating opportunities for everyone to participate in key decisions (Leithwood & Mascall, 2008:529).

Harris (2009:62) indicates that distributed leadership influences team performance positively by encouraging teachers' empowerment to work collaboratively in order to enhance learner's performance. When teachers are involved in decision-making, ideas will be shared among leaders (Gronn, 2012:423; MacBeath, 2014:349; Botha, 2015:207). According to Robbins and Judge (2012:11), distributed leadership expands the practice of leadership beyond the principal by recognising the motivation of teachers, parents,

community and stakeholders in education.

The practice of distributed leadership is to influence power. It can be exercised by anyone in the organisation and is not confined to those holding formal leadership positions (Bush, 2011:6). Distributed leadership emphasises collective leadership by shifting the locus of control from the principal to all stakeholders in the school community (Van der Mescht & Tyala, 2008:221).

Similarly, Gronn (2012:145) reports that distributed leadership in the post-heroic era is less about instructing or controlling people, but rather about working cooperatively with them to promote teamwork, involvement, empowerment and risk taking (Gronn, 2012:445). Diverse expertise and flexible forms of leadership are required to address the multifaceted challenges at schools (Harris & Spillane, 2008:31). It is in this context, the expansion and becoming more intense of principals' work, that the development of the concept of distributed leadership is emerging (Gronn, 2008:151).

Moreover, distributed leadership is a pragmatic response to changing times (Harris, 2009:325). Equally important, Bush (2011:88) states that distributed leadership concentrates on engaging expertise whenever it exists within the organisation, rather than seeking a formal role. Distributed leadership practice recognises the input of all the school's stakeholders, in particular those who participate in leadership as a collective social process.

Furthermore, Jones, Harvey, Lefoe and Ryland (2015:15) define distributed leadership as "engaging many people in leadership activity", with emphasis on collaboration to reach the schools' objectives. This implies shared leadership practices, realised within extended groups, both formal and informal. Teachers, parents, learners and the community work together to solve problems and therefore engage in a form of leadership practice. Distributed leadership is not done by an individual to others; rather, it is an emergent property of a group or network of individuals in which group members pool their expertise.

Therefore, this type of leadership is a form of collective agency incorporating the activities of many individuals at a school, working together and guiding others in the process of instructional change (Spillane, 2008:36). Significantly, it extends the boundaries of

leadership, as it is premised upon high levels of teacher involvement and encompasses a wide variety of expertise, skills and inputs (Harris & Jones, 2012:27).

At the core of distributed leadership is the process of engaging many people in leadership activities. Studies by Naseer (2011:417) show that learners' achievement are more likely to improve where leadership sources are distributed throughout the school and the community and where teachers are empowered in areas of importance to them. Evidence suggests that where teachers share good practices and learn together, the possibility of securing better-quality teaching is increased. Therefore, within this collaborative cocktail, distributed leadership is crucially important, because it is social glue that supports effective, interdependent working and has benefits (Harris & Jones, 2014:481).

2.4.2 Benefits of distributed leadership

Evidence from the organisational development and improvement literature indicates that distributed leadership has a propensity to influence organisational changes and learners' academic performance positively (Leithwood & Reihl, 2013:71). Consequently, distributed leadership enhances the division, splitting and distribution of leadership roles and tasks to individuals across the school organisation (Smylie *et al*., 2007:470).

Distributed leadership decreases the workload of principals by empowering teachers to be agent of change and come up with new opportunities for teachers to develop skills, encouraging risk taking and new ideas such as sharing. Decision-making has also been found as a primary component of teacher empowerment (Leithwood & Reihl, 2013:677). Trusting relationships, an organisational structure and communication are notable elements of teacher empowerment (MacBeath, 2014:349).

Leithwood and Mascall (2008:192) report that trusting relations at a school is premised on the interactive nature of the relationships of the members of the school. Moreover, there is evidence supporting that if teachers experience trust among one another, as well as amongst parents and learners, this will promote learner achievement and improvement (ibid). Distributed leadership increases leadership development and experiences (Lithwood & Mascall, 2008:89). Therefore, a school where power is shared, where decisions are made jointly, and where teachers collaborate with the principal, can only

take place within a climate of trust.

Furthermore, Smylie *et al.* (2007:469) emphasise the significance of trust from a distributed leadership point of view and realise that the level of trust at a school is related to how distributed leadership is perceived and accepted.

Distributed leadership creates a healthy climate by developing leadership where learners feel free to approach teachers and the principal whenever they experience challenges in any form (Spillane, 2008:99). When learners realise that both teachers and the principal are interested and committed to their welfare and safety, they will be better able to excel in their learning activities (Marishane, 2013:57). For the same reason, learners develop positive attitudes towards their teachers and the school, thus considering the school as their home environment. In addition to that, they develop higher-order skills in managing their learning activities, thus reducing the need for supervision at school and at home. Similarly, Thomson and Sanders (2010:73) state that when learners have a strong feeling of being at school, dropout is reduced and learners' academic performance improves.

Without reservation, to improve learners' academic performance, teachers must have space to perform their daily duties, for example, preparing lessons for learners should not be done in the classroom or the staffroom, but in designated areas (Leithwood & Reihl, 2013:68). Learners must have an adequate number of classrooms to avoid overcrowding and misuse of facilities like school furniture. The school must have essential educational equipment and facilities such as computers, chalkboards, water and electricity in order to function effectively (Bush, 2011:514).

For the school to function effectively, distributed leadership emphasises the professional development of teachers and involvement of parents and community in the process of learners' improvement (Naseer, 2011:414). When teachers believe that they are empowered in areas of importance to them, they became very positive in the way the school is structured and managed (Cheng, 2010:54). Therefore, they develop skills that enhance oneness and new ideas that promote learner performance and improvement.

Consequently, the distributed view of leadership supports professional learning communities (PLCs). It is a group of educators who meet frequently, share levels of

expertise, and work jointly to improve their teaching skills and the academic performance of learners (Bush & Glover, 2012:35). For the same reason, PLCs have gained favourable attention in many countries, including Singapore.

Singapore is famous for its excellent learner academic performance, witnessed “in its outstanding performance in international tests like Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study and the programme for International Student Assessment. PLCs have captured the hearts of Singapore education policy makers” in its improvements towards learners’ academic performance (Dimmock & Goh, 2011:215). Therefore, it is important for schools to implement PLCs as a noticeable vehicle for achieving teacher development, curriculum innovation and enhancing learners’ learning outcomes that will lead to improved learner academic performance (Harris & Spillane, 2008:31). Distributed leadership defines a collaborative school type of management, which entails a lateral decision-making structure (Leithwood & Reihl, 2013:46).

Spillane (2008:28) claims that distributed leadership should be seen as a powerful support tool in any organisation. Thus, at schools it should include the entire teaching staff, parents, school board and community. Sharing power authority and decision-making are all positive correlates of empowerment (Hipp & Huffman, 2010:17).

Simply stated, empowerment in distributed leadership cannot be the domain of the individual, but an involvement of stakeholders in order to build a teamwork (Park & Ham, 2014:20). Positive teamwork benefits schools, because when teachers work together they are better able to bring about shared expectations and high standards for the benefit of all learners (Leithwood & Reihl, 2013:20). In addition to that, teachers working together engage in new work skills, experiences and rich information of higher quality than teachers working in isolation. Similarly, they become more effective and there is likely to be professional growth and empowerment if leadership is distributed amongst all members (Harris, 2009:13). It stands to reason that distributed leadership focuses on collegial support leadership by example, sharing responsibility for success, enhancing ownership and role-modelling leadership for students, intensive participation, reduction in isolation, shared and cooperate learning, as well as increased professionalism. As a result, shared decision-making is a hallmark of the distributed leadership model.

2.4.3 Distributed leadership, shared decision-making and capacity-building

Avolio (2011:12) mentions, “the core of being a leader is developing and helping people to grow their full potential where they can lead themselves effectively”. To achieve the goal of education in general and the goal of a school in particular, school leaders need to be instructional leaders to run the teaching and learning process effectively and act as transformational leaders to engage stakeholders in different school activities (Marishane & Botha, 2011:64).

Distributed leadership implies broad-based involvement in leadership practices (Harris & Spillane, 2008:10). It also requires restructuring and risk taking by those holding top positions and rearranging and removing structural barriers that prevent stakeholders to work effectively together. In addition, distributed leadership is central to system reconfiguration, which necessitates a decision-making process (Hargreaves & Fink, 2008:13).

Findings of studies on distributed leadership practice reveal that it is not possible to create a distributed leadership strategy without redesigning the school as an organisation. In a study by Harris (2008:72), 65% of respondents agreed that components of redesigning organisation were happening across North Carolina.

The principal should be able to distribute power to empower others to assume leadership responsibilities throughout the school (Harris, 2009:11). This is done by developing and maintaining good relations, building team spirit among stakeholders in the process of decision-making. The concept of distributed leadership extends the boundaries of the leadership insofar as it entails a high level of stakeholders’ involvement and utilises a wide variety of expertise knowledge and skills. Therefore, in the process, the school wins their support and trust as key elements of distributed leadership (Leithwood & Mascall, 2008:41).

This type of leadership supports teamwork rather than individual work and emphasises the involvement of stakeholders in decision-making (Gronn, 2008:141). As a result, working as a team produces better decisions than working as an individual and working as a team provides access to a larger pool of information than individual member, even

in decision-making is best to work as a team in order to have more capability to discover mistakes. Despite this, Hallinger (2013:9) reports that collaborative, decision-making and participation in efforts at evaluating the schools' academic development encourages a pleasant and collegial school climate.

Beeka (2009:11) indicates that a pleasant and collegial school climate provides better decision-making among stakeholders because teachers adopt the habit of discussing their work and matters with one another, spending time discussing what they have learnt in their workshops in order to gain new knowledge. Finally, the school should provide a healthy environment where partners help one another in shared decision-making (Hallinger, 2013:126).

The tight relationship between distributed leadership and shared decision-making seems to a give and a strong sense of community and tends to assist empowerment processes (Harris, 2009:9). Hence, in promoting distributed leadership, school principals should encourage staff to take the initiative to make appropriate decisions. When teachers believe that they are empowered, they have opportunities to learn from one another through cooperative learning opportunities in discussions of assessments, sharing materials and analysing student learning outcomes (Harris, 2009:31). The emphasis is on the scope within which teachers are allowed to be involved in the shared decision-making.

Therefore, 'interactive relations for shared decision-making' high-lights the importance of interactive, engaging, flexible and permeable relations for shared decisions; these could possibly include interactions within and beyond the levels or department within the school organisation hierarchy (Hipp & Huffman, 2010:19), whereby stakeholders share information and work collaboratively to plan, solve problems and improve learning opportunities. Equally important, Robinson and Timperly (2007:248) have identified that working in collaboration where teachers and leaders meet to engage in constructive talks to improve student outcomes as an essential to "helping teachers to learn to improve the achievement of their students". As a result, principals should foster teamwork and create a collaborative work culture in order to promote school improvement and capacity building (Gronn, 2008:145).

When the leadership of the school builds the capacity of the teachers, the focus should be on self-development programs with the purpose of improving the school's performance outputs. Developing teachers' knowledge and the skills they require to transform the learning environment is central to the distributed leadership capacity-building approach (Marishane & Botha, 2011:19).

Equally important, Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Hopkins, Harris, Gu, Brown, Ahtaridou and Kington (2009:11) describe that school principals carry the leadership activities through practising their knowledge and acquired skills to influence members to achieve common goals. Therefore, school principals are expected to improve the overall school performance and learners' achievement through effective school leadership practices. As a result, school leadership is one of the most complex processes that help to influence followers to achieve common goals.

Past research shows that building capacities (knowledge and skills) of the staff within a school is an essential means of achieving school improvement (Clark, 2007:133-134). To be an effective leader, school principals need to have a better knowledge and required skills of more than one leadership theory in order to serve their followers effectively and efficiently.

> The school management team of a school has an extremely large responsibility to ensure that all areas of a school are effective and take into account its limited members to ensure that whole school effectiveness is possible and needs the participation of other members of staff to lead other areas of the school (Williams, 2011:195)

Distributed leadership provides exciting possibilities for school effectiveness and promotes development of shared responsibility among members who, in turn, contribute to school effectiveness (Harris, 2009, cited in Williams, 2011:193).

2.4.4 Distributed leadership and school improvement

Literature reveals that it is evident that principals can no longer be expected to lead and manage schools on their own, one of the methods which school leaders can use is to

distribute leadership to ensure improvement in academic outcomes (Marishane & Botha, 2011:12; Leithwood & Reihl, 2013: 23; Hatcher, 2015:253).

It is incumbent upon the leadership of the school to gain the support of the vision from the school community, teachers, learners and parents. The relevance of the vision in a school context is that it demonstrates integrity, honesty and commitment to the achievement of educational goals in order to gain the teachers' trust and enhance school improvement (Smylie *et al*., 2007:470). In addition, Leithwood and Mascall (2008:194) state that evidence is mounting that relations among teachers, parents, students and the community promote learners' achievement and school improvement.

Distributed leadership promotes learner academic performance, which leads to school improvements by restructuring roles and responsibilities at the school, creating new teams and new responsibilities as well as creating teacher and learner leadership (Hargreaves & Fink, 2008:244). Thus, distributed leadership creates specialist support teams across the school, providing the school with an opportunity to create teams, not just for teachers, but of connected staff such as learning mentors, classroom supervisors and administrative team for contact with learners, parents and teachers (Hargreaves, 2008:231).

This type of leadership focuses on the goal of the group, rather than the individual's action. In this regard, encouraging members of teams to meet personally to showcase leadership is an important aspect of principals' job (Carson, Tesluk & Marrone, 2007:14). The meetings should provide a platform for team members to use their talents, abilities and personal strengths through offering support and advice. Creating a supportive atmosphere allows team members to participate fully; it is a key feature of distributed leadership practice (Harris, 2009:55).

Consequently, Hulpia, De Vos and Van Keer (2010:42) report that participative decision-making and distribution of the supportive leadership function have an important impact on teachers' commitment to the development of the school as a whole. Distributed leadership develops within a school climate of collaboration, where teachers are able to choose meaningful leadership roles connected to teaching and learning. Equally important, the principal plays an important role in supporting new leaders by

communicating a common purpose, building on a school climate of collaboration and modelling leadership actions (Chamberland, 2009:9). Today, contemporary education systems about school transformation depend on how satisfactorily the principal works together with their teachers and fellow members.

Findings from a study conducted by Louis *et al.* (2010:321) reveal the importance of teachers placing their trust in their school leaders as a vital change catalyst. Moreover, trust and commitment are important keys to school-wide implementation and a significant tool of distributed leadership to school improvement.

Therefore, an atmosphere of trust, collegiality and cooperation must be created at schools to improve school improvement (Grant, Gardner, Kajee, Moodley & Somaroo, 2010:401). School leadership should therefore share authority and distributed leadership activities with subordinates and involve other personnel as well as the school community in the process of decision-making and school improvement.

Employing a distributed leadership model is beneficial because of its flexibility in terms of the fact that it creates a larger pool of experienced team members who are confident in managing the change process (Spillane, 2008:31). It is evident that distributed leadership may improve schools by developing a shared school vision where the principal promotes a culture of collaboration, support and trust among teachers and encourages distributed leadership responsibilities among different personnel of the community, fostering decision-making to motivate others and empowering others to lead and distribute leadership responsibilities throughout the school (Bell, 2007:74).

In addition to that, consultation and involvement of staff in the decision-making and school improvement play an important role where the principal encourages participants to share their views on different matters and respects their views and ideas (McGovern, 2014:246). Moreover, establishing of interpersonal relationships as a feature of distributed leadership plays a significant role in school improvement. For example, mutual empowerment, caring, collaboration and genuine partnership among staff should be used as vehicles for affecting school improvement. Parent-school partnerships also improve schools, strengthen families, build community support and increase learners' performance. For instance, involvement such as supporting school volunteering and attending school

activities, participative decision-making roles in parent-teacher-student organisations and collaborating with the community using community learning resources and taking part in community groups may be part of such partnerships (McGovern, 2014:228). However, distributed leadership may be important for quality education at schools; there may be barriers to it.

2.4.5 Barriers to distributed leadership

Distributed leadership is premised on the sharing of leadership responsibilities (Spillane, 2008:13). The interactions of the school members are primary aspects of distributed leadership. Delegation of tasks or dividing responsibilities according to role is not distributed leadership; schools that purport to practise distributed leadership actually delegate. Harris (2009:261) refers to that as "misguided delegation", whereby principals delegate the tasks or divide responsibilities instead of spreading, sharing and distributing work across individuals (Smylie *et al.*, 2007:470).

However, principals themselves may become barriers if they do not want to transform their leadership style and move to a distributed leadership style. Distributed leadership can be affected by poor implementation of the position and authority of the responsible person (Wright, 2008:23). This means that the principals may fail to interact with stakeholders by developing a common and shared school vision that promote a culture of collaboration, which is a prime issue of distributed leadership (Naseer, 2011:414).

This is equally important, even if the context in which the school operates is not conducive to democratic leadership (Harris, 2009:13). Therefore, school leadership requires critical change to influence the quality of interactions between teachers, parents, school boards and community (Jones *et al*., 2015:356). Thus, sound leadership practice engenders sound relationships between leader(s) and team members, which form the basis of effective communication and people interaction.

Distributed leadership can be affected whereby deliberations in the school governing bodies are still dominated by school principals on the basis of their authority (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009:33). Furthermore, decisions taken by school governing bodies are often ignored by school management teams in the guise of what is considered to be in "the best

interest of the school". The manager who subscribes to this autocratic style of management also has an impact on distributed leadership, as he or she is responsible for giving direction regarding school policy, but assigns tasks without consultation and agreement (Grant *et al.*, 2010:403).

Authoritarian forms of leadership are another consequence that has been the development of a tradition of non-participation in the decision-making process at school level on the part of the teachers, parents and community. This factor can be regarded as being primarily practice-based and has led to uncertainty about the value of greater participation and insufficient skills. The lack of appropriate leadership development opportunities for school principals and teachers is a major debilitating factor that leads to learners' performance.

2.5 DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP AND LEARNER ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

The research shows that high-performing leadership teams are characterised by internal coherence and unity, a clear focus on high standards, two-way communication with internal and external stakeholders and a commitment to distributed leadership (Bush & Glover, 2012:21).

Successful distributed leadership comprises collaboration, communication, joint problem solving and honest feedback (Smylie, 2007:469). It is therefore important to distribute a shared vision among the school board, teachers, parents and community members in order to improve learner academic performance. Similarly, Smylie *et al.* (2007:503) indicates that a school where power is shared, where decisions are jointly made, and where parents, teachers and community members lead with the principal, can only occur within a climate of trust, which leads to learners' performance.

In addition, Kruger and Steinman (2003:15) posit that a constructive environment has a positive effect on teaching and learning as well as learners' performance. Trust in a school is based on the interdependence of relationships of the members of the school; therefore, trusting relations among teachers, parents and community members encourage learner performance and improvement (Hoy & Miskel, 2008:194).

Thus, distributed leadership focuses on the goals of the group, rather than the action of one (Gronn, 2012:141). However, working collaboratively and sharing ideas lead to improvements in classroom practices and student learning outcomes. Equally important, Gunter (2012:32) identifies that distributed leadership requires multiply levels of involvement in decision-making, focusing mainly on improving instructions and classroom and leadership practices in order to enhance learners' performance.

Moreover, Gunter (2008:259) emphasises aspects of distributed leadership such as empowerment, collaborative decision-making and participation in an effort to judge the school's academic development that leads to improve learners' performance. It stands to reason that collaborative efforts inevitably result in teachers developing new perspectives about learning and creating conducive classroom environments. As a result, the professional development of teachers and principals is essential to distributed leadership and is widely supported in the literature (Bierly, Doyle & Smith, 2016:12).

Distributed leadership is a post-heroic leadership model, where the organisational activities are shared among school members (Hulpia *et al.*, 2010:45). This leadership practice inspires cooperation, sharing, empowerment, a sound work-ethic and increased productivity and interaction (Halverson & Clifford, 2013:385). Similarly, Harris and Spillane (2008:32) look at distributed leadership as any form of stretched, collaborative leadership practices at schools that can help learners to perform better.

Hallinger (2013:135) contend that distributed leadership is "a collaboration practised by the principal, teachers and other members of the school's improvement team for the purpose of improving the school in terms of effective teaching and learning" to enhance learners' academic performance. Equally, Hargreaves and Fink (2008:232) posit that there is a high probability for learner achievement to improve when leaders share decisions and tasks with teachers and the parent and communities.

Razak, Darmawan and Keeves (2010:186) mention that when teachers are fully committed to their schools and tasks, it will influence learner academic achievement positively. Similarly, Eginli (2009:17) proposes that teachers who enjoy the support of all schools' stakeholders, and therefore, have the scope to accomplish their professional efforts and contribute to the development of every learner.

Therefore, distributed leadership contributes to improving learners' performance by encouraging teachers to work more collaboratively to develop experts (Hallinger, 2013:140). Leithwood and Reihl (2013:13) indicate that schools with the highest level of student achievement attributed this to relatively high levels of influence from all sources of leadership. Distributed leadership features in two of their widely cited 'seven strong claims' successful school leadership. Hatcher (2015:255) reports that distributed leadership is significantly related to change in academic capacity and, consequently, to growth in student learning. As a result, the research does show that distributed leadership has the potential to expand the scope of leadership, leading to enhanced student outcomes while developing the formal leaders of the future (Gronn & Middlewood, 2010:77).

Moreover, distributed leadership has been researched extensively in the United States, England, Scotland and Ireland, and it has been linked to rapid success in improving school performance that leads to academic performance through responsive leadership approaches and supportive interactions with followers (Harris & Spillane, 2008:34).

This type of leadership presents a support mechanism for organisational improvement and transformation in order to improve learners' performance (Harris & Spillane, 2008:34). The outcome is that distributed leadership and the level of interdependence needed at schools involve the principal, teachers, school board, parents and the environment to achieve learners' performance. Spillane (2008:8) emphasises the importance of learning by identifying three co-leadership practices necessary for schools as "collaborative, collection and coordinated practices of leadership" that can improve performance.

Spillane (2006:47) further suggests that improving learning at schools requires collaboration among the strategic players. As a result, Spillane emphasises that distributed leadership is part of the vision of improving teaching and learning in order to enhance academic performance. In addition to that, Peurach and Marx (2010:26) indicate that learners' academic performance at the school requires leadership and effective management to sustain performance standards. Jones and Harris (2014:479) comment that transformational educational leadership is at the centre of students' learning and

general academic performance. When used effectively, it can improve individuals' attitudes, actions and communication with members of the team.

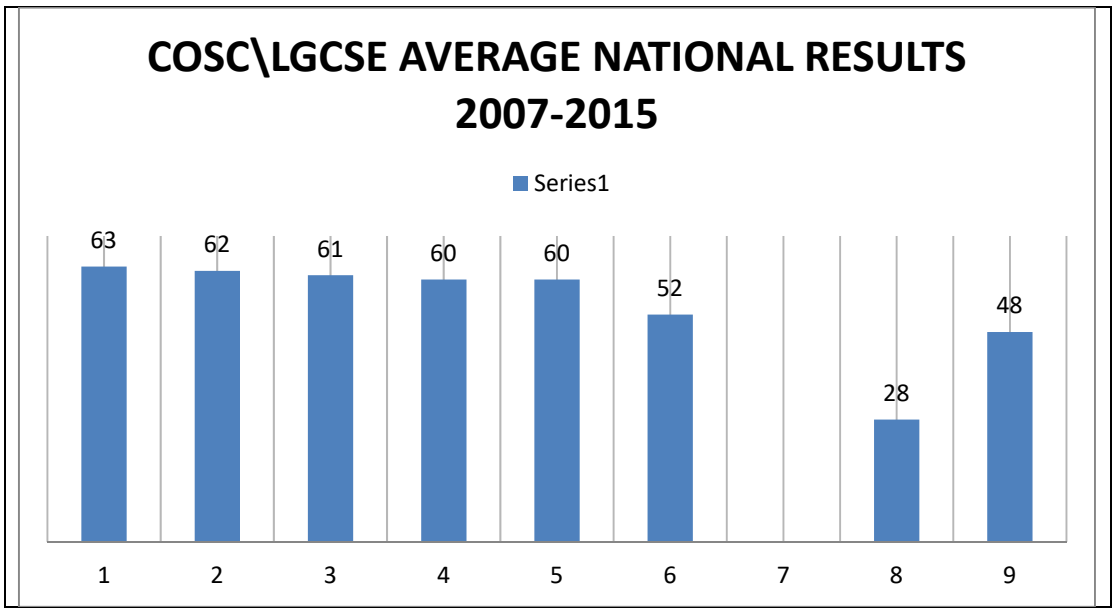
Equally important, Mayrowetz (2008:424) suggests that the effectiveness of distributed leadership is reflected in changes in leadership practices, learners' academic performance and relationships with academic staff. Using distributed leadership can take a collective approach to improve academic performance. As a result, Harris (2009:9) states that distributed leadership is associated with democratic and equitable forms of schooling, aimed at arising academic standards in improving learners' performance. Distributed leadership empowers teachers to influence positive student learning outcomes in their classroom practice (Harris 2009:9). When teachers' voices are heard in the decision-making process, they will be empowered and motivated to improve their learners' academic performance (McDonald & Larson, 2013:11).

Distributed leadership, according to Hartely (2010:279), encourages possible social cooperation and trust among educators, parents and community members to work together towards improving learners' academic performance. He further states that bringing communities together will motivate teachers, the school board and parents to play an active role in school affairs. As a result, they may be able to encourage teachers and learners to work hard at improving learners' academic performance.

Consequently, Hatcher (2015:253) indicates that learners' academic performance is more likely to improve when leadership sources are distributed throughout the school community and teachers are empowered in the areas of importance to them; also, if they are included and involved in the school decision-making process, which leads to distributed leadership as leading element for instructional development (ibid).

The academic performance of learners at the end of secondary education (COSC/LGSCE) examinations, which seems to be of poor quality, is of concern to the Lesotho government. The indication is that from 2007 to 2015, the COSC/LGCSE results seem to be declining. Table 2.1 shows the COSC/LGSCE Average National Results from 2007 to 2015.

Table 2.1



Source: *T.S.L compilation of Ecol annual publication of COSC results (Matlejane, 2009)*

The numbers on the horizontal axis in Table 2.1 represent the years from 2007 to 2015. The table indicates the figure for the first COSC Grade 12 cohort since introduction of the Free Primary education in the year 2000, in 2012 was. The table also reflects that the information for the year 2013 is not available, partly due to the replacement of the London-based COSC by LGCSE in 2013.

The declining poor performance is due to several factors. The pattern in Lesotho points to the fact that one of source is a lack of adequate leadership skills at schools, for instance the top performing schools, which performance exhibit relatively good management structures. This involves a lack of documented evidence or adherence to set up school management structures and schedules amongst authorities (school boards), parents, community partnership, and a lack of administrative structures between school leadership, teacher and learners.

The poor academic performance at high school education level is not a concern only in Lesotho, but South Africa has similar experiences. Niemann and Kortzo (2006:10) acknowledge the existence of excellent schools in South Africa as well as dysfunctional schools that achieve a less than 30% pass rate in their matric results. At dysfunctional

schools, the poor academic performance is associated with a lack of adequate leadership and communication strategies to address learners' academic performance.

2.5.1 Distributed leadership as leading element for instructional development

A distributed leadership approach addresses leadership with teams, groups and organisational features reflecting the awareness of organisational management regarding, a view that leadership roles and positions should share (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2013:11). This approach addresses the entirely of human resources in organisations such as academic staff at educational organisations as leaders (Malloy, 2012:11).

In addition to that, Day *et al.* (2009:7) report that this leadership model forms a necessary base to develop the leadership potential of human resources at schools and provide equal chances and categories for staff to realise the goals of the school. The basic principle emphasising this approach is the action of shared wisdom and common sense by creating interaction among staff at the school and maximisation of school competence and productivity, which will ensure improvements and achievements at the school (ibid).

Therefore, the distributed leadership model regards the management and operations of organisations in general and school organisations in particular as a complex and hard task. As a result, school management cannot be left to a single person, because school structures are not easy to be managed effectively with the leadership of a single leader.

Similarly, Robbins and Judge (2012:11) emphasise that this approach includes leadership styles that focus on interpersonal relationships, consider individual needs of staff and regard dissimilarities among members and leadership styles that focus on the technique and content of task. The concept of distributed leadership is interacted among leaders. Followers and situations to enhance quality of teaching and distributed leadership is adjacent to distributed cognition. It represents collective intellect. As a result, knowledge, skills or expertise is more than the sum of individualistic knowledge and abilities (Cha & Ham, 2012:637).

Consequently, Baloğlu (2011:127) states that in this point of view, leadership is more than individual knowledge and skills as well as producing the collective leadership potential of

an organisation. According to this leadership approach, school principals should first develop themselves and then train teachers to be super leaders in order to improve academic performance. When the shared values of school culture are based on trusting one another, super behaviours will develop in the school environment that leads to successful improvement (Spillane & Diamond, 2007:11).

Moreover, distributed leadership is about sharing and distributing of leadership practices (Malloy, 2012:11). Leaders, audience and situation interact in this type of leadership (Spillane, 2006:11). As a result, distributed leadership is not about assigning people to particular task or simple sharing task (Penlington, Kingston & Day, 2008:65). This type of leadership focuses on working collaboratively for the similar goal with progressive communication and interaction. Therefore, collaboration communication and interaction, rather than personal effort, is emphasised to improve school leadership and leaners' performance (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009:15).

The nine case studies from schools in the UK support the notion that effective teams apply distributed leadership among senior leadership teams in ways that give them a strong collective overview of teaching and learning, as well as of pastoral issues. They illustrate the argument that team structures are increasingly linked to notions of distributed leadership: "The most successful principals are sharing or distributing leadership responsibilities across their leadership teams" (OECD, 2008:31). School leadership plays an important role in learners' performance

2.5.2 School leadership and learner performance

The success of any school certainly depends on the kind of leadership the school has (Bush, 2011:515). However, most of the studies carried out about school leadership has revealed that school leadership has a direct, great influence on the school achieving its goal of developing the whole learner, teachers' effectiveness and learners' academic performance (Jones & Harris, 2014:476).

Obviously, the school principal is an overseer of all activities taking place at a school and responsible for the overall running and control of the school compound (Halverson & Clifford, 2013:387). However, there are many factors at play that account for students'

performance. For instance, being excellent communicators and having the ability to communicate effectively and accurately are important to achieve daily tasks (Campo, 2014:1). Another significant responsibility of principals includes reminding teachers, parents, learners and the school community of the school vision, mission, values and core significance of the school to provide teaching and learning in order to achieve good academic performance (Hallinger, 2013:141).

A study of distributed leadership is particularly timely, as a number of Irish and international studies have highlighted the need for leadership to be distributed throughout the organisation and the possible advantages in terms of school improvement and enhanced learning (NCSL, 2004:14; OECD, 2008:21).

To achieve academic performance, the principal as instructional leader involves setting goals, managing curriculums, monitoring lesson plans, allocating resources and evaluating teachers regularly to promote student learning and growth (Gronn, 2012:425). Effective instructional leadership behaviour of the school leader has been shown to be the most essential role to improve learners' academic performance (Strauss, 2013:45). Undeniably, a successful instructional leader should possess excellent planning and observation skills as well as proficiency in the research and evaluation of both teacher and learner' academic performance (ibid).

Conversely, Kormla (2012:14) contends that lack of school leadership at some schools degrades learners' academic performance due to the absence of quality leadership results in ill-adapted school organisation and programme. Similarly, the absence of school leadership leads to unstable and difficult staffing, learners' negative attitudes towards academic performance and discipline, an unhealthy system and climate, and non-cooperation of parents and the community (Halverson & Clifford, 2013:417).

Moreover, school leaders should practise shared leadership, where decision-making involves other stakeholders. The concepts and opinion from the school community can help to improve learners' academic performance. Their communication skills can inspire trust, confidence and motivation among teachers and learners and instil a sense of effectiveness in teachers and eventually have a positive impact on learners' academic performance. Similarly, Leithwood and Reihl (2013:78) argue that when school leadership

is characterised by trust, academic support norms and social relations have the potential to move learners towards academic success. Research has pointed to the importance of trust in an organisation practising distributed leadership (Smylie *et al*., 2007:41). Relationships built on trust can operate at individual, interpersonal, whole or community level (MacBeath, 2014:453).

Equally importantly, the school leader should encourage collaboration among teachers such as sharing experiences, knowledge and risks they come across with regard to teaching and learning process, and eliminate teacher isolation so that discourse about learners' performance becomes a collective work effort (Malloy, 2012:9).

The principal is obliged to maintain mutual interaction with teachers and community members, as this level of exchange between the leader of the school, teachers, parents and board members is a fundamental aspect for the success of effective schools (Hipp & Huffman, 2010:12). The majority of the principals of successful schools have developed a common and shared school vision and promoted developing processes that enable people to work together in flexible but disciplined projects, support and trust (Naseer, 2011:414). Furthermore, principals empower others to lead and distribute leadership responsibilities throughout the school, consequently emphasising the professional development of teachers. The concept of teachers working together to improve their teaching practices is a move away from the isolation and individualism of teaching as well as them involving parents and community in the process. To improve learner academic performance and leadership communication, distributed leadership has some merits (iid).

2.5.3 Merits of distributed leadership

Distributed leadership has transformed the traditional leadership model in which an individual person considered as a hero to lead alone entirely, and allocated the action of leading position among the members of the organisation (Bush, 2011:514). The most significant and extreme element around distributed leadership is the way this approach includes many elements related to quality education as well as educational environments (Halverson & Clifford, 2013:11).

In brief, distributed leadership can be called distributed instructional leadership and states

the principal as designed to encourage an effective climate of teaching and learning for leaders, teachers, parents, learners and the community (Malloy, 2012:11).

Research evidence shows that, without the support of the principal, distributed leadership may not be sustainable, and evidence from the same research shows that effective leaders play an important role in distributed leadership and in building capacity (Jones & Harris, 2014:479).

In addition, Botha (2015:207) indicates that principals must create opportunities for teachers to exercise leadership, secure trust among themselves. To this end, professional development may be regarded as one of the elements of successful distributed leadership. He perceives that staff development brings about change in the classroom practice of teachers.

A study conducted by Letsatsi (2009:13) on staff development in Lesotho shows that there is little empirical knowledge on the rank of teacher professional development in the country. Without generalising, he states that most schools still believe professional development is attending workshops. However, attending workshops do not improve teachers' careers. Therefore, the researcher perceives that principals in Lesotho have more important roles to play, not only incorporating teachers in their leadership, but also in organising staff, parents and community development programmes at the school to enhance distributed leadership.

Leader qualities of those who practise distributed leadership should be a combination of intelligence, courage and fearless risk making in an effort to ensure that the school environment is conductive to learning and produces learners who achieve academically (Grant *et al.*, 2010:403). Similarly, according to Van der Meschtl and Tyalall (2008:222), the global trend is towards site-based management, as it echoes the societal values of democratic participation. Leadership is an all-encompassing task, as the leadership practice of the principal as the figurehead is not the only practice that should be addressed. Rather, official and unofficially chosen leaders play equally vital roles in leading and managing schools (Hargreaves & Fink, 2008:230).

This type of leadership regards leadership as the collective contribution of all leaders to

the organisation and as a result distinguishes it from all other theories (Hatcher, 2015:254). There is a conviction that shared leadership is better than single leaders acting alone (Kempster, Cope & Parry, 2010:45). Distributed leadership accommodates communication, contribution and interaction within an organisation, including knowledge, by respecting difference expertise areas and recognising them (Korkmaz & Gunduz, 2015:110). Student achievement and alignment towards development in teaching are the foundations of distributed leadership (Cheng, 2010:35). School principals face various issues, including challenges that are necessary for school improvement. To overcome any issue necessitates the collaboration of the school board, SMT, parents, community and learners in order to achieve the goal (Pont, Nusche & Hopkins, 2008:10). Therefore, the work of leading and managing schools should involve multiple people in varying degrees (Spillane & Camburn, 2006:3). Effective leaders play a crucial role in distributed leadership and community building.

2.5.4 Distributed leadership in action: How it can create high-performing schools

Distributed leadership is essential, not only to ensure that all leadership activities are handled compactly to create high-performing schools, but also to see to it that the collective talents and experience of all members are deployed to the best effect (Hartley, 2010:202). Distributed leadership implies sharing responsibility for decision-making, for instance, with leadership teams, and enabling staff to lead in certain activities, empowering them to be innovative and creative and to work collaboratively with colleagues, parents and others members of the school community (ibid).

Researchers surveyed more than 4 200 teachers, assistant principals and principals at schools of varying sizes throughout the United States. They did in-depth interviews with teachers, principals and system-level leaders. Their research clearly demonstrates that few school systems distribute leadership within individual school buildings in ways that are common among most successful organisations – public or private, while many districts invest heavily in new leadership roles (Bierly *et al.*, 2016:310).

This type of leadership has been shown to be an important contributor to organisational success and performance (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009:11). Forms of distributed

leadership can assist capacity building at a school, which contributes to school improvement. As a result, it invites collaboration, shared responsibility and a sense that brings all members together to share ideas on how to improve academic performance for learners in order to create high-performing schools. Distributed leadership is a comprehensive design for a school to deliver on its core mission, improving the teaching and learning (Botha, 2015:214).

In addition to that, Bush (2011:515) states that this type of leadership can strengthen leadership capacity. In this instance, leadership is concerned with interdependency rather than dependency and include a variety of leaders in diverse roles who share leadership responsibilities (Harris, 2009:5). Therefore, it extends the boundaries of leadership, giving rise to the concept of teacher leadership. Extending leadership opportunities to teachers is powerful in that it acknowledges the diverse and significant leadership roles the teacher takes on every day and how these tasks intensify teaching positively (Hatcher, 2015:256).

Similarly, Day *et al.* (2009:75) indicate that distributed leadership in practice means that teachers have the opportunity to lead as well as take responsibility for the most important areas of change needed in school. As a result, principals can use the distributed leadership approach to enhance and sustain a leadership model that focuses on establishing more leaders with “end-to-end” responsibility for all aspects of teachers’ professional development, such as setting goals, observing, giving feedback, facilitating high-quality collaboration and creating strong alignments with high-performance evaluation (McGovern, 2016:30).

Distributed leadership means the principal has to share responsibility with others to become a leader of leaders, rather than a leader of all (Gronn, 2010:70). Equally important, the distributed leadership model puts more leaders closer to the frontline. They support teachers by observing and co-teaching in classrooms, and provide richer and more actionable feedback on instruction (Conley, 2007:11). This type of leadership breaks down barriers by creating opportunities for teachers to work together, creating teams with a shared mission in order to create high-performing schools.

Strong leadership creates teams and situations where team members can share knowledge, solve problems together and work towards common goals. Moreover, Day *et*

al. (2009:11) state that the most effective leaders understand that their role is not only to lead, but to inspire and build, as well as sharing commitment and capacity for a great performance. Therefore, the essence of distributed leadership is to empower teachers to become more involved in educational decisions at the school, thus improving classroom practice and learners' achievement (Mayrowetz, 2008:427).

Globally, distributed leadership has gained noticeable popularity in education discourse on contemporary education leadership and management literature with the aim to source the most suitable models of school governance, promoted as an offer of empowerment to school leaders. A distributed leadership perspective may be regarded as a preferred way for leaders to gain collaborative efforts of their team members (Gunter, 2012:37).

2.6 SUMMARY

Increased consciousness that education change in South Africa, as in globalisation, is accompanied by increased responsibilities and accountabilities, especially alongside the principal, is evident in contemporary studies. Changing roles of leaders within environments need to be addressed. School principals in Lesotho require certain characteristics and skills to sustain a dynamic school context that shapes student learning. Distributed leadership can play an important role in bringing about change at schools if considered carefully and applied.

This type of leadership is grounded in the interaction of school leaders, followers and situations (Spillane, 2009:9). In that respect, it is more than allocating tasks among formal and informal leaders. Consequently, distributed leadership seeks the source of leadership in actual practice, rather than in formal described roles, because multiple leaders have different areas of knowledge and expertise, and can work in collaborative and coordinated patterns to effect change rather than the contribution of one leader working independently.

Therefore, working collaboratively enhances communication; good communication means connecting with others, and creates an integrated work culture in order to improve school performance. Communication is of great value to human beings in various aspects

of social life. Leaders with good communicate skills are able to convey their thoughts, knowledge and ideas. Hence, interpersonal communication seems to be a necessity at schools. The next chapter focuses on interpersonal communication.

CHAPTER 3
THE ROLE OF INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION IN IMPROVING LEARNER LEARNERS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

3.1 INTRODUCTION

An objective of the study is to investigate the extent to which interpersonal communication may contribute towards the improvement of learner academic performance at Lesotho high schools. This chapter reviews literature that focuses on the following aspects: nature of communication, leadership and communication, barriers to parental involvement at schools, interpersonal relationship and communication, communication relation, school board and community relations, caring community, and school climate and culture.

3.2 THE NATURE OF COMMUNICATION AT SCHOOLS

An act of sharing one's ideas, attitudes or perceptions with another person or groups through words and other modes of communication is essential. In order for the school board as well as the parents and community members to share in the activities of school, there should be effective communication among them (Battilana, Gilmartin, Sengul, Pache & Alexander, 2010:242). In addition, communication may be successful if it is face-to-face, as well as when the stakeholders who participate in the communication show reverence and belief in their own and others' abilities (Capon, 2008:181). Therefore, the principal can play a critical role in ensuring that mutual respect and trust prevail among stakeholders in decision-making.

Communication is the heart of education and encompasses the activities that take place at schools, including the operating systems it employs to run smoothly. It should be noted that school communication activities may be regarded as a vigorous part of an effective education system and successful two-way communication is justified as an essential feature for schools succeeding in the education system (NSPRA, 2006:4; Grant & Ray, 2016:328).

Moreover, Thompson (2011:29) points out that decision-making is an essential part of a

manager's task; therefore, school principals' success as leaders is dependent on the quality and efficiency of decisions and his communication skills. Furthermore, Battilana *et al.* (2010:172) emphasise that communication is essential for a school to be successful, and that no school can exist in isolation from the rest of the living world. A school cannot achieve its goals without clearly defined internal and external communication links (Bouffard, 2008:312). As a result, the ideal is that the school community should step into a new territory from which it has traditionally been excluded; its members have to gain authority to participate in wide range of decision-making situations. Teachers working with the school community at any school setting may assist the community to recognise their strength and their ability to work together to establish unique ways in which they can help their children to learn and grow (Henke, 2011:39).

Successful communication at the school depends largely on collaboration and teamwork among school boards, parents and teachers. The school has to create a wider path and more opportunities for school boards, parents, teachers and the community to be involved in the school's processes and operations (Marishane, 2013:96). Presently, schools are experiencing a low level of parent-school relationships where communication is lacking and schools do not have systems in place that favour parent participation (Bouffard, 2008:309). Therefore, school leaders should exhibit positive attitudes in order to build collaboration and develop a trusting relationship with parents and the community. A key factor in building such a relationship is strong communication with stakeholders in a positive and consistent manner.

Furthermore, Van Deventer and Kruger (2010:16) state that as much as teachers need to be informed about new changes in different areas, the principal needs continuous feedback on the effect of these changes on teachers and learners' academic performance. Therefore, transparency begets trust among stakeholders, builds an atmosphere of positive interpersonal relations and creates a sense of freedom. In other words, when the school boards, parents and teachers keep the lines of communication open and are comfortable in sharing thoughts and feelings about providing quality education, the most extreme winner is the student, who will benefit from the strong relationship and enhance his or her academic performance (Kowalski, Petersen &

Fusarelli, 2007:45).

Communication is the foundation of effective partnerships and, therefore, to build effective partnerships with parents and the community that will increase students' achievement. Schools should speak and listen to parents, communities, business leaders and others with a stake in student learning (NSPRA, 2006:54; OECD, 2008:67). Successful partnerships require sustained mutual collaboration and support from school staff, families at home and in the community, and a school environment that welcomes its partners and encourages them to ask questions and voice their concerns as well as take part in a suitable decision-making (ibid). As a result, when community members have meaningful involvement, they feel empowered and develop a sense of pride, and this leads to new ideas, contributions and support, which leads to success.

3.3 LEADERSHIP AND COMMUNICATION

Some leaders seem to lack communication skills, which is an important function in leadership (Campo, 2014:1). Similarly, Davies and Davies (2010:5) indicate that leadership is a very important function. Organisations need a wisdom leader who is visionary, flexible and able to adopt change, as well as communicates effectively. Equally important, communication is a significant tool in any school environment as it contributes to the formation of a cohesive team and as activities are shared, workload is reduced (Sergiovanni, as cited in Bush, 2007:397). It is therefore important for the leadership to see to it that all stakeholders are involved in strategic planning of the school by communicating with them.

Leaders who possess the skill of communication are able to communicate the philosophy and objectives of the school in order to gain commitment to the staff (Kowalsi *et al*., 2007:44). A positive attitude towards staff members maintains good relationships among them; thus, decision-making necessitates communication and management and lays down the values and standards that learners are expected to adhere to, for instance, school prospects, school code of conduct and consistency (ibid).

Communication serves as the cornerstone for efficiency and effectiveness of any organization (Mojaki, 2009:21). In order for a school to function effectively, the leader

should create a conducive learning environment for all stakeholders involved in the school to work harmoniously (Capon, 2008:181). For instance, the physical appearance of the school should create an inviting climate for potential learners and provide a safe environment for staff and learners (Marishane, 2013:24). The leader should communicate a clear vision, mission and values of the school, as important aspects to all stakeholders. Furthermore, David (2009:229) emphasises that the leader should be able to communicate clearly and thoroughly throughout the school. He argued that leaders who cannot communicate competently can be considered as being "at a distinct disadvantage in terms of leading and facilitating school restructuring" (ibid).

In Lesotho, some schools have shifted radically away from their mission statement, values and objectives, because they do not adhere to them (Mokoqo, 2013:1). Through communication, school boards, teachers, parents and the community may be able to understand their positions in order to improve learners' better academic performance (Ahmad, Rahim & Seman, 2013:24). As a result, it is necessary to create learning communities to encourage growth and professional risk taking. It is the responsibility of the leaders to ensure that communication is effective among all stakeholders.

3.3.1 Communication partnership interaction

In this study, the community plays an important role in strengthening and building positive relationships at the school but for the purposes of this study the community will not actively contribute to improving learners' performance. Parents, however, have the responsibility to take charge of their children's learning and will therefore be actively involved.

The school does not exist in isolation, but within the community that it serves. In this context, to be effective, schools should, among others, consider the following aspects: school community relations, community participation and parent involvement, barriers to parent involvement in schools and communication. These aspects are discussed in detail below.

3.3.1.1 School community relations

School leadership requires a collaborative effort among teachers, learners, the principal, school boards and community members to influence students' academic performance in a positive way. For instance, community members have the knowledge, skills and talents that could contribute to the development of the school and, if invited by the principal, they are willing to share their knowledge with teachers and learners (Leithwood, Pattern & Janti, 2010:679). A school needs to involve community members in decision-making in order to build trust and commitment among them. In particular, they could serve as resource persons in subjects such as home economics and agriculture. Research also suggests that schools can strengthen students' sense of community by adopting feasible, common-sense approaches.

Actively cultivating respectful support relationships among learners, teachers and parents promote community partnerships (Crawford, 2012:610). Support relationships play an important role in the community, in the sense that it enables learners from diverse backgrounds to share their personal opinions, emotions and understandings with peers in their classrooms (Crawford, 2012:615). Support relationships assist parents in participating actively in their children's educational lives and taking up active roles at the school.

In addition to that, a common objective and ideal are emphasised. Along with academic performance, a school that encourages a strong community endeavour contributes to developing the qualities essential to good character and citizenship and instils moral values and responsibility within learners (Stoll, 2009:193). This results in all stakeholders working together to promote the school's values and shaping learners' daily interactions.

Moreover, communication provides opportunities for the school such as business people who could play an active role at the school by providing teaching materials and a variety of necessities that may be used in the production of teaching, or donate sport materials such as balls and jersey to the school. Subsequently, learners develop the skill of teamwork and develop richer relationships with their teachers and leaders and feel a sense of accomplishment as they contribute to others' development in the system,

develop wider and richer relationships, and experience the many satisfaction of contributing to the welfare of others (Stoll, 2009:195).

Similarly, Bush (2007:403) states that a school that acknowledges and understands supportive community participation, promotes relationships and creates conducive working environment. Therefore, it is important that a school should respect local traditions, and norms participate in local events of the community, and help to establish strong relationship between the school and the community, which in turn, results in close cooperation and communication, especially when the principal knows how to work with the community (Thompson, 2011:29). As a result, establishing school community relations is very important because supportive relationships which include community participation and parent involvement, form the heart of the community.

3.3.1.2 Community participation and parent involvement

A school that accepts democratic and participatory leadership and encourages collaboration performs better than those that use autocratic leadership (Orodho, 2014:10). Community participation and parent involvement in the school enhance team spirit. The school leadership should establish a relationship with parents and the community and ensure that regular updates regarding school activities are provided (Marishane, 2013:2). As a result, leaders need to communicate with stakeholders to develop a common and shared school vision in order to support a culture of cooperation.

Furthermore, Thompson (2011:22) indicates that the community and parental involvement may promote a more positive school culture. Thus, developing traditional skills and crafts, a community could demonstrate traditional activities unknown to the staff, such as traditional dances or displays and teach local crafts. However, community and parental involvement is an area most schools ignore and fail to improve (Marishane, 2013:107). However, if handled properly, it can create a cordial atmosphere among stakeholders. As a result, parents invest in the academic careers of their children and share the schools' responsibility of increasing learners' academic performance.

Effective parent involvement produces positive spin-offs for learners, families and the learning environment. Research indicates that the positive influence of parental

involvement is beneficial, notably those parents who support their children in their learning by assisting them with tasks such as reading or tutoring, using material and instructions provided by teachers (NSPRA, 2006:8; National Network of Partnerships, 2012:32). As a result, the earlier parents get involved in their children's education, the greater the chances of enhancing the child's achievements.

Subsequently, promoting parental participation is an essential goal for a school. The school should initiate interactions with parents and give them the support they require. In order for schools to assist learners to improve their academic performance, the parent-school involvement relationship should be well structured and constantly strengthened. Thus, parent-community involvement that is connected to learner achievement inevitably has a greater effect on learner achievement than more common forms of participation (NSPRA, 2006:8; OECD, 2008:45).

Communication from school to home should be effective; learners' progress and notes should be checked regularly. As a result, learning at home, interactive homework information, and ways to help students practise and study for tests should be taken into account (ibid).

The way the community may contribute and assist the school as a learning environment is, for instance, by "providing direction, in recruiting volunteers to help at school functions, resource person and providing a sense of stability" (Marishane, 2013:102).

Moreover, Marishane (2013:99) indicate that parents and the community may play an important role in providing parenting support and security to the school, provided the leadership engages them in productive ways and works cooperatively with them. For example, developing co-curricular activities, unlike subject teaching, does not necessarily require teacher training. It requires talent, love and commitment. In cases where teachers lack the expertise for sports such as netball, football and athletics, community members with such skills can help. When parents and the community feel engaged to the education environment, the school's processes and activities in a meticulous and compassionate manner, the school is at a vantage point to meet its educational goals (Leithwood & Mascall, 2008:539).

Therefore, the principal should communicate with all stakeholders for better educational goals of the school, because there is no relationship without communication. Communication is an essential skill in any organisation (Bush, 2007:399). However, there are barriers to parental involvement in schools, as discussed in the next section.

3.3.2 Barriers to parental involvement in schools

Barriers to parental involvement in their children's education, as indicated by Wherry (2009:7), are explained below.

- Schools where parents do not have the ability to participate in decision-making in areas like school improvement plans, ideas from parents are not taken into account.
- Schools that fail to invite, welcome and encourage parents' involvement hinder learners' performance;
- Schools that do not inform parents immediately when they discover learners experiencing problems such as coming to school late, failing to submit assignments and missing classes.
- Schools that fail to provide parents with practical advice about what they can do to assist their children's study at home, such as providing material or good communication.
- Schools that are deficient in exercising two-way communication between parents and school personnel, for instance, ignoring parents' contributions, but treating parents like partners in helping children to learn, need an effective communication strategy.
- Therefore, changes in technology have all influenced parental involvement. There has to be a general commitment to involve parents in partnerships with schools. There should be consistent involvement in education as well as the spirit in which that engagement impacts to lead the school to successful improvement, considering school values, mutual trust and respect, collaborative approaches and effective communication (Wherry, 2009:7).

3.3.2.1 Communication

Communication is one of the most basic elements of human functioning, because it is the foundation of strong, healthy relationships. Relationships commence and develop through communication (Kellet, 2007:54). In addition to that, leaders possessing the skill of communicating effectively are regarded as an integral part of all management functions, since they are equipped with skills to plan, organise, lead or control staff (Hewitt, 2009:133).

It is argued that management by objectives relies heavily on the communication skills of the leaders. When arranging work schedules and controlling activities, leaders have to discuss quality, make a continuous observation of performance, and take corrective actions (Kellet, 2007:55). Thus, interpersonal roles involve interacting with staff to motivate them and resolve conflict between different departments.

Furthermore, communication in the workplace is generally accepted as having the capacity to maintain a heathy school environment, and it is considered to play an important role in ensuring organisational success (Hewitt, 2009:135). Equally important, Kowalsi *et al.* (2007:41) state that communication is important, because it does not simply convey information to people; it also fosters relationships between people.

In this study, communication may be regarded as one of the central elements of effective teamwork, and interaction between members of the organisation. This is a primary aspect of distributed leadership (Stoll, 2009:3). Furthermore, Smyli *et al.* (2007:475) refer to this as leadership distributed, stretched and distributed over multiple leaders with effective communication among themselves.

The concept of distributed leadership is premised on effective teamwork, sharing of leadership responsibility, and that the results of the team when communicating are higher than those of individuals working alone (Woolley, 2009:514). Good communication means connecting with others, because when working as a team there is interdependency and a collective effort that will help to achieve good results (Stoll, 2009:31). Therefore, working as a team and dividing tasks among one another increase learners' academic performance. Members are able to pool their expertise and empower one another through

effective communication (Leithwood & Mascall, 2008:529). In general, teams are characterised by high communicative interaction between its members and the efficacy of team leadership relies heavily on good communication.

Communication is a continuous process that enables schools to function effectively, as it is associated with all management processes (Habaci, 2013:269). However, in today's world, communication between stakeholders at schools are on the decline because of ineffective communication.

In order to improve learner academic performance at Lesotho schools, principals, teachers, parents, school boards, and community members should assist the school in creating an optimal learning environment, supported by great communicative interaction between stakeholders. In addition, Habaci (2013:267) indicates that communication is a simple, but an amazingly powerful tool, that gives effective leaders an edge and the wisdom to lead schools towards successful goals. Communication is a craft that should be learnt. Varma and Sternberg (cited in Toti, 2009:53), view communication as a way that begins a relationship and keeps it going, because where there is no communication there is no relationship.

Equally important is that a relationship needs communication and leaders who adopt change, and are able to formulate school development plans (Lauring, 2011:231). For instance, shifting from a traditional style (autocratic) to a democratic style of leadership is sensible, because school change requires competent leaders who are able to deal with current matters, as well as steer the school towards outstanding academic performance. The requirements for leadership are comprised of multitudinous individual characteristics, especially communication skills (Matthews & Thakkar, 2012:325).

In order to attain the aims and objectives of a school, mutual communication needs to be increased (Whitley & Chambers, 2009:6). An effective education depends on the responsibilities of the principal and teachers; therefore, the principal should communicate effectively with staff as well as parents, school boards and the community (Habaci, 2013:270). Communication is a process of sharing ideas, knowledge, attitudes and skills. Through this process, behaviour can be changed (ibid).

Effective communication sustains an effective environment if people listen to one another attentively and if they show positive relationships when interacting (Gruenert, 2008:57). In addition, there are many people at a school, such as school boards, principal, teachers, parents, community and other employees, who should all work in harmony with one another other. In order for a school to succeed, communication must be seen as strong and significant (Habaci, 2013:268).

Furthermore, for a school to establish strong communication, leaders should be able to empathise with staff (Salas & Gelfand, 2013:735). Therefore, communication channels need to be constructed at schools, which must always be open to accommodate staff participation in any decision process related to the school (Matthews & Thakkar, 2012:325). As a result, a leader is required to be able to communicate effectively, work with others cooperatively, and support and train staff members.

Moreover, leaders should have effective communication skills in order to communicate meaningfully with staff from different cultural backgrounds (Whitley & Chambers, 2009:18). Communication among teachers is a natural process that involves spontaneous intercommunication at a school (Hasgorur, 2007:166). Teachers are expected to stick to general communication principles in this process. However, poor communication leads to unfavourable conditions and affects learners' success negatively (Henke, 2011:40).

To ensure the effective running of schools and its outcomes, it is important that teachers should strive to keep the communication with learners and their parents open (Hasgorur, 2007:169). The nature of this communicative action should not only concentrate on complaints forwarded to parents, but it should encompass an interest teachers express in the social and academic well-being of the learner (Beeka, 2009:49). Therefore, teachers should choose face-to-face communication when communicating with parents. Apart from meetings, they should visit their homes and use clear and understandable language in order to maintain effective environment and enhance learner academic performance (Balay, 2009:15). In this respect, it follows that empowering teachers is an essential weapon.

Principals who were exposed to the intervention programme such as teacher empowerment and effective communication with stakeholders become more competent

than those who were not (Balay, 2009:17). Thus, principals have a greater possibility enhancing learner academic performance (Beeka, 2009:47). Therefore, empowered teachers and effective communication directly influence achievement and increases school success. This indicates the importance of ethical foundation, as it involves elements of trust and mutual respect (Habaci, 2013:466).

Communication is a necessity in all areas of social life. As such, the phased localisation of the Cambridge Overseas School Certificate (COSC) examinations, which was renamed Lesotho General Certificate for Secondary Education (LGCSE) needed to be communicated clearly with parents, teachers, students, school boards and the community members in order to understand what it entails. This would place stakeholders in a better position to advise their children, especially when it comes to the selection of subjects (Mendenhall, 2011:20).

3.4 INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS AND COMMUNICATION

Interpersonal communication is a key human function that involves interaction among people, and includes the ability to relate effectively with others. MOET (2006:14) indicates that people interact with others in different ways such as race, politics and religion. In interpersonal communication, everyone expresses personal needs and understands the needs of others, makes decisions, solves problems and regulates power. This relationship can enhance cooperation, mutual trust, and support, and help to work successful as a team (Woolf, 2009:43).

In Chicago, the researchers found that trust among school staff and parents is an essential predictor of learner performance (Caspe, Lopez, Chu & Weiss, 2011:13). In order to engage parents, the community and the school board in learning, teachers need a trusting, mutually respectful relationship with stakeholders that are reinforced by consistent two-way communication systems.

Similarly, Motepe (2007:291) claims that interpersonal skills involve a set of skills necessary for establishing, maintaining and sustaining relationships and are closely interconnected with communication skills.

What can be gathered from the above is that successful relationships are built on effective communication. When stakeholders express themselves, understand the needs of others, make decisions and work collaboratively, misunderstandings will be cleared up. Positive attitude, trust and support encourage stakeholders to build a smooth and strong, sustainable relationship. It is therefore important for the school board, teachers, parents and community to work together as a team in order to improve learner academic performance.

3.4.1 Responsibilities of the school board

A school board should manage and administer the school for which it has been constituted. It should (in terms of the MoET Education Act, 2010:182):

- recommend to the appointing authority or proprietor, as the case may be, disciplinary action against a principal or head of department;
- on the advice of the inspector of the schools or a district education officer, recommend to the appointing authority the promotion or demotion of a teacher;
- cooperate with the relevant local authority on matters related to the development of the school; and
- submit, within six months from the end of the school year, an audited statement of accounts of the school to the proprietor and the principal secretary.

Therefore, in order to facilitate the above, a school board should make use of all members and ensure that they work together as a team towards school improvement. Effective school board leadership significantly influences student achievement and should work hand in hand with the principal.

3.4.2 Duties of the principal

A principal is responsible for the organisational management and day-to-day running and leadership of a school. According to Section 21 of the Education Act of 2010 (MOET 2010), the principal

- is the main accounting officer of the school;

- is responsible to the school board for the control and use of the school funds;
- maintains or causes records of income and expenditure of the school to be maintained;
- prepares an annual budget for a school and submit it to the school board for its approval; and
- maintains or causes management records of a school to be maintained as provided for in the regulations laid down by the Minister of Education and Training.

In addition, the principal (in terms of the MoET Education Act, 2010:178):

- has to ensure that meaningful teaching and learning take place at the school;
- is responsible for discipline of teachers under his or her supervision in line with the disciplinary code of conduct;
- has to maintain and enforce discipline among staff and all registered learners receiving instructions at the school;
- within two months of the commencement of a new school year, has to provide accurate statistical returns as may be stipulated in the regulations;
- shall, within three months of the end of each school year, submit a financial statement of the school to the school board for its approval; and
- and perform other duties as may be described by the Minister or delegated to him or her by the school board.

The deputy principal should work in close cooperation with the principal. This will facilitate taking over the principal's duties when the principal is unavailable.

3.4.3 Duties and responsibilities of the deputy principal, heads of departments (HoDs) and teachers

The deputy principal is responsible for the following:

- arranging meetings with heads of departments to discuss the curriculum and ordering of and equipment;
- expected to teach a reduced load 14 to 18 periods per week;

- should coordinate the administration of internal examinations, the recording of examination and continuous assessment marks and the preparation of term reports;
- is normally in charge of discipline (often chairperson of a disciplinary committee), prefects' meetings and punishments;
- serious disciplinary matters, which could possibly result in suspension or expulsions of pupils must be referred by the Deputy to the Principal;
- is responsible for preparing the school timetable and for drawing up the roster for teachers on duty, ensuring that all classes are supervised when teachers are absent; and
- acts as a secretary at staff meetings, and ensures that accurate copies of minutes are promptly distributed to all members of the teaching staff (MOET, 2006:10).

Therefore, the deputy principal should work jointly with heads of departments and teachers.

A head of department not only has responsibilities in his or her subject area, but must also act as a link between the principal and members of staff. To facilitate this, and the performance of his or her other duties, it is advisable that he or she

- meets regularly with the members of the staff in the department and the principal;
- ensure that the school is working according to the correct external syllabus as laid down by the Ministry of Education and Training;
- is responsible, with the subject teachers, for the preparation and upkeep of Scheme and Records of Work done books to be completed weekly by all subject Teachers. This record must be checked regularly by the principal of the school. This record is school property and may not be removed from the premises upon retirement or transfer. It must be available to any subject teacher to be able to see what has been recovered and what point in the scheme of work has been reached by particular class.
- newly employed teachers should be able to refer to the HoD for advice on the teaching of the subject and information on useful reference material;
- should hold regular meetings of the subject teachers to discuss relevant

department matters;

- should see to the formulation and implementation of policies in respect of assessment and pupils' written work and ensure that feedback from assessment is used to inform the teaching-learning processes; and
- should supervise and monitor subject teachers through such means as lesson observation, checking scheme books, preparation books and pupils' books (Ministry of Education and Training, 2006:11).

As a result, HoDs must work cooperatively with teachers.

Teachers must be aware of being members of a team working for the development of the school under the leadership of the principal, as well as the specific duties related to teaching. They

- should take an active part in school life, particularly in out-of-school activities such as games and societies;
- teach a full programme as allocated by the principal;
- must be familiar with the syllabuses, schemes of work and text books, and collaborate with other teachers of the subjects, in preparing schemes of work, and know something about the work taught in classes both above and below his or her own.
- have to complete the weekly Record of Work done, by entering a reasonable detailed note of work covered that week in the record book.
- set and mark exanimations under the direction of the HoD;
- take part in disciplinary matters when necessary;
- maintain daily class attendance;
- keep classes informed of any time table changes;
- prepare lesson plans and notes both for personal use and to note the pupils; and
- monitor progress and keep a record of pupils' marks for the use on the record book (MOET).

Therefore, it is important for the school hierarchy mentioned above to work as a team,

taking into account the community.

Marishane (2013:109) state that a school does not exist in isolation, but within the community that the school is situated. As a result, parent-community involvement is a necessity. Parent-community involvement plays a crucial role in supporting the school with funds and security, provided the principal works cooperatively with them. When parent-community involvement is considered as part of the school process and operations in school developments, the school becomes successful in achieving its educational goals through interpersonal communication.

Interpersonal communication at the school is an essential skill to assist stakeholders in relating in positive ways with one other and maintaining healthy interpersonal relations as well as social well-being (Van Wyk & Lemmer, 2007:307). Therefore, it is important for a school management team to work collaboratively with parents and the community to enhance learner academic performance.

In addition to that, Van Wyk and Lemmer (2007:315) indicate that parent-community involvement in schools correlates with higher academic performance and school improvements when the school works together with parents and the community to support learning, learners tend to earn high standards, attend school regularly, stay at school longer, enrol in higher-level programmes and it promotes community relations.

3.5 COMMUNITY RELATIONS

The involvement of a community in school activities plays an essential role, especially when the school makes that community to feel a part in decision-making. Boot (2011:20) indicates that “deep relations between communities and schools are crucial in developing countries”, involving several advantages.

In addition to that, MOET (2006:6) states that encouraging pupils to take part an active part in any community projects, and cooperating with members of the community in any school activity increase the participation of communities in schools for improvement.

In Lesotho, many schools do not teach history as a subject. History education will introduce learners to their heritage by teaching them about their society (Ray, 2013:333).

Teacher and other staff recognise that community relations bring important information to share with teachers. They know that the communities' knowledge of their children is often different from that of a teacher and they acknowledge how important this input is to their understanding of each learner. Printy (2008:29) emphasises that when teachers practise this principle of building positive community relations, they are acutely aware that they are in an equal partnership with the community. Each perspective is valid and valuable and they make sure to let the community know that they appreciate their input as well as that they intend to work in partnership with the community to make sure that their learners are successful at school (ibid).

Moreover, when the school invites traditional groups from the community to take part in national celebrations such as Moshoeshoe Day, and display or sell their crafts on an 'Open Day' to raise funds for the school, they feel that they contribute to the life of the school (Boot, 2009:45). Therefore, the involvement of the community partnership can be an important strategy in the development of the school and enhance performance.

As a result, the community provides incentives for the school as well as willing to support learners who academically perform well. The report confirms that schools where the strategic plans involve power sharing and community participation are likely to achieve successful educational goals.

However, Grant and Ray (216:408) indicate that globally, community relations cannot be an isolated effort of the school or an individual teacher; it is the work of the whole school to ensure that community partnerships feel welcome and have options for participation in their children's education. They further state that community partnerships need an open and friendly environment that welcomes community partnership, and teachers who embrace the principles of community support in all that they do; teachers who are knowledgeable about community issues and are sensitive to the needs of the community and what effect these needs may have on their learners.

In addition, the National Network of Partnership Schools (2012:213) emphasises that teachers who have high expectations and are committed to ensuring excellence by creating curriculums that are relevant to each learner's family culture and living conditions succeed in improving their learners' academic performance. In addition, members of

school boards who understand the value of community partnerships work in close collaboration with community agencies and support programmes that can bring needed resources to the schools.

It further indicates that schools need school boards, teachers and other staff who are committed to building respectful and responsive relationships with families, and avoid negative labels. Support schools need are school boards, teachers and parents who recognise the unique role that schools play in providing equal opportunities to learning, which will support the future of the community.

Therefore, power sharing and community involvement at schools, effect change through voices and actions. In order for community relations to function effectively, there should be effective communication, including respect and trust (Capon, 2008:181). As a result, the principal should take into account that there is respect and trust among school boards and communities.

3.6 SCHOOL BOARD AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS

A school board is an essential part of the community and plays an active part in the development of that community. Similarly, learners should, by their appearance and activities, be the source of pride to that community (MoET, 2006:5).

In addition to that, school boards oversee the management and the proper and efficient running of the school (MoET Education Act, 2010:181). This means that a school board has the authority to communicate effectively with the community.

Equally important, Joubert and Bray (2007:4) state that a school governing body has general responsibilities to ensure that the school is run effectively and provides the best education for learners. Knowledge and understanding play important roles in the school governing body and the community. School boards and communities should build good relations through effective communication. The school board should communicate the rational strategic planning of the school in an integrated manner with the community in advance (Marishane, 2013:101). Moreover, David (2009:229) emphasises that strategic planning should be communicated clearly and thoroughly throughout the school. This

means that when the rationale for implementing strategy is understandable and appreciated, implementation may be well done.

In order to improve learner academic performance, school boards and communities should work collaboratively in harmony to promote the best interests of the school and provide quality education. Furthermore, Anglin (2010:174) reports that community-relations involvement helps schools to increase their connection with the community life. Community relations may assist the school to increase its relevance and strengthen its connection in order to effect sustained change (Anglin, 2011:133). Therefore, community relations, working cooperatively with school boards are essential. School boards, in cooperation with relevant community partners, can use a school after school hours as a place of variety for community functions such as improving partners and other members of the community's skills pertaining to parenting, family well-being and computer technology.

Schools could work in groups with community development institutions in developing communities. The careful planning and designing of programme by schools and members of the community could elevate communities (ibid:167). As a result, uplifting the community is a powerful way of giving back and it leads to a caring community.

3.7 CARING COMMUNITY APPROACH

When the school works hand-in-hand with the community, the community ends up caring for that school by meeting the social and emotional needs of learners and providing effective communication for learning (Hlalele, 2012:115).

In addition to that, Myende (2011:80) states that using various positive strategies to help learners to assist one another helps to maintain positive behaviour, support among themselves and ongoing commitment to work as a team. As a result, these lead to the integration of academic and behavioural support for all learners. The use of evidence-based social practices and systems encourages academic commitment and performance and the use of teaching practices promotes voluntary learners' behaviour and creates safe school settings.

A caring community is a necessity, in the sense that it promotes a context and environment in which schools can work for all. Students must receive instruction and support in social and emotional as well as behavioural learning to support academic growth (Van Wyk & Lemmer, 2007:305). In order for effective learning to occur, students must have a relaxed state of mind. Therefore, a caring community is essential to a school, because it brings about collaboration, as well as supportive and respectful relationships among staff, school boards, parents and the community, which focus on different issues such as effective teaching through effective communication of sharing responsibilities to improve learners' academic performance (Woolf, 2010:37).

Equally important, Ellerbrock and Kiefer (2010:396) indicate that in a caring community, learners are provided with academic and life skills necessary to experience success at school. A caring community influences learners' development and educational practices in positive ways (Myende, 2011:115). Academic improvements of by a caring community include learners' opportunities to master the foundational skills necessary for learners to experience success at school (National Network of Partnership Schools, 2012:49). Moreover, a caring community approach can improve school programmes and school climate, provide services and support, increase parents skills and leadership, connect parents and teachers with others at the school and in the community, and help schools with their task (Clase, Kok & Van der Merwe, 2007:243), in order for learners to succeed at school and in future.

Therefore, collaboration of parents, teachers and community leads to learners' success in education. A caring community requires excellent academic achievement, good communication and productive interactions involving all stakeholders (Ellerbrock & Kiefer, 2010:396) in order to create a healthy school climate.

3.8 SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

School leaders have a great role in working with all stakeholders to formulate a vision for the academic success of all students (Conley, 2007:11). Developing a shared vision around standards is a significant element of a school leader, linked with clarity of communication of the vision to the parents, students, and staff. The relevance of the vision

for the school context is also very important (Penlington *et al.*, 2008:66). Equally important, a principal's vision should be positive both to what is happening internally and in the external environment, considering the community and wide policy context (ibid).

Vision is the beacon that provides a school with direction. A vision statement should provide a realistic, trusted and appealing picture of a school for the future. It should be shared by a large number of stakeholders and relate the school to its place in the community (Joubert & Bray, 2007:50). Consequently, the mission statement should support the vision of the school by explaining the character, identity and reason for the school existence (ibid). A mission statement should define its purpose in such a way that it rises above the interests of learners, parents and teachers' morale and creates a suitable learning climate (Joubert & Bray, 2007:50).

Van Deventer and Kruger (2010:16) support the view that good teacher morale and learner accomplishment go together and, as such, teamwork and collaboration are the pillars of a sound school climate. The principal is the most important and central factor of a school environment and its climate. This is because the principal plays a crucial part to see to it that a school climate is conducive to quality teaching and learning (David, 2009:249).

Furthermore, Marishane (2013:29) indicate that a school climate is largely influenced by the leadership qualities of the principal, such as readiness and experience. The ability of the school to fulfil its educational goals of quality teaching and learning is not a single factor; there are many other factors at play that account for learner academic performance, such as the quality of teachers, school management and school premises. Climate also is an essential factor (ibid). A school's climate is associated with the cultural values and beliefs that prevail among stakeholders. Kruger and Steinmann (in Van Deventer & Kruger, 2010:14) state that school climate is influenced by culture.

Moreover, Hoy and Miskel (2010:192) indicate that the nature of teacher interactions with parents and the community would be a feature of a school's values if the school values its learners, parents and community. For instance, a school that focuses on fundraising will organise more social functions for parents. Overall, the school climate has a direct impact on the ability and willingness of the teachers and learners to achieve its

educational objectives.

Furthermore, Brown (2008:13) indicates that the establishment of a conducive healthy climate at a school helps the school to succeed in improving the academic performance of its learners. Therefore, it is important to identify the features of a conducive school climate.

At a school where management supports teachers and learners by ensuring that teaching materials are properly ordered and delivered in a specified period to facilitate learning, the school climate would be positive towards achieving its educational objectives (Boot, 2011:133). A healthy school climate is characterised by friendly and enthusiastic teachers who are always available, approachable and willing to help. Raising teacher morale is important for the achieving of educational goals. It provides an opportunity for teachers to express themselves and to be involved in decision-making, as this can give them a feeling of purpose and acceptance (Boot, 2011:124).

Normally, learners within a healthy climate are able to do their work independently and maintain high levels of commitment, such as the completion of school projects. Every school has an institutional character that develops over a period of time and is determined by the community it serves, including its staff. The uniqueness of the school is known as its institutional culture (David, 2009:249). The way staff and learners feel about the institutional culture is known as the school climate (Gruenert, 2008:58). Principals may have some influence on the culture if their management characteristics affect the climate of the school.

The culture and climate of the school give the school its identity and assist the school in achieving its goals of quality teaching and learning in order to improve learner academic performance (Hoy & Miskel, 2010:194). The principal plays a crucial role in determining the culture and climate of the school. Therefore, collaboration and teamwork are essential elements for driving the school to function effectively towards achievable goals through effective and sound communication (Deal & Peterson, 2009:41).

3.9 POLICY AND PRACTICES

The Ministry of Education and Training (2009:8) stipulates in the curriculum and assessment policy framework that, while acknowledging, as the Lesotho constitution states, that Sesotho and English are the two official languages, it recognises the fact that there are other languages besides Sesotho and English. English shall be used as a medium of instruction and to be taught as a subject as well, while a local language, which is Sesotho, is taken as one of the passing subjects, including English, mathematics and science. However, the new education structure published in the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Framework LGCSE (Raselimo & Mahao, 2015:12) measures the competency of the learner.

3.10 SUMMARY

Interpersonal communication plays an important part in improving of learners' academic performance, because it involves interaction among school boards, teachers, parents and the community. Working together, sharing views and ideas, empowering one another to feel part of the school in decision-making create a healthy school environment. The development of the teacher or a school as a whole is a mechanism to improve learner academic as an aspect of distributed leadership. Effective communication is essential for the school to be successful; it depends largely on collaboration and teamwork of the school board, parents, teachers and the community partnership. The school has to create wider paths and opportunities for parents and community partnerships to be involved in the school process and operations. Working in collaboration creates open communication that leads to an open and friendly environment that welcomes community partnership. The school that understands the value of the community participation and works in close collaboration with that community can bring much-needed resources to the school. Community partnership that is recognised by the school is better able to support the school to meet its educational goals, and can best help all learners to succeed.

The next chapter presents the research design and methodology used in the study.

CHAPTER 4
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the research design and methodology, research instruments and sampling method that the researcher utilised to gather data. This chapter also reflects on the selection of participants, ethical considerations, trustworthiness and value of the study, and presents the data analysis procedures.

4.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

Research design is a plan or a blueprint of how one intends to conduct research (Babbie & Mouton, 2011:74). It is a plan that moves from the underlying theoretical framework to specifying the selection of respondent, the data collection techniques to be used and data analysis to be done (Maree, 2010:105). It specifies whether the study will involve groups or individual participants and how many variables are included in the study (Gravetter & Forzano, 2009:185).

Fouché (2005:268) and Creswell (2009:3) indicate that research design signifies strategies and procedures for the research, which includes the decision from broad assumptions to detailed methods. Furthermore, Creswell (2009:14) states that research design leads and is ascertained by the topic of the investigation. Therefore, studying a topic such as a distributed leadership communication strategy for improved learner academic performance provides insight into the skill or knowledge as well as challenges the leaders face at schools.

4.3 RESEARCH PARADIGM

This study is based on an interpretivist paradigm. According to Willis (1995:23), interpretivists do not believe that there is no distinct, correct route or particular method to knowledge. Walsham (1993:33) argues that, “in the interpretive tradition, there are no ‘correct’ or ‘incorrect’ theories. Instead, they should be judged according to how

‘interesting’ they are to the researcher as well as those involved in the same areas”.

Similarly, Mertens (1998:22) maintains that the assumption on which the interpretivist paradigm is based, is that knowledge is socially created by researchers who should endeavour to appreciate the multifaceted world and experience of those who live in it. The ultimate aim of the interpretive research is to offer a perspective of a situation and to analyse the situation under study so as to provide insight into how a particular group of people makes sense of their situation or the phenomena they encounter.

Moreover, the interpretive design recognises negotiations between investigator and the investigated to present the insider’s perspective, so that both the investigator and investigated are present. The data are accounts that researchers then encode for emergent themes, looking for connections and constructing higher-order themes (Hancock, Ockleford & Windridge, 2009:13).

An interpretive approach is an approach that aims to understand people (Babbie & Mouton 2011:28). The important goal of the interpretivist is consideration; thus the researcher should work supportively with the schools under study in order to comprehend and interpret each participant’s subjective experiences with how principals could use distributed leadership communication to improve learner academic performance. However, a interpretivist may state his or her understanding.

The primary supposition is that by studying people in their social contexts, there is a better chance to appreciate their insights about their own undertakings (Hussey & Hussey, 1997:54). The interpretivists’ societal truth is observed by various people with a magnitude of views of reality (Mack, 2010:7).

The interpretivistic paradigm highlights the researcher’s part as the ability to recognise, elucidate and explain social reality through diverse contributors (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2007:19). In the current study, an interpretivistic approach is adopted, because it maintains that reality may be understood through subjective interpretation of reality. Certainly, it may be presumed that qualitative researchers commit to the natural perceptions and to the interpretive understanding of human experience (Jourbish, Khurram, Ahmed, Fatima & Haider, 2011:2083).

Similarly, Niewenhuis, Beckmann and Prinsloo (2007) indicate that the interpretive paradigm is supported by thought and explanation; therefore, to witness is to gather data about actions, whereas to interpret is to understand that by drawing conclusions. It focuses on people's subjective experiences, on how people construct the social world by sharing meaning, and how they interact with one another. This study focused on how the principal could use distributed leadership practices to improve learner academic performance. In order to achieve the aforementioned, the researcher employed the qualitative research approach.

In the next section, the qualitative research approach is discussed.

4.4 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH APPROACH

In this study, a qualitative approach was used. Hitchcock, Huges, Denzin and Lincoln (as cited by Manning, 2008:4) argue that qualitative research is "an approach that enables researchers to learn first-hand about the social world that they are investigating by means of participation in that world through a focus on the individual". The qualitative approach is important, because it describes data in words, not in numbers. Studies accept the researcher as "research instrument" in the data gathering process.

In addition, the researcher's engagement in the fluctuating world experiences of participants or respondents is crucial, as he/she is required to record mentioned changes in the real-life context before, during or post changes (Maree, 2007:79). Similarly, Maree (2011:23) indicates that qualitative researchers believe participants possess certain assumptions about things in their world and their experiences should be explored to make meaning of it. Therefore, a particular shared relationship exists between researcher and participant.

Moreover, Denzin and Lincoln (2011:61) acknowledge that qualitative researchers consider the real-life perspective as well as adhere to the interpretive meaning that may be attached to human existence. Equally important to note is that qualitative research involves an inquiry in which researchers collect data in face-to-face situations by interacting with selected participants in their own contexts. It is based on the "constructivist philosophy that assumes multi-layered of reality, interactive shared social

experiences interpreted by individuals" (McMillian & Schumacher, 2010:115). It refers to meanings, concepts, definitions characteristics and descriptions of things (Berg, 2009:3).

In qualitative research, rich, descriptive data are collected signifying a specific context, where the researcher intends making meaning of his or her observations or in-depth study. It provides a clear focus on how people and groups understand and regard the world and interpret their own experiences (Maree, 2007:50).

According to Gravetter and Forzano (2009:147), qualitative research is built on carrying out observations, which are then summarised and interpreted in a narrative report. Qualitative research is intended to gather a great deal of information on a small number of individuals or groups with a specific attitude, behaviour and experiences through interviews or focus groups. It attempts to get an in-depth opinion from participants. In this study, the qualitative approach was employed to get rich information and in-depth data from participants about how principals could use distributed leadership practices to improve learner academic performance at Lesotho high schools.

The reasons advanced for choosing the qualitative approach for this study are as follows: The researcher recorded the real-life experiences (within their own school contexts) of teachers and their leaders in their quest to improve the performance of learners at their schools. The researcher established a sound interpersonal connection, evident in qualitative studies, between herself and the research participants when collecting the data. What is central is the researcher's recognition that participants brought their own interpretations and views of a particular situation, but what is more important is how they made sense thereof. The researcher was particularly cautious of this so as to provide an accurate reflection of their experiences.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants at four schools in order to determine their understanding and experience of learner academic performance and distributed leadership practice at high schools in Lesotho. The researcher "entered the participants' world and through on-going interaction, seeks the participants' perspectives and meanings" (Creswell, 2009:20). This approach is dynamic and interactive and samples in this method may be made up of either individuals or groups. Qualitative research design commonly does not provide the researcher with a step-by-step plan or

fixed schedule to follow (Hill, 2012:79). In this study, the qualitative approach was applied as it contains features that enabled the researcher to gain a rich description of information and enabled her to attain more information in order to interpret the phenomenon under study. This approach gave the researcher an opportunity to interpret the significance and viewpoints of the participants.

4.4.1 Advantages of qualitative research

Qualitative research enables the researcher to “go the extra mile” (i.e. beyond the statistical results yielded in a quantitative study) in terms of reporting and interpreting the data. In the quest to understand how the leadership of schools in Lesotho could use the distributed leadership practices to improve learner academic performance, the researcher was determined to delve into the context which the investigation yielded.

This approach provides understanding and a description of people personal experiences or phenomena thus enables the researcher to study behaviour in natural surroundings and strives to obtain meaning from it (Rossman & Rallis, 2012:8).

Qualitative research is useful as an investigation is generally conducted amongst a relatively small number of participants with the aim of increasing the quality of the response (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011:32).

The product of qualitative research is useful, as it commonly presents as a descriptive report, rather than a statically generated account of phenomena (Johnson & Christensen, 2012:376). Research reports are more interpretive, as the researcher tries to understand the lives and experience of the research participants (ibid).

4.4.2 Disadvantages of the qualitative research

It usually time-consuming to collect data when compared to quantitative research and difficult to present in visual ways (Guest, Namey & Mitchelland, 2013:25).

The results may be more easily influenced by the researcher’s personal biases. The researcher may possibly include his or her own feelings in the experiences of the participants (Mack, 2010:10).

Knowledge acquired from resources might not generalise to other people or settings.

4.5 POPULATION

Gravetter and Forzano (2009:11) state that the target population means the entire set of individuals of interest to the researcher. In addition to that, Newby (2010:231) states that "the target population refers to all instances that meet the requirements of the research issue".

The population of this study comprised the school board members at each of the four schools, as well as the principals, chairpersons, parents' representatives, councillors, chiefs and teachers. The population were drawn from four schools in the Berea district in Lesotho; two high-performing schools and two low-performing schools.

In this study, the choice of the principals was important as they were the most senior officers at their school and organised and managed all activities occurring at their schools. They were accountable to their school boards for the control and use of school funds. The chairpersons of the school boards presided at all meetings of a board and caused representatives of parents and teachers in a board that he or she chaired to meet with their respective constituencies at least twice a year and provide reports of such meetings.

The chief, councillor and parents' representatives were hands-on in the managing and organising of all activities and therefore constituted part of the senior management at the respective schools. The teachers, as classroom managers, planned all daily learning activities and were also directly involved in learners' academic performance and progression. The participation of all these members in this study became very significant, considering the role each of them played to turn their school into a better place.

The total population of the study area is composed of 68 participants. The researcher chose one principal from four schools, as she wished to understand and explore different experiences, opinions and practices in their field, based on the phenomenon under study. The researcher thought that to gather information from only two principals from two schools would not be enough. Therefore, she compared the responses of four groups of stakeholders to be able to determine the truthfulness and credibility of the data collected.

The sampling procedure for this study is outlined in section 4.6

4.6 SAMPLING

Masiloane (2008:32) asserts that sampling refers to the way in which elements are selected from a larger pool of participants in order to move towards a sensible conclusion from the study. It is done in such a way that information collected represents the whole population. According Denzin and Lincoln (2011:14), in order for a qualitative study to produce the anticipated results, it is desirable that the sampling population should be relatively small. In this study, a purposive sampling was employed, because sampling was done with a specific purpose in mind (Mouton, 2011:280; Maree, 2007:78)

In purposive sampling, the researcher selected her research participants. They were deliberately chosen because of their eligibility in advancing the purpose of research. This method means that in this study, participants were selected because they had more or less common characteristics, and because of their relevant knowledge and experience. They could therefore provide the necessary data needed for the study.

This study employed purposive sampling, as the targeted sample was easily accessible to the researcher. In addition, the sample contained characteristics representative of the attributes of the population that served the study purpose best. It worked well, because the participants in this study had rich information about the topic, which enabled the researcher to focus on respondents with similar experiences.

Furthermore, Mouton (2011:222) indicates that “purposive sampling enables the researcher to select information-rich participants”. The chairperson of the board, principals and teachers (Grade 12) were selected to participate in the study because they had rich information on the topic. Parents from the school board, as well as chiefs and counsellors from each of the sampled four schools were chosen for this study.

4.7 DATA COLLECTION

Perri and Bellamy (2012:301) regard data collection as “procedures for capturing what is important for the research question from the data that have been created, including the

use of codes to classify the important aspects during data collection". Data collection was conducted through open-ended interviews whereby participants answered the interview questions with some probes and clarifications, if necessary.

According to Masiloane (2008:43), data collection is an essentiality act in the process of research, since gathering is the most important aspect of dealing with research problems. The researcher took into account the importance of using appropriate devices to collect useful information for the study. Therefore, in this study, a focus-group and semi-structured interview in gathering data from the participants were used.

Section 4.7.1 outlines the manner in which focus-group interviews were conducted.

4.7.1 Focus group interviews

According to De Vos *et al.* (2007:299), focus-group interviews may be regarded as "means of better understanding how people feel or think about an issue, product or service". In addition, Creswell (2009:5) defines a focus group as "a carefully planned series of discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive and non-threatening environment". Participants who took part in the focus-group interviews that were conducted comprised 10 teachers per school.

The aim of the focus group is to garner a comprehensive range of views on the research topic under investigation, and to create a relaxed and comfortable environment where participants feel free to share their views and insights with one another from various backgrounds, without pressurising them to reach a consensus. A focus group of 10 teachers was used. These teachers were selected because they shared certain common features related to their experiences. This helped the researcher to have a clear understanding of their situation and think of better ways that might assist.

Similarly, James, Milenkiewicz and Bucknam (2008:13) report that focus groups suggest that they are interviews that are conducted with a small group of participants while discussing their ideas about a certain topic. The focus-group interview aims at disclosing additional information through the participants' interchanging of views and sentiments about the topic under discussion. This is applicable to this study as teachers from their

respective schools came up with different ideas to share their concerns on issues they experienced.

4.7.1.1 Advantages of the focus group

According to Hennink, Hutter and Bailey (2011:21), and Rule and John (2011:16), data are collected in a group setting where participants engage one another on the topic and subsequently exchange a large volume of information with the emphasis on diverse views being presented. Moreover, Mouton (2011:24) indicates that "focus-group interviews provide a stimulating and secure setting for members to express ideas without fear create deeper understanding of phenomena and encourage relaxed exchange of attitude, thoughts and ideas in the crowd security". The researcher suggests that small focus-group discussions may be the ideal setting for participants to get comfortable to discuss contentious issues or to address a particular study purpose. In addition, different views may be elicited from participants in a non-threatening environment which the researcher is obliged to create.

In section 4.7.1.2 the disadvantages of focus groups will be discussed.

4.7.1.2 Disadvantages of the focus group

According to Hennink *et al.* (2011:78), focus-group interviews may be very pricy and it requires a very experienced researcher who can manage group dynamics well. Also, participants may experience them as less personal and consequently less confidential, while the conversation may sometimes be dominated by a single, outspoken person. In the same vein, King and Horrocks (2010:11) contend that it may not be the most suitable data collection method if the researcher wishes to probe sensitive areas. The group environment lacks confidentiality for seeking personal experiences. Greef (cited in De Vos *et al.,* 2011:363) mentions that focus-groups interviews should be avoided if the aim of the study is to educate, or the requirement is that people reach consensus about an issue. In addition, if the researcher does not intend to use the results, but want to give the appearance of listening instead, the focus-group interview should be avoided (Greef, cited in De Vos *et al.*, 2011:363).

The semi-structured interview is discussed in section 4.7.2.

4.7.2 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews involve a two-way conversation in which interviewers ask participants questions initiated for the specific purpose of obtaining relevant data (Berg, 2009:23). Semi-structured interviews employ open-ended questions during the data collection process, which include eliciting participants' responses and interpretations of their environment or context within which the study takes place (MacMillan & Schumacher, 2010:178). In a semi-structured interview, the interviewer has the opportunity and flexibility to probe the interviewee to provide additional information to elucidate the original answer. The semi-structured interview, according to (Babbie & Mouton 2011:15), is the most prominent mode of data collection in qualitative design.

Bouma, Ling and Wilkinson (2012:33) are of the opinion that semi-structured interviews as "those organized around areas of particular interest, while still allowing considerable flexibility in scope and depth". Berg (2009:31) further states that semi-structured interviews are especially suitable where one is particularly interested in complexity or process, as semi-structured interviews basically define the lines of inquiry (Maree, 2010:87). It is contended that this format of interview will be well suited to the collection of data for this research.

In-depth, individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with the following members at each designated school: the chairperson of the board, the chief, the councillor and the principal. Group interviews were conducted with three parents drawn from the school board of each participating school. The use of a semi-structured interview process was selected to provide some uniformity to each interview, thus ensuring that common themes were covered at all the researched schools.

4.7.2.1 Advantages of semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews are regarded as less time-consuming, since this involves face-to-face talk. Also, the interview does not take much of both the researcher and participants' time. It is therefore a useful and innovative way to secure a large amount of

data rapidly (Guest *et al.,* 2013:29). What is equally important is that semi-structured interviews may produce information that directly yields answers to the research questions. In this research study, the researcher had the opportunity to request participants to illuminate their answers if she felt that the participant needed to add more information (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013:371).

4.7.2.2 Disadvantages of semi-structured interviews

Generally speaking, as a data collection tool, the semi-structured interview may form part of research projects to verify data developing from other data sources. Participants may not be willing to share the information with researcher, they may be less interested to listen and even answer the questions. They may find the interview process disturbing, because they do not want challenges or probing questions (Berg, 2009:33). Additionally, it does not provide participants with the option to choose responses from a pre-determined set of multiple responses provided. This may be a disadvantage, as in this study it was the researcher's experience that at least two participants from the sample that was selected preferred a list of response options. The data obtained from the research participants were not necessarily less complicated to analyse than the data gleaned from closed-ended questions (Maree, 2010:87).

In the following sections, notably 4.8 to 4.12, validity, reliability, trustworthiness and generalisability of the collected data will be discussed.

4.8 VALIDITY

Validity implies that the appropriate procedures were applied to respond to the research question and it is about what the specific instruments actually measures as well as the meaning of the results obtained (Babbie & Mouton, 2011:56). To acquire valid data, Delport and Roestenburg (2011:172) states, "a researcher must ensure that the measurement procedures and the measurement instruments to be used have acceptable levels of reliability and validity" (Guest *et al.*, 2013:16). Validation has to do with people agreeing that what one says is credible.

Validity may contribute to the credibility of the data collection tool and consequent

research findings. “A valid and reliable instrument will measure what it is expected to measure, and be consistent or dependable in measuring what it is designed to measure” (Moule & Goodman, 2009:12).

Research has the aim of advancing knowledge (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:102). Participants looking at the commitment and participation of the researcher; they reflect on what they are doing in try to improve the situation, which provides to trustworthiness. The qualitative researcher is accountable for the results of the research findings. These findings must be trustworthy and credible so that they may be applicable in the field and be useful to the people who read them.

In this study, the researcher strived towards the achievement of validity by ensuring that that data collection methods were aligned with the research questions and objectives of the study. According to Maree (2010:80), recording precise, almost verbatim and meticulous descriptions of people and situations may also improve validity. Therefore, a tape recorder was used to record participants in this study in order to enhance validity.

4.9 RELIABILITY

Reliability refers to the quality of a measurement procedure that provides accuracy and repeatability relates to the degree of consistency of measurements. Reliable measures are measures that produce consistent response overtime. Reliability also refers to the extent to which scores and tests are free from errors of measurements. It is an evaluative criterion which are judged by external standards (Popham, 2011:61). In this study, the participants were part of the school community; they were experienced and they had knowledge of what was happening at the high schools concerning learners’ academic performance. Masiloane (2008:41) posits that reliability may be viewed as the extent to which a test or procedure yields comparable findings under constant conditions in all situations.

Reliability of findings is very important for a research project. Thus, in this study, discussion points for interviews with school board members were administered to the same participants. The researcher was helped by pre-testing to clarify some research questions and to determine whether the questions were objective with different groups of

the target population.

4.10 TRUSTWORTHINESS

In qualitative research, validity and reliability are usually addressed through trustworthiness (Gray, 2011:19). Similarly, Kometsi (2015:169) states that the notion of trustworthiness addresses both reliability and validity concerns. Reliability is related to the procedural trustworthiness of observations or data, whereas validity relates to the trustworthiness of interpretations or conclusions. There are different levels for assessing the quality of qualitative research. The participants in this study were not exposed to any acts of disloyalty during the research process.

In order to ensure the correctness of the data collected in the study, the interview data were tape-recorded and transcribed after the participants had been interviewed. According to Berg (2009:109), “transferability is the degree to which the results may be generalized to a wider population situation”. In order to guarantee the exactness of the transcripts, the participants were provided with copies so that they were able to check whether the information they had provided had been correctly coded. According to Hennink *et al.* (2011:113), trustworthiness is the test of data analysis, findings and conclusions in looking at issues of standards of validity and reliability with respect to the researcher’s own research. This has been chosen as a standard of good practice by researchers using the interpretive qualitative paradigm (Gray, 2011:123).

4.11 GENERALISABILITY

Christiansen and Aungamuthu (2012:67) state that generalisability is the extent to which the conclusion of a study may be applied beyond the sample population to the whole population of the study. When the research results are said to be generalisable, it means that the findings of one study can be applied more generally, either to groups similar to the one that was researched or in other contexts. The aim of this study was thus not to extend the findings (generalise), but to understand a particular phenomenon, notably learner academic performance and distributed leadership within a particular context. The application of the qualitative approach in this study is particularly useful, as a detailed

descriptions of the phenomena under study were provided to enable others in similar situations to understand the phenomena better; therefore, useful to the degree to which it contains detailed description to enable others to understand similar situations and extend that understanding in subsequent research.

4.12 DATA ANALYSIS

Perri and Bellamy (2012:301) state that data analysis refers to methods for manipulating the data to enable the research question to be answered, usually by identifying important and relevant patterns. Data analysis means drawing conclusions from what the researcher finds or concludes and to whom the conclusions apply (Bouma *et al.*, 2012:245). According to Maree (2010:99), “qualitative data analysis is usually based on an interpretive philosophy that is aimed at examining meaning and symbolic content of data”.

In addition to that, Maree (2011:99) indicates that qualitative data analysis tries to establish how participants make meaning of a specific phenomenon by analysing their perceptions, attitudes, understanding, knowledge, values, feelings and experiences in an attempt to approximate their construction of the phenomenon.

Through an analysis process, the researcher becomes deeply immersed in interview transcripts and field notes collected, and systematically organises these notes into salient patterns and themes to bring meaning so that themes tell a coherent story. The researcher then writes it all up so that others can read what the researcher has learned (Rossman & Rallis, 2012:262). It is important to do this, because they assist the researcher to structure and guide the data analysis and presentations as well as organise more data so that conclusions could be made and communicated.

In this study, qualitative analysis techniques were used. Qualitative research uses many diverse information for data analysis and comprises identifying, coding and categorising patterns found in the data as well as identifying the patterns of similarities and differences. According to Masiloane (2008:47), data analysis involves various techniques to summarise and examine the collected information to aid the interpretation of data and relationship among variables. Its main aim was to organise data in such a way that

conclusions could be made and communicated.

Data were analysed using codes and thematic analysis. Coding is the process of reading carefully, line by line, through transcribed data, and dividing it into meaningful analytical units (Maree, 2010:105). The coding process enables the researcher to retrieve and collect all the text and other data associated with some thematic idea quickly so that the sorted bits can be examined together and different cases compared in that respect (ibid).

Thematic analysis is essential, because it will help the researcher to sort data according to different categories. This could be done by identifying common themes in responses, for example, looking at the similarities and differences in responses by grouping the information, search for meaningful patterns then analyse it into content and themes (Gray, 2011:33).

This type of analysis provides a systematic element to data analysis. It allows the researcher to associate an analysis of the frequency of a theme with one of the whole content. This will confer accuracy and intricacy and enhance the research's meaning. As a result, thematic analysis provides an opportunity to understand the potential of any issue more widely (Joubish *et al.,* 2011:2087).

Data emerging from school board members and other identified participants were analysed continuously during the data collection process. The researcher examined and reduced the information collected to manageable parts. The key themes and patterns were explored in meaningful conclusions to ensure accuracy and consistency. The researcher constantly read the transcripts to enhance an understanding of the participants' opinions. The researcher began to code the data after reading it many times. The researcher sorted the data according to different categories, looking at the similarities and differences. Special codes were used to identify the aspects relevant to the research question and these were put in groups to form themes. The researcher organised the related themes to form categories in order to identify specific patterns (Masiloane, 2008:24).

4.13 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Gray (2011:576) states that ethics refers to the study of standards of conduct and values and how these impact on both the researcher and research subjects. Ethical issues in social research include voluntary participation, no harm to participants, anonymity and confidentiality and not deceiving subjects (Babbie & Mouton, 2011:520). Most qualitative researchers use discussion and negotiations to resolve ethical dilemmas in fieldwork.

In order to conduct research at any institution, approval for conducting the research should be obtained. As the research had to be conducted in an ethical manner to enhance quality and trust-worthiness (Rule & John, 2011:111), the researcher applied for ethical clearance. The researcher was granted ethical clearance by the Faculty of Education at the University of the Free State. Ethical clearance number UFS-HSD2017/0157 was awarded. The researcher also obtained permission from the Department of Education to conduct research at four schools in the Berea district in Lesotho. Written consent was therefore requested from MOET officials. The researcher made a written request to the principals and the school governing body, which was granted, on condition that official programme and classes will not be disrupted.

Using the guideline by McMillan and Schumacher (2010:117-125), the researcher assured ethical acceptability of the study. The participants were informed that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time. All participants remained anonymous and the confidentiality of the participants was protected. By adhering to the guidelines by McMillan and Schumacher (2010:114), the researcher received a warm welcome during site visits and the full cooperation from all the schools' principals and participants.

4.14 SUMMARY

This chapter dealt with the qualitative research methodology adopted to conduct the study. Qualitative research methodology and design were defined and explained. The population and sampling method used and the reasons for sampling procedures followed were also explained. Data collection instruments, the process and data analysis were dealt with. Validity, reliability and trustworthiness of the study were explained and

discussed as well as ethical considerations. This also served to justify that this was a genuinely qualitative research study. In the next chapter, the researcher presents the findings, as well as an analysis and interpretation of the data collected from the participants on what distributed leadership communication strategy may be effective in improving learner academic performance at high schools.

CHAPTER 5
DATA PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the empirical methods that were used to gather data relevant to the stated research questions. Data analysis and findings are discussed in collaboration with the literature reviewed. Data analysis is described by Marlow (2010:120) as a way of giving meaning to the collected data. In order for analysis to be meaningful, data had to be presented. The aim of this section of the study is to present, analyse and discuss individual, in-depth interviews and focus-group interviews as indicated in Chapter 4. The researcher decided to employ the use of a qualitative research approach to collect data in the individual in-depth interviews and focus groups.

The transcribed data was analysed by coding common ideas emanating from the interviews conducted with various participants (principals, chairpersons of boards, teachers, parents' representatives, chiefs and councillors) and then grouping them into themes and where applicable, literature will be employed to contextualise the findings from the transcripts of the interviews. The objective of the empirical research was to establish the perceptions of school board members, teachers, parents and the community regarding distributed leadership practices and interpersonal communication with regard to improving the academic performance of learners.

In order to differentiate between responses from the participants of the four high schools participating in the study, letter codes were used as follows: PA 1, 2, 3, 4; PB 1, 2, 3, 4; PC 1, 2, 3, 4; and PD 1, 2, 3, 4 were assigned to the principals, respectively. Chairpersons of the boards were assigned letter codes CPB A 1, 2, 3, 4; CPB B 1, 2, 3, 4; CPB C 1, 2, 3, 4; and CPB D 1, 2, 3, 4. Teachers in focus groups were assigned TFG A 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6; TFG B 1, 2, 3, 4, 5; TFG C 1, 2, 3, 4, 5; TFG D 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10. Parents were assigned letter codes PR A 1; PR B 1, 2; PR C 1, 2 and PRD 1; and chiefs and councillors were assigned letter codes CC A 1; CC B 1; CC C 1, 2; and CC D 1, 2. Data

collected through interviews will be presented and analysed.

5.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

In order to achieve the overall aim of the study, which is to propose a distributed leadership communication strategy to improve learners' academic performance, the empirical investigation was undertaken to gather information on the following research questions:

What is the nature and scope of distributed leadership practices?

How does interpersonal communication contribute to improving learners' academic performance at Lesotho high schools?

How do members of the school board, teachers and parents perceive distributed leadership practices and interpersonal communication as a contributing factor to the improvement of learners' academic performance?

How can a distributed leadership communication strategy be proposed to improve the academic performance of learners at Lesotho high schools?

5.3 SAMPLING

When adopting a qualitative approach, it is not a common rule to use sampling in order to generalise, rather to expose or describe the diversity in a situation, phenomenon or issue. In this study, the researcher used purposive sampling in order to select information-rich participants (Maree, 2007:78; Mouton, 2011:280). To take part in this study, the targeted population were selected from four schools in the Berea district of Lesotho, of which two high-performing schools and two low-performing schools were selected. From each school, 1 principal, 1 chairperson of the board, 7-10 teachers, 3 parent representatives (per school) as well as 1 chief and 1 counsellor were selected to participate in this study.

5.4 PREPARING FOR THE EMPIRICAL STUDY

In preparing for the empirical study, the researcher visited the schools to deliver permission letters to the school principals, requesting the participation of the specific individuals at the school, prior to conducting the empirical study. The researcher explained the purpose of the study to the principal and respective participants. In general, the researcher kept the nature and quality of the participants' performance strictly confidential and anonymous and left the consent forms with the principal for the participants to read through before signing up for participation. All interviews were audio-recorded during interviews so that findings from responses of participants could be transcribed and reported verbatim. Each individual interview lasted for approximately 30 minutes and focus-group interviews 40 minutes, depending on participants' responses.

5.5 DATA GATHERING THROUGH INTERVIEWS WITH PRINCIPALS, TEACHERS, CHAIRPERSON OF THE BOARD, PARENTS, CHIEF AND COUNCILLOR

The questions related to personal views of distributed leadership, particular problems, issues or challenges that contribute to learners' performance and impediments related to practices of distributed leadership. In general, the following aspects were probed: aspects related to interpersonal communication, parent community partnership and learner performance.

5.5.1 Data gathered through interview with principals (*cf.* Annexure F)

This section of the highlights questions 1 to 7, which contain personal information such as date, school, age, gender, nature of appointment, academic qualification, leadership and management experience. Questions 8 to 14 relate to distributed leadership; questions 15 to 17 deal with interpersonal communication; questions 18 to 23 relate to learner performance; and questions 24 to 25 deal with to parent community partnership.

Questions 8 to 14 focus on the formulation of school policy, procedure followed to construct vision, mission and values, practice of transformational leader, teaching and learning support to ensure learners successful academically, involving teachers in leadership by giving teachers opportunity to lead, the nature of leadership practices at

school, the collaboration of different departments in teaching and learning and leadership where diverse thinking does not impede on the practice of distributed leadership.

Questions 15 to 17 focus on the meetings with the chairperson of the board. Members are given a chance to compile their own agenda, encouraging community participation in school activities.

Questions 18 to 23 focus on meetings with teachers and parents to discuss learner academic performance, effective communication, the influence of the homework or test policies on the learners. In addition, issues and challenges concerning learner academic performance, systems to support teachers in their teaching practices and parents with providing their children with academic support as well as what the school board and community members can do to improve learner performance.

Questions 24 to 25 focus on schools and how they ensure parental involvement in school activities, as well as fostering positive relationships with parents and community.

5.5.1.1 Biographical data of principals

Table 5.1 below depicts the biographical data of the principals who participated in the study. The dates indicated signify the dates on which the interviews were conducted at schools.

Table 5.1: Biographical details

Date	Principals of schools A, B, C and D	Age	Gender	Nature of Appointment	Academic Qualification	Leadership and management experience
28-03-2017	PA 1	52	Female	Permanent	B. Ed.	None
07-04-2017	PB 2	48	Female	Permanent	M SC	None
29-03-2017	PC 3	35	Female	Permanent	B. Ed.	None
05-04- 2017	PD 4	63	Female	Permanent	B.Ed.	None

5.5.1.2 Distributed leadership and school policy

Principals are expected to be knowledgeable about the running of the school and how to formulate school policy (*cf.* 2.3).

PA1, PB2, PC3, and PD4 stated that school policy was formulated by the school board, teachers and the principal.

Responses from the four participants revealed that drafting a school policy was not the duty of the principal only. The power to issue administrative instruction nationally was usually reserved for the senior offices in the Ministry of Education and Training. However, such directives, coupled with laws and proclamations, do not cover every aspect of schools' legal obligations. Some discretionary powers are left to the principals of schools in many areas such as setting policies on homework, assessment, co-curricular activities, links with parents and admissions.

To a question on procedures followed to construct a vision, mission and values, participants responded thus:

> PA1, *"Hh … Usually we contact teachers, so that they can make some suggestions."*
>
> PB2, *"It is constructed based on vision and objectives of the MOET and needs of the community where the school is situated."*
>
> PC3, "*There is no mission, no vision; it is only this year, the proprietor must draw the mission.*"

PC4, *"Our mission and vision is based on educational policy."*

The aforementioned discussion clearly indicates that the three principals found themselves going about their everyday work without a clear vision of where the school should go. School principals are expected to play a leading role in improving the quality of teaching and learning at their schools (*cf.* 2.3.3). As principals they have to appreciate that it is their responsibility to ensure that the school is a performing school that meets its objectives. It is necessary for a school to establish and specify the school's direction with the participation of all concerned, namely staff, pupils, parents, the school board and the community. These expectations and guidelines should be written down so that they become a clear indication of what the school wishes to achieve. The process of attempting to translate the school's expectation into practice is embodied in what is referred to as a school's mission values and objectives.

To the question on transformational leadership, the principals responded thus:

To improve learner academic performance seems to require what transformational leadership delivers. It also requires predictable changes in the performance of school members, for example teacher practices, must often change in specified ways if learners' academic performance is to improve (*cf.* 2.3.2).

> PA1 responded, *"I think so ahh ... Usually I prefer delegation, teamwork, people to contribute exercise their capabilities and all that, usually work with teachers, they are really helping a lot."*
>
> PB2 said, *"Partially I guess because the way we operate we agree with teachers*, *discuss and look at challenges again they come up with solutions, I definitely try to talk with them from HODs to teachers."*
>
> PC3 mentioned, *"I take other teachers opinion, in my leadership participation is crucial."*
>
> PD4 reported, *"I consider myself as transformational leader because I motivate teachers after good results if not we sit together and try to find out where we do not perform well and make follow ups I also delegate some work to the teachers."*

It can be concluded that four principals felt that a particular skill was much more important as it bore fruitful results when applied to a certain context. Three participants considered

themselves as transformational leaders; one considered herself partially. With transformational leadership, the principal approach is to join hands with teachers, setting a clear, collective vision and accepted mission and purpose to improve learner academic performance. It also includes 21st-century competencies like creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving and collaboration. Four participants showed one or two competencies, which seemed that they were trying to be transformational leaders.

To the question on support of teaching and learning, the principals responded thus:

The success of any school certainly depends on the type of leadership that the school has (Bush, 2011:515) (*cf.* 2.5.2).

> PA1 pointed out, "*What I usually do I tried to find a bursary especially for brilliant students to feel part of the school."*
>
> PB2 indicated, "*All three parties must be engaged teachers, parents and learners I engaged parent in meetings and make them aware with examinations, open day we invite them and discuss by holding meetings, parents do come to follow-up on their children, our teachers are involved from point a point A to Z. We do preliminary plans and make arrangements and step-in in terms of their views we sit down together to see our learners' motivational plans with them consultants that we pay for the support*."
>
> PC3 stated, "*OK … we use learners' books; besides that I buy reference books for teachers to use them."*
>
> PD4 mentioned, "*I encourage teachers to attend workshops, supervise study and encourage teacher study groups, leave slots in the timetable for study also encourage peer teaching presentations."*

The responses above reveal that three principals (PA1, PC3 and PD4) involved only teachers to ensure that learners were academically supported, which is indicative that more effort should be expanded in this regard. One principal (PB2) involved three parties, namely parents, teachers and learners; sometimes even external stakeholders. The school leaders should practise shared leadership, where decision-making involves other stakeholders (Botha, 2015:207). The participants also echoed the sentiments that the ideas and opinions from the school community can help to support learners to be

successful academically, and their communication skills can inspire trust, confidence and motivation among teachers and learners. This, in turn, could instil a sense of motivation in teachers and eventually have a positive impact on learners' academic performance.

To the question on involving teachers in leadership practices, principals responded thus:

PA1, PB2 and PD4:

> Generally, principals stated, "*They feel good because teachers are knowledgeable about their subjects, they involve them by delegating duties to them and give them opportunities to lead other departments."*
>
> Except (PA1), who stated, *"Administration is transparency even if I am not at school they know their work and not confined in classroom only even in sporting activities."*

The responses show that involvement of teachers in leadership is very scarce; even opportunities to lead. Leadership is about dispersed, espoused sharing of power among principals and followers and representing the distribution of leadership skills and responsibilities throughout the school (*cf.* 2.3.3).

To the question on the nature of leadership practices, principals indicated:

> PA1 and PB2 stated, "*They practised democratic leadership whereby their different departments bring reports from the workshop and discuss important points also take educational trips to explore as much as possible but in line with school policy. They invite school board, administration and student to take part in leadership."*
>
> PC3 and PD4 reported, *"They use instructional leadership usually manage the curriculum to see to it that teaching is in line with curriculum and collaborate with different departments to share ideas."*

The responses of the four principals involved decision-making process, as they discussed. However, it seems to be limited in some areas. Based on instructional leadership, the principals' approach to curriculum and instructional development is strong and direct, displays behaviour focused on control, coordination and supervision of all teaching and learning activities (Marishane & Botha, 2011:7).

To the question on impact on the practice of distributed leadership, principals responded thus:

Principals play a key role; however, the role is not that of dominating, but rather of collaborating.

> Principals (PA1, PC3 and PD4) indicated, *"They delegate duties to different department dividing responsibility to the teachers according to their capabilities."*
>
> PB2 stated, *"I consult teachers and interact with them on how to share responsibilities according to different activities at the school."*

It is clear that three principals delegated and divided responsibilities to different departments, except one principal, who interacted with teachers. It seemed as if four principals only involved teachers without considering other stakeholders, whereas three principals delegated and the other one shared responsibilities. However, delegation of tasks or dividing responsibilities according to role is not distributed leadership (*cf.* 2.4.4). This means that schools that purport to practise distributed leadership actually delegate. Harris (2009:261) refers to that as "misguided delegation", whereby principals delegate the tasks or dividing responsibilities instead of spreading, sharing and distributing work across individuals (Smylie *et al*., 2007:470).

5.5.1.3 Interpersonal communication

To the question on how often do they meet with the chairperson of the board, principals responded thus:

Communication is the heart of education. In order for the school to communicate effectively, teachers, parents and the community should be involved. School communication is a vigorous part of education success (NSPRA, 2006:4)

> PA1 mentioned, "… *several times, depending on the burning issues*."
>
> PB2, explained, "… *so often more than necessary fortnightly."*
>
> PC3 indicated, *"… if there is a need.*"
>
> PD4 reported, *"They meet when there is a need but according to Lesotho Educational*

policy it should be four times a year."

Responses show that they regularly met with the chairperson, depending on the burning issues they needed to address as well as meeting the requirements of the Lesotho educational policy. (*cf.* 3.4.1). However, meeting with the chairperson discussing school improvements should be done regularly. Regular interpersonal communication ensures that everyone gets a chance to make meaningful contributions. It may be in formal or informal setting; together, the aim of working to improve learner performance may be achieved (Park & Ham, 2014:455).

To the question on giving school members an opportunity to draw up their own agenda, principals responded thus:

> PA1 indicated, *"Yes, because there is no point from me to draw my own agenda the board must draw based on issues that they have."*
>
> PB2 stated, "*Yes, so that they come up with good practice and ideas on how to improve the school."*
>
> PC3 and PD4 responded, *"Yes, the school board and teachers are given a chance so that they can come up with different views and opinions, to create positive collaboration in order to enhance learners' academic performance."*

It is clear that the four principals invited school boards and teachers without consulting other members such as non-teaching staff, whose value to the school should not only be counted according to the work that they do, but also because of their interaction with the learners. Drawing up of an agenda should not focus only on teachers and school boards, but informal should be disseminated among all members, all members should be involved within a school play a crucial part. This sense of empowerment and pride leads to new ideas, contributions and support, consequently improving academic performance of learners (*cf.* 3.2; 3.4; 3.4.2).

To the question on encouraging community participation in school activities, principals responded thus:

PA1 indicated that he does interact, but "the community is hostile; there is no relationship with them."

PB2 pointed out, *"it is limited quite rare normally with the chief."*

PC3 and PD4 concurred that usually on ceremonies such as the cultural day parents are invited they also act as motivational speakers and the school buys food from them.

The discussion revealed that PA1 encouraged community participation, but no relationship with them, while PB2 seemed restricted or inadequate, however it a mutual relationship with the chief was evident, even though PC3 and PD4 usually invited them to ceremonies and also as motivational speakers to their students. In actual fact, a school does not exist in isolation, but within the community it serves (*cf.* 3.3.1, 3.5). The involvement of the community in school activities plays a crucial role, especially when the school leaders recognise that community participation in decision-making can help the school to improve academically. For example, older people probably know traditional stories, or could tell learners about the history of the area, while those who work in nearby towns might be asked to talk to learners about their jobs (Boot, 2011:40).

To the question on how often do principal hold meetings with teachers and parents to discuss academic performance of learners, principals responded thus:

PA1, and PC3 indicated, *"Two times for all students and three times for external students."*

PB2 indicated, *"Once a year and only for external students."*

PD4 explained, *"Twice a year, June and December, to discuss learners' performance."*

The responses indicate that meetings between teachers and parents seemed to be limited. It is important for school principals to have the necessary skills and knowledge on how to build collaboration and trusting relationships with teachers and parents (*cf.* 3.2). This is supported by (Bouffard, 2008:309), who states that a key factor in building such relationships is strong communication with teachers and parents that is frequent, personal and consistent in order to improve learners' academic.

To the question on how communication may contribute to improving learner performance, principals responded thus:

PA1 reported, "*Yes, it is important because learners will be able to know what to do."*

PC3 and PD4, *"Yes, it is important because learners will be able to express their views*

about some difficulties they came across in their subjects, also reminded about their work and should take their work seriously."

Except PB2, who states, *"It is very important but when it comes to learners is not effective, because I do not communicate with them regularly, but I have to improve on tha*t."

The responses of four principals reveal that they concurred that effective communication was very important and it could improve learners' performance if practised effectively and regularly. However, PB2 showed that with learners it was ineffective; it should be done consistently and thoroughly and they have to improve on it. Communication is the foundation of effective partnerships. To build effective partnerships between staff and learners that will increase learner achievement, schools must speak and listen to learners (*cf.* 3.2; 3.3).

To the question on how homework and the weekly test policy influences learners' performance, principals responded thus:

PA1 mentioned, *"We have topic test in other subjects, but others I do not know, teachers give them homework but others know how to monitor it whereas other just mark it without monitoring it."*

PB2 stated, *"We do not have policies; the only tests we have is topic test quarterly and examinations."*

PC3 and PD4 reported, *"They do have policies test such as topic test, weekly test that influence learners to be actively involved in their studies, read in advance and also give them immediate feedback, to make students not to be reluctant to do their work."*

The responses from the four principals show that topic tests and weekly tests influenced learners to work hard and take part in their learning, because they created study groups and peer-to-peer learning to improve their performance (*cf.* 3.3.1.2). In order for principals to be effective in increasing learners' academic performance, a school-family involvement policy such as topic tests and weekly tests should be prepared, well designed, focused and be in line with curriculum.

To the question on problems issues and challenges that contribute to learner academic performance, principals responded thus:

PA1 indicated, "*Lack of infrastructure, having no access to computer advocates to learner-centred approaches and social matters."*

PB2 reported, "*Drop-outs because of school fees and absenteeism are major problems, parents are not there to help them, school tries to help but without parent guidance seems difficult."*

PC3 responded, "*Drug abuse, truancy, shortage of text books, which leads learners to depend on notes giving by teachers and parents not willing to pay school fees."*

PD4 stated, "*Insufficient infrastructure, social matters, learners come from humbly backgrounds, career guidance at early stage is needed, and counselling."*

It is a clear that the four principals face different challenges that may contribute to learners' performance or poor performance. These situations need a principal who have interpersonal skills in order to interact effectively with stakeholders, both individually and in groups, so that everyone can express personal needs and understand the needs of others, make decisions, solve problems and regulate power. These relationships can enhance cooperation among school boards, teachers, parents and community, mutual trust, and support to work successful as a team and overcome the problems of learners' academic performance (*cf.* 3.4). This supported by activity theory, which refutes the argument that leadership is the domain of one person such as the principal. Active theory emphasises leadership as a collective phenomenon, the centrality of the division of labour and the interdependency of relationships (Engeström, 2001, cited by Gronn, 2008:141), which is applied by the researcher in the study (*cf.* 2.2).

To the question on systems that support teacher in their teaching practice, principals responded thus:

PA1 explained, *"School buys teaching aids, text books and preparation books to support teachers."*

PC3 and PD4 mentioned, "*The school buys teaching aids such as textbooks and preparations books, teachers attended workshops, and hold staff meetings to discuss techniques that can help teachers in their teaching practice and provide in-service training."*

PB2 indicated, *"Teachers have a staffroom, computers, internet to do their research and projector to improve their learning."*

It is clear that PA1, PC3 and PD4 had limited systems to support teachers in their teaching practice and this needed to be improved. PB2 seemed to have more systems which broadened teachers in their teaching and as a result, teachers felt empowered. Empowering teachers is an important task, because they are allowed to take risks. As a result, they become confident in trying new instructional methods without fear of failing if the principal encourages them to learn from experience and discuss options for the future (*cf.* 2.3.2). This feeling of safety serves as comfort and motivator, as teachers searched for different ways to improve learners' performance (Botha, 2015:215).

To the question on how parents, school board, community members can do to improve the learner performance, principals responded thus:

PA1 pointed out, *"They need to be fully committed in the school by taking part in school activities such as teaching learners in subjects such as agriculture."*

PB2 and PC3 indicated, *"Parents must pay school fees, attend school meetings, need to be fully committed, feel free to communicate with them, pay for field trips which are aimed towards learning to motivate students, check homework, give learners time, and buy books for them."*

PD4 responded, *"School board should motivate teachers by giving them incentives at least M500.00 for teachers who perform well in their subjects."*

From the responses, principals wanted parents to be fully committed, feel free to communicate with them, pay school fees to motivate learners to learn, check learners' homework, give them time to complete tasks, and also buy books for them, while the school board should motivate teachers with incentives. However, involvement of the community was not mentioned or it was ignored. It seems as if the principals required a collaborative effort among parents and the school board without involving community members. A school needs to involve community members in decision-making in order to build trust and commitment among them. Studies also suggest that schools can strengthen learners' senses of community by adopting feasible, common-sense approaches (*cf.* 3.3.1). Furthermore, community involvement in learners' academic

performance is a necessary imperative (*cf.* 3.3.1.2).

To the question on ensuring fully parental or community at school activities, principals responded thus:

> PA1 indicated, *"On traditional days we invite community and ask parents to contribute to make ceremony successful."*
>
> PB2 states, *"We invite parents and business people to donate sport materials such as balls, nets, and jerseys to school."*
>
> PC3 and PD4 mentioned, "*They ask parents to contribute to trips, invite them on traditional day to contribute something to make ceremonies to be successful, ask them to talk with students as coachers, also on open day then communicate with parents individually considering disabilities of their children."*

The responses of the four principals about ensuring parental involvement seemed similar, because they asked parents to contribute on ceremonies and school trips; invited them on traditional day, talked to learners as coachers and communicated with them on open days about their children's disabilities. Effective parental involvement has a positive impact on learners, families and the school. Enhancing parental participation is thus an essential goal for the school and the school should take the lead in providing parents with the opportunities and support needed (*cf.* 3.3.1.2); therefore, the form of involvement should be focused and deliberate. This is supported by Leithwood and Mascall (2008:561), who state that when parents and community feel engaged with the school's processes and operations in a controlled and supportive manner, the school is in a better position to meet its educational goal.

To the question on developing positive relationship with parents and community, principal responded thus:

> PA1 mentioned, *"Yes, we try to communicate with parents and community in order to understand the importance of being together to develop our school."*
>
> PB2 and PC3 responded, *"Yes, we try to be together through parents' meetings with leaders because the school is within the village, provide them with school hall to hold their concerts and funerals."*

PD4 explained, *"We provide them with school grounds to play in order to build good relations."*

The responses of the four principals showed that they tried to develop a positive relationship with parents and community but it seemed limited. Community participation and parent involvement in the school enhance team spirit. This relationship can enhance cooperation, mutual trust, and support and help to work successful as a team. The researchers found that trust among school staff and parents and community is an essential predictor of school performance (Caspe *et al.*, 2011:37). Consistent, two-way communication, and trusting, mutual respectful relationships are aspects of a positive relationship (*cf.* 3.4). The principal should ensure that parents and community are regularly updated on school developments (Marishane, 2013:108). As a result, leaders need to communicate with stakeholders to develop a common and shared school vision to promote a culture of collaboration (*cf.* 3.3.1.1).

5.5.2 Data gathered through focus-group interviews with teachers (*cf.* Annexure G)

In this section, question 1-5 indicate personal information such as date, school, age, gender and academic qualifications. Question 6-10 deal with distributed leadership; questions 11-13 with interpersonal communication; questions 14-18 with leaner performance; and questions 19-21 with parent community partnership

Questions 6-10 depict the participants' personal views of distributed leadership, the nature of opportunities provided to teachers, and how schools foster and facilitate a positive collaboration, official load according to Lesotho educational policy and impedes on the practice of distributed leadership.

Questions 11-13 address participants' perceptions of what signifies the shared vision and mission values of the school, oneness in shared decision-making process perceptions and provision of job-embedded professional development opportunities to teachers.

Questions 14-18 outline meetings with parents over individual learners' academic performance and its benefits to promoting parent-teacher interaction. The influence of active parental participation, what community members, parents and the school board can do to contribute and put systems in place to ensure learners receive the necessary

support. Furthermore, teachers engaging in problem solving or addressing challenges related to learners' academic performance, the nature of collaboration between departments and sharing of ideas promoted by leadership are addressed.

Questions19-21 probe the participation of parents and community to improve learning outcomes, the involvement of parent and communities in school activities, specifically with the aim of improving their children school performance and sharing of responsibilities with parents and community.

5.5.2.1 Biographical data of teachers' focus group of schools A, B, C and D

Table 5.2 below depicts the biographical data of teachers who participated in the study. The dates indicate signify the dates on which the interviews were conducted at schools.

Tables 5.2 represent the biography of teachers' focus-group participation

Date	**Teachers focus group of schools A, B, C and D**	**Age**	**Gender**	**Academic qualification**
23-03-2017	TFGA 1	48	F	B. Ed.
23-03-2017	TFGA 2	23	M	Dip Sec Ed.
23-03-2017	TFGA 3	24	F	Dip Sec Ed.
23-03-2017	TFGA 4	33	M	B.Ed.
23-03-2017	TFGA 5	39	F	B.Ed.
23-03-2017	TFGA 6	24	M	B.Ed.
07-04-2017	TFGB 1	44	F	PGDE
07-04-2017	TFGB 2	28	M	B.Ed.
07-04-2017	TFGB 3	44	M	B.Ed.
07-04-2017	TFGB 4	34	F	B.Ed. Hons
07-04-2017	TFGB 5	32	M	B Ed.
29-03-2017	TFGC 1	31	M	Dip Sec Ed.
29-03-2017	TFGC 2	27	M	Dip Sec Ed
29-03-2017	TFGC 3	37	F	B.Ed.
29-03-2017	TFGC 4	34	M	Dip Sec Ed
29-03-2017	TFGC 5	36	F	B.Ed.

05-04-2017	TFGD 1	47	M	PGDE
05-04-2017	TFGD 2	41	F	B.Ed.
05-04-2017	TFGD 3	37	M	B.Ed.
05-04-2017	TFGD 4	48	F	B.Ed.
05-04-2017	TFGD 5	37	F	Dip Sec Ed
05-04-2017	TFGD 6	40	M	Dip Sec Ed
05-04-2017	TFGD 7	39	F	PGDE
05-04-2017	TFGD 8	43	M	BA.Ed.
05-04-2017	TFGD 9	30	M	Dip Sec Ed
05-04-2017	TFGD 10	28	F	B.Ed.

5.5.2.2 Teachers' views on distributed leadership and personal views

Teachers' personal views of distributed leadership (having many leaders, each in charge of an area of the school, like subject heads, extra-mural activities instead of the principal at the top of the hierarchy) as practised at one's school (*cf.* 2.3.3, 2.4, 2.4.1).

(TFGA 1, 2, 3, TFGB 2, 4, TFGC 5, and TFGD 2, 5, 7). Generally, teachers stated that distributed leadership was okay. The said that because no man was an island; if they shared work it would be easier and the performance would become very well.

> TFGB 1 explained, "*If leadership is distributed to specialization thing that need special set of skills so distributed leadership is division of labour."*

Most of the teachers agreed that distributed leadership had a positive effect for themselves and their schools if practised well, because it influenced team performance by encouraging teachers' empowerment to work collaboratively in order to enhance learners' performance. There was evidence that distributed leadership was not adequately practised.

> TFGA 2 said, *"We have different talents to use in the building of our school, if I marvel somewhere I should be a leader there, so leadership should be distributed among staff members not focused only on the principal."*

Distributed leadership is important in the current school context, since it reduces the

workload of the principal and staff members by including parents and community. This is supported by Gunter (2012:270), who states that in a true collaboration school culture, strong relationships develop between members, diversity is valued, problem-solving becomes the responsibility of everyone and leadership is distributed, contextual and continuous (*cf.* 2.4) in order to see to it that collective talents and experience of all are deployed to the best effect (Hartley, 2010:272).

To the question on nature of learning opportunities provided to teachers, they responded thus:

(TFGA 4, 5, TFGC 2, 6 and TFGD 6, 7). Generally, teachers stated that they attended departmental workshops and mini courses where they frequently shared ideas and came up with new ideas that actually promoted a conducive atmosphere for teaching and learning.

> TFGC1 explained, "*This maximizes teachers to take full responsibilities and had a chance to know an individual learner."*
>
> TFGB1 mentioned, *"They are not provided, I am not aware if such opportunities exist."* (*cf.* 2.4.1).

Teachers' responses showed that the nature of opportunities, even if it was provided was inadequate and that they need to attend mini-courses frequently in order to develop new ideas, because distributed leadership was a shift from an individualistic focus on the leader towards more widespread notions of leadership and processes of leadership (*cf.* 2.3.3, 2.4). Spillane (2008:26) supports this sentiment by emphasising that in the contextual framework of a product of interactions of school leaders, followers and their situations centre on knowledge and skill. Furthermore, the nature of opportunities could be seen as powerful support tool at any school and has to be provided with different ways to support teaching and learning.

To the question on schools that foster and facilitate a positive collaboration and diversity thinking, teachers responded thus:

TFGA 1, 3 and 6 reported that they worked together with the school board, negotiated everything with them and they were allowed to air their own views and contribute.

TFGB 3, 4, and 5 mentioned that sometimes the leadership fostered and facilitated collaboration and diverse thinking.

TFGC added, “But always emphasised by the teachers.”

TFGC 1, 2 indicated that the bond between teachers and learners, should be that of coherence as to enhance the good performance to student also admit students from different religion in scriptures.

TFGD 7, 8, 10 reported that open discussion should be allowed, as well as a learner-friendly environment created, which supports teaching and administration.

TFGD 6 added, *“The principals always emphasize teamwork and arouse that positive collaboration.”*

Teachers expressed different views regarding collaboration and diversity such as open discussion among teachers, administration and learners so that they could work together, as a result, they should admit learners from different religion in their scriptures to enhance diversity thinking, whereas at other schools this seemed to be emphasised by the teachers. Diverse thinking and positive collaboration are important aspects in distributed leadership, because distributed leadership is premised on the sharing of leadership responsibilities where leaders are defined by their abilities to build a strong and functional collaboration team. In support to that, Park and Ham (2016:37) emphasise that distributed leadership involves stakeholders in decision-making process, foster teamwork and creates collective work culture in order to improve learner performance (*cf.* 2.4).

To the question on official workload for teachers they responded thus:

TFGA 2, 3, 5 mentioned 20, 25 or 30 periods per week.

TFGB 1, 2 indicated 30 or 35 periods per week.

TFGC 1, 2 indicated 25 or 30 periods but they were uncertain about the number of periods allocated by the Department of Education.

TFGD 1, 3, 7 stated 30 and 35 periods per week.

Teachers expressed different views about official workload for teachers, according to the Lesotho Educational Policy. Except TFGB 1, 2, who stated 30 to 35.

The responses showed that teachers were ignorant about the rules and regulations of the Minister of Education and Training, Educational Act (2010) that governs them.

To the question on impedes of practice on distributed leadership, teachers responded thus:

TFGA 1, 2, 3 mentioned that principals did not share with them the mission and vision of the school; they did not know if it existed.

TFGB 1 and 2 explained that effective leadership should be practised, especially communication skills.

TFGD 7, 9 and10 reported a lack of effective communication with staff members; it only existed at the departmental meetings.

> TFGC 3 indicated, *"Most of the time teachers are not considered about the decision taken by the school board members."*

Responses from the participants show that distributed leadership was affected by poor implementation of the position. This means that the principals failed to interact with stakeholders by developing a common and shared vision that promoted a culture of collaboration. Effective communication seemed lacking; teachers were not considered in decision-making, the key aspects of distributed leadership (Naseer, 2011:414). School leadership requires fundamental change to influence the quality of interactions within teachers, parents, school board and community members (*cf.* 2.4.4).

To the question on vision, mission values and purpose, teachers responded thus:

(TFGB 5-5, TFGC 5-5 and TFGD 1-10). Generally, teachers stated that they did not know the vision and mission of the school at all.

> TFGD 2 stated, *"We only know the values such as respect, trust and cleanliness, no noise in the staffroom during marking process."*

> TFGA 1 said, *"Yes, we do it because it helps us to achieve our common goal."*

Most of the teachers expressed the view that they did not actually know what the vision and mission of the school were. School leaders should have a role in working with

stakeholders to formulate a vision and mission for the academic success of all learners (*cf.* 3.8). Developing a shared vision around standards is a significant element of a school leader. Clarity of communication of the vision to the parent, learners, staff and relevance of the vision to the school context is very important (Penlington *et al.*, 2008:66). It is important for school leaders to communicate the vision and mission of the school to all concerned, namely staff, learners, the school board and the community members. In Lesotho, most principals, for variety of reasons, find themselves going about their everyday work without a clear vision of where the school should go.

To the question on oneness in decision-making, teachers responded thus:

TFGA 1, 3 mentioned that they held meetings where they discussed matters arising.

TFGB 2, 3, 5 indicated that it helped them to identify the strength and weakness of both the student and the teacher, a parent becomes as a middleman to help the two to work together harmoniously.

> TFGC 2 explained further, *"If applied positive, it will diversify and help to bring new ideas and efficient running of the school."*
>
> TFGD 1 said, *"Sometimes it is done, but always done by teachers and everyone is involved and apply his or her effort."*
>
> TFGD 3 added, *"With principal is in rare cases."*

From the responses above, TFGA, TFGB and TFGC seemed as if they invited oneness in decision-making even though it seemed limited because it ranged between teachers and parents, excluding the school board and the community. Except for TFGD3 whereby oneness is not always promoted by the leadership when teachers are involved, teachers in the other focus groups concurred that endeavors are made to involve everyone and to keep it positive. Leaders in leadership roles seemed to lack communication skills, which is an important role in leadership (Campo, 2014:1). Involvement of stakeholders in decision-making is crucial (*cf.* 2.4.3; 3.3). Working as a team produces better decision-making. In decision-making it is best to work as a team in order to have more capabilities to discover mistakes. This is supported by Hallinger (2013:9), who states that collaboration, decision-making and participation in an effort to evaluate the school's

academic development encourage a pleasant and collegial school climate.

To the question on providing teachers with continuous job-embedded skills teachers responded thus:

TFGA 3 and 4 indicated that they regularly went to workshops to acquire skills with other schools and other experts in their subjects.

TFGC 2 and 3 reported that they went to workshops to discuss how to tackle examination questions and share ideas about difficult concepts.

> TFGD 3 stated, "*Attending workshops support teachers with knowledge, even syllabus keeps on changing we have to abide with such things and to handle them and also to adhere to those changes."*
>
> TFGB 1 explained, *"Normally provided from the ministry, but we do not have that thing anymore, we usually attend them and share ideas among teachers, a lot of changes happens in education and need to be updated, now we have Grades and LGCSE such changes need training, especially in Lesotho we have to be aware of the trends."*

The responses above show that TFGA, TFGC and TFGD concurred that they attended workshops regularly to acquire skills with other schools because the syllabus kept on changing; therefore, they had to adhere to those changes. TFGB mentioned that the ministry no longer provided those workshops; however, lot of changes happened in education and needed to be updated, as teachers they had to adhere to those changes and such changes need training especially in Lesotho. They had to be aware of the trends but there was no training (*cf.* 3.3.2.1). In the Lesotho education system, localisation of C.O.S.C to LGCSE need to be clearly communicated with parents, teachers, learners' school board and the community members in order to understand what it entails.

To the question on meeting parents over individual learner performance and the benefits of parent teacher interaction, teachers responded thus:

TFGA 1 and 3 responded that they met parents once a year.

> TFGA 4 added, *"Once in the blue moon after they have written their examinations when we see that a student has a problem we call a parent."*

TFGB 3 pointed out, "*Once a year mid-year most of the time is June*."

TFGB 4 added, "Sometimes we do not meet them."

TFGC 1 and 3, and TFGD 3 and 5 explained that the interaction improved performance both teacher and learner effort, helped to support structure of the child and also learners were unable to express themselves, so teachers told the parent where they encountered problems with the learner, such as lateness. If the parent was there, it became easy to understand the learner and to assist him or her to improve.

From the responses above, is it clear that meeting with parents over an individual learner was not enough if it was once a year. That showed a lack of communication between parents and teachers. As a result, teachers should always communicate with the learner and the parents about learner performance, even out of school. This communication should not only indicate complaints to the parents but be based on academic success of the learner and their socialisation (Beeka, 2009:49). Teachers should choose face-to-face communication when communicating with parents. Apart from meetings, they should visit their home and use clear and understandable language in order to maintain a positive environment which promote learner academic performance (*cf.* 3.3.2.1).

To the question on influence of active parental participation, teachers responded thus:

TFGA 1 and 2, and TFGC 3 and 4 were of the same view, indicating that after meeting with parents, learners performed better.

TFGB 2 responded, *"Yes, parents voluntarily involved the children feel that they have to pull up their socks and it motivates them."*

TFGD 1, 3 and 5 mentioned that checking assignments regularly as well as progress reports, discussing strengths and weakness of the child with the parents, in time contributed to leaners changing their behaviour and staying focused.

Most of the teachers concurred that the influence of active parental participation in the school enhanced team spirit and parental participation. Additionally, this may promote a more positive school culture and a supportive school environment. Discussing school

activities and helping learners with assignments at home, enhances strong relationships and an improvement in learner academic performance (*cf.* 3.3.1.2).

To the question on how parents, school boards and community members can contribute to improve learner performance, teachers responded thus:

TFGA 1 and 3, and TFGC 2 indicated that parents had to help to ensure that learners were not involved in hiding themselves in their hostels.

> TFGC 4 mentioned, *"Parents not to come only if he or she have a problem they have to come as resource person to assist, and learners understand better if taught by someone not familiar with them."*

TFGB 1 and TFGD 5 and10 reported that their community could pass messages to the school if the children were not at school during school hours. They could also create study groups, using the community hall for study.

It can be concluded that parents should ensure that learners do not dodge their classes. Also, parents have to be involved as a resource person to teach their children any subject there were comfortable with. The community can create study groups and use the community hall for study. The school board is an essential part of the community and plays an active part in the development of the community. The school board oversees the management and the proper and efficient running of the school (in terms of the MoET Education Act, 2010:181). This means that the school board has the authority to communicate effectively with the community in order to improve learner performance (*cf.* 3.6)

To the question on systems in place to ensure that learners are supported in learning, teachers responded thus:

(TFGA 1, 4, TFGB 1, 2, TFGC 4 and TFGD 7, 9). Generally, teachers stated that they used morning study, afternoon school study, Saturday study, Sesotho clubs and science club to enhance learners' performance.

> TFGD 3 indicated, *"We use slots in the time-table to visit library during the day, and form study groups from each class whereby they help each other."*

> TFGB 1 explained, *"Learners are allowed to utilize the properties of the school for the study, come on weekends, have schemes to help needy students in order to learn over three years and monitors those programmes."*

From the responses above, teachers tried their best to support their learners. Therefore, teachers' commitment is an important factor that affect school effectiveness and success of the learner performance positively. This is supported by Englin (2009:7), who states that committed teachers who have the support of their colleagues and leaders experience the fulfilment of their professional work as a result of their ability to reach every student. He further notes that teachers may be likely to remain and persist to have a positive impact on students' achievements.

To the question on how to solve problems or address challenges related to learner performance teacher responded thus:

TFGA 3 and 4, TFGC 5 and TFGD 9 and 10 were of the same view. They reported that they called parents to come and share ideas and to advise learners to study hard. Teachers opted to pay school fees for those children who could not afford it, initiate fundraising schemes for helping needy children, support learner achievements and allow learners to report to their class teacher, even other teachers, if they had problems, in order to mould and shape them to become better learners.

> TFGB 2 stated, *"We come together to solve problems so that they do well sometimes beat them, became harsh on them and tries to do make-up tests to reinforce performance not specific to those but, to everyone."*

Teachers' responses showed that they tried their best to solve problems and address challenges. This situation needs teachers with interpersonal skill because interpersonal skill involved a bunch of skills necessary for establishing, maintaining and sustaining relationships and were closely interconnected with communication skill (Motepe, 2007:291). Problems and challenges related to learners' performance need collaboration among the school board, parents and the community; it is not an individual effort. When stakeholders express themselves, understood the needs of others, made decisions, and worked collaboratively, misunderstandings will be cleared up. A positive attitude, trust and support encourage stakeholders to build a smooth and strong sustainable relationship. It

is therefore important for the school board, parents, teachers and the community to work together as a team to address problems and challenges facing by the learners in order to improve learner academic performance (*cf.* 3.4).

To the question on nature of collaboration between the different departments, teachers responded thus:

(TFGA 1, 2, TFGB1, TFGC 2 and TFGD 4). Teachers indicated that they sat together and talked about the objectives and helped one another to solve problems.

> TFGB 2 explained, *"All the time we work together, share departmental issues on how to motivate students we work as a team, and performance of students improves even discipline wise, like English department we see to it that learners speaks English."*
>
> TFGD 7 reported, *"In agriculture we give students the products that they produce if they perform well as an incentives and certificate to motivate them. We do team-teaching especially for subjects such as geography, development studies, agriculture and chemistry."*

It was clear that teachers did collaborate between different departments by sharing ideas and topics related. They discussed topics together, did team-teaching, and asked one other where they encountered difficulties in order to meet the needs of the students. With related topics, they invited a teacher from another department to teach the concept; also departments whose subjects performed well to share skills with those whose subjects performed poorly and created a balance in performance. Departments shared their success and hiccups and the leadership promoted team teaching. Distributed leadership influences team performance by encouraging teachers' empowerment to work collaboratively in order to enhance learners' performance (*cf.* 2.4.1). The research shows that high-performing leadership teams are characterised by internal coherence and unity, with a clear focus on high standards (*cf.* 2.5).

To the question on ensuring participation of parents and community improving learner outcomes, teachers responded thus:

TFGA 3 and 4, and TFGB 1, TFGC 2 and 3 reported that teachers were of the same view that the school had set dates to meet with parents, normally invited them. They wrote

letters, contacted them, followed up and they normally came and made suggestions on how to improve the school.

> TFGD 5 pointed out, "We *call meetings, give reports to the parents and voluntarily parents pay extra money for practical subjects, also ask parents to check classwork for their children if it is marked by teachers."*

It is clear that teachers ensured the participation of parents in improving learning outcomes, but without considering the community they set dates to meet with parents, contacting them, calling parents meetings, asking parents to check classwork and making follow up. The form of participation should be focused and designed to engage parents and students in order to improve students' achievement in developing knowledge and skill, types of involvement about students' education should include limiting TV viewing, supervising academic work, communicating from school to home about students' progress (*cf.* 3.3.1.2). As a result, the community may assist the learning climate of a school in many ways such as providing direction, in recruiting volunteers to help at school functions, resource persons and providing a sense of stability. Marishane (2013:24) reiterate that parents and community can play an important role in providing parenting support and security to the school, provided the principal engaged them in productive ways and work cooperatively with them.

To the question on involvement of parents and community in school activities, teachers responded thus:

TFGA 2 and 3, TFGB 2, TFGD 4 and 7 concurred that parents should be invited to help for whatever they know and help on cultural days, especially with subjects like Sesotho, assist in cultural clothes and share knowledge on poems in Sesotho.

> TFGC 4 stated, *"Parents should pay for educational trips, can use school grounds, teach learners how to sing in the school choir and what to wear on traditional day, also discuss the progress report."*

The responses seemed inadequate about involvement of parents and communities in schools' activities, specifically with the aim of improving their children's school performance such as math and science activities. Enhancing parental involvement is thus

an essential goal for school and the school should take the lead in providing parents with opportunities and support needed. To be effective in increasing student achievement, school-family involvement policy must be well designed and focused. This is supported by (NSPRA, 2006:8) in saying that family and community involvement that is linked to student learning has a greater effect on achievement than more general forms of involvement. Thus, discussing school activities and helping learners with assignments at home bring strong relationship to learner academic performance (*cf.* 3.3.1.2).

To the question on sharing responsibilities with parents and community members, teachers responded thus:

TFGA 1 and 3 indicated that parents paid school fees and taught our children different kinds on traditions practiced and to also pay for educational trips.

TFGB 1 and 2 stated that they had a board at the school to represent everyone, such as teachers, parents, chief and the community who work together to share ideas.

> TFGC 3 reported, *"Parents often talk to us about the security, caring for school properties and we normally work together to protect the school property because it is their own property as well."*
>
> TFGD 3 and 6 mentioned, "*Sometimes parents call us if they realize that students are dogging their classes."*

The responses above reveal that sharing of responsibilities with parents and community at the school is insufficient and not focused, because the rules are not clearly stated, even for the community members. School that acknowledge and understand supportive community participation, promotes relationship and creates conducive working environment (Boot, 2011:43). This means the school should respect local traditions and norms as well as participate in local events of the community, helping to establish a strong relationship between the school and the community, which in turn results in close cooperation and communication, especially when the principal knows how to work with the community. However, community and parental involvement is an area that most schools ignore and fail to improve (Marishane, 2013:35). However, if considered, it creates a conducive atmosphere among stakeholders (*cf.* 3.3.1.2).

5.5.3 Data gathered through individual in-depth interview with the parents, chief and councillor, and chairperson of the board (*cf.* Annexures H, I and J).

In this section of the chapter, questions 1 to 5 indicate personal information such as date, school, gender and academic qualification. Questions 6 to 7 (parents), 6 to 7 (chief and councillor) and 6 to 8 (chairperson of the board) address aspects regarding distributed leadership. Questions 8 to 9 and 9 to 10 deal with interpersonal communication, according to the members mentioned above. Questions 10 to11 and 11 to 15 address learner performance. Questions 12 to 14 and 16 to 17 refer to parent community partnership.

Questions 6 to 7 cover the perception of the role of the principal regarding distributed leadership, the principal sharing power with others, and work collaboration with teachers, school board and community. Questions 6 to 7 refer to participants' reflections on sharing of leadership responsibility at the school, and perceiving distributed leadership is outlined. Questions 6 to 8 probed the school boards' responsibility to encourage teacher leadership capacity, foster teamwork with teachers' parents and community and the type of support they provide.

Questions 8 to 9 outline school communication with parents, participating in school matters. Questions 8 to 9 explored relationships with the principal, work cooperatively with SMT, teachers, parents and community. Questions 9 to 10 examined feelings about being a chairperson, working relationship between teachers, parents, community, and school board with regard to communication.

Questions 10 to 11 address communication with the principal about learners' performance, and what parents, the community and the school board can do to contribute towards improving learners' performance. In Questions 10 to 11, reflections about school improvements or matters concerning school such as learners' academic performance, how parents' community and school board can do to contribute to improving leaner performance are addressed. Questions 11 to 15 queried how the school board initiates activities with business people and the community; mechanisms to follow up on complaints issues raised by parents; teachers are given opportunities to invite parents;

working relationships between parents, the community and the school; and what parents, community members and the school board can do to contribute towards improving learners performance.

Questions 12 to 14 focus on how often the school invites parents and the community to participate in school activities; whether the management team works cooperatively with parents and the community; and ways of involvement in decision-making concerning school activities. Questions 12 to 14 indicate how the school leadership encourages pupils to take actively part in any community projects; how the school welcomes members of the community at any school activities and how it provides support or security to the entire school. Questions 16 to 17 focus on schools updating parents and the community about school developments, while the school board communicates with stakeholders to promote a culture of collaboration.

5.5.3.1 Biographical data of parents, chief and counsellor and chairpersons of the board

Tables 5.3, 5.4 and 5.5 below depict the biographical data of the parents, chief and counsellor, and chairpersons of the board who participated in the study. The dates indicated signify the dates on which the interviews were conducted at schools.

Table 5.3: Biography of the parents' participation

Date	Parents of schools A, B, C and D	Age	Gender	Academic qualification
29-03-2017	PRA 1	42	M	STD 7
08-04-2017	PRB 1	52	M	FORM C
08-04-2017	PRB 2	62	F	BBA Degree
29-03-2017	PRC 1	61	F	FORM B
29-03-2017	PRC 2	38	F	FORM C
03-04-2017	PRD 1	53	M	FORM C

Table 5.4: Biography of the chief and the counsellor participation

Date	Chiefs and counsellors of	Age	Gender	Academic qualification

	schools A, B, C and D			
29-03-2017	CCA 1	64	M	STD 1
07-04-2017	CCB 1	41	M	Certificate E I
29-03-2017	CCC 1	73	M	STD 7
29-03-2017	CCC 2	45	M	STD 7
31-03-2017	CCD 1	52	M	FORM C
31-03 2017	CCD 2	61	M	FORM C

Table 5.5: Biography of the chairpersons of the board's participation

Date	Chairpersons of the board of schools A, B, C, and D	Age	Gender	Academic qualification
28-03-2017	CPBA	55	F	STD 7
08-04-2017	CPBB	66	M	MBA
29-03-2017	CPBC	64	F	FORM A
31-03-2017	CPBD	49	F	B. ED

5.5.3.2 Perceived role of the principal regarding distributed leadership

Parents perceived the role of the principal in different ways regarding distributed leadership practices:

PRA1, PRB 2 and PRA 1 were of the same view, namely that the principal worked cooperatively with them. They sat together to solve the problems they encountered.

> PRA 2 emphasised, *"Re sebetsa le eena hantle, re lula fatse re shebisana bothata na re ka bo rarolla joang."*

Contrary to this, PRC 3 stated that they worked together, they did their work properly, and got students engaged and involved.

From the responses above, it transpired that parents worked cooperatively with the principal, sat together to solve problems, without emphasising how to approach their

responsibilities. Indeed, distributed leadership practice increases interaction with parents, teachers and the community in decisions, which leads to the improvement of learner academic achievement (*cf.* 2.3.3). Parents should be clear about their roles and responsibilities. They have to consider them as important aspects to the effectiveness of distributed leadership, because when the lines of communication are clear, parents will know their responsibilities and whom to approach for support and guidance.

To the question on sharing power, parents responded thus:

PRA 1, PRB 2 and PRD 1 concurred that the principals worked together with them. They could not come up with solutions without consulting them.

> PRA 1 explained as follows, *"Ba ke ke ba etsa liqeto ba sa re joetsa".*

PRC 3 indicated that the principal worked cooperatively with them, but with teachers they did not know.

The responses above indicate that principals worked cooperatively with parents, but without emphasising how they worked. It seems as if parents did not know their roles as parents.

PRC 2 indicated that the principal worked cooperatively with them, but with teachers they do not know. Therefore, working cooperatively with teachers and sharing power with others seemed inadequate, because distributed leadership implied sharing responsibility for decision-making. For example, within leadership, members are enable to lead on certain activities without tight accountability mechanisms. As a result, the pressure of accountability grows; thus, it is important to share power among parents, teachers, the school board and the community, because it is increasingly clear that improving learners' performance cannot be the principal's responsibility alone; it should be dispersed (*cf.* 2.4).

To the question on management team sharing leadership responsibility within the school, chief and counsellor responded thus:

CCA 1, CCB 2, CCC 2 and CCD 1 concurred that management shared leadership responsibilities at the school by calling meetings and discussing the problems that the school encountered and solve them.

CCA 1 emphasised as follows, *"Ba bitsa liphutheho le ba amehang ho shebisana mathata le ho a rarolla."*

It is clear from the participants' responses that sharing responsibility is about being called for the meetings, discussing problems the school come across and solving them. It should be clear that sharing responsibility is not about discussing problems and solving them. It is important to know that sharing responsibilities at the school is to talk openly and set clear expectations of the school, setting a clear, collective vision and accepted mission and purpose to improve learner academic performance. Botha (2015:210) mentions that management teams should behave as role models, envision the future, strive to communicate effectively, and inspire team members to work towards the goals of the school (*cf.* 2.3.2).

To the question on perceiving distributed leadership, chief and counsellor responded thus:

CCA 1, CCB 2 and CCC 2, agreed that the way the school worked seemed as if they practised distributed leadership, because they called members of the board to discuss matters arising and solve problems quarterly.

However, CCD 1 indicated, "Yes, the school practises distributed leadership because members of the board were called to discuss problems."

She emphasised as follows, *"Ee, ea sebetsa hobane re bitsa lintho tsa boto ho tla buisana le ho rarolla mathata hobane li emetse litichere, batsoali le sechaba."*

Therefore, it is important to take into account that, even if members of the board represent parents, teachers and the community, those members still have to be involved in schools' decision-making without being represented.

From the responses above it is clear that distributed leadership is not well practised because they called members of the board only without knowing about other members such as staff members, students, parents and the community. Distributed leadership will enable participative in decision making. This sentiment is supported by Beatty and Fildman (2009:19) in saying that an activity system is characterised by "multi-voicedness" where the views, tradition and interest of teachers as well as all members of the school

community are regarded as important (*cf.* 2.3.3).

To the question on encouraging teacher leadership capacity, chairpersons of the board responded thus:

CPBA 1 and CPBB 2 indicated that they called meetings and discussed as board members how to encourage teacher leadership capacity, CPBC 3 and CPBD 4 mentioned that they acted as support group to the principal, who organised all the activities that supported teaching and learning to make it effective.

It is clear that chairpersons of the board took little initiative to encourage teacher leadership capacity at the school. They called meetings to discuss and act as support group to the principal without showing their own capabilities of being a leader. It seems as if they did not know their roles, because being a leader is to develop and assist people in reaching their potential where they can lead themselves and others effectively. This is supported by Marishane and Botha (2011:64) in saying that to achieve the goal of education in general and the goal of schools in particular, school leaders need to be instructional leaders to run teaching and learning process effectively and act as transformational leaders to engage teachers in different school activities (*cf.* 2.4.3). As a result, distributed leadership encourages teacher empowerment.

To the question on fostering teamwork with teachers, parents and community, chairpersons of the board responded thus:

CPBA 1, CPBB 2 and CPBC 3 are of the same view that they called parent meetings regularly, brief them on progress of the school, and give them a chance to add their own views. CPBA 1 indicated that they sat together to discuss issues and how to come up with solutions.

> She emphasised, *"Re lula moho re shebisana hore na mosebetsi re o etsa joang".*

Three of them pinpointed the parents only without considering teachers and the community.

> However, CPBD 4 said, *"Teachers sometimes engaging in activities of the school, staff encouraged on maintain an efficient and running of the school. Community, as a whole*

may be invited in sports, social and cultural activities and parents will be called in meetings so as for them to be given a say on how to help even suggest ways of improving the school."

From the above responses it is clear that three chairpersons were unaware of the teachers and community involvement in the meeting; they focused only on the parents, except for CPBD 4 who considered them. Distributed leadership supports teamwork and emphasised involvement of stakeholders in decision making (Gronn, 2008:141). Working as a team produces better decisions than working as an individual. Also, working as a team provides access to a larger source of information than an individual member; even in decision-making it is best to work as a team in order to be more capable to discover mistakes (*cf.* 2.4.3).

To the question on type of support the chairperson of the board is expected to provide chairpersons of the board responded thus:

CPBA 1 and CPBC 3 agreed that they called meetings to solve problems and worked together with teachers if they had some issues.

She explained, *"Re bitsa liphutheho ho rarolla mathata ho kopanya litichere,le ho sebetsa moho ha e ba li hohlana."*

CPBB 2 and CPBD 4 stated that they provided leadership role to see to it that their school abided fully with the educational act, labour court and constitutions relevant to teaching service.

The responses above show that two chairpersons work together with teachers if they have some issues and call meetings to solve problems, while other two chairpersons only provided a leadership role by seeing to it that the school complied fully with the educational act. It is therefore important that chairpersons play their role in an effective manner; they have to know their roles and responsibilities in order to work harmoniously with staff members (*cf.* 2.4.3). As a result, chairpersons of the board have to ensure that they have experts in their positions.

5.5.3.3 School communication

To the question on school communication with parents regarding children's performance, parents responded thus:

PRA 1, PRC 1 and PRD 1 concurred that they met twice a year to discuss children's performance. PRB 2 mentioned that sometimes they met with the school to discuss; sometimes they did not.

PRC 2 explained as follows, *"Re kopana habeli selemong ho bua ka boithuto ba bana."*

From the responses above it is clear that school communication with parents was limited if it was twice in a year, as indicated by the parents. PRB 2 mentioned that sometimes they met, but sometimes they did not. In that way, it shows that schools fail to invite, welcome and encourage parent involvement, for example by as keeping parents regularly informed about learners' progress (f.3.3.2). This is supported by Wherry (2009:7) in saying that such schools show a lack of a two-way, respectful partnership communication between parents and school personnel.

To the question on participating in school matters to provide a sense of stability, parents responded thus:

PRA 1 and PRB 1 agreed that parents do not always participate in school matters but they sometimes do.

PRB 2 explained, *"Ha se ka mehla re nkang karolo empa ka nako e ngoe."*

PRC 1 and PRD 1 mentioned that board members were given a chance to participate but for parents do not always participate freely and diligently in school matters.

It is clear that parents' participation is insufficient in school matters. Changes in technology have all influenced parental involvement (Wherry, 2009:9). There has to be a general commitment to involve parents in partnerships with schools. There should be consistent involvement in education as well as the spirit maintained in which that engagement impact the school to successful improvement. Considering school values, mutual trust and respect, collaborative approaches and effective communication are imperative ingredients to effect this (*cf.* 3.3.2).

To the question on relationship with principal, chief and counsellor responded thus:

CCA 1 and CCB 1 agreed that the principal told them about the problems that she encountered at school, so they sat together share those problems and solve them. CCC1 and CCD 2 indicated that principals did not come up with solutions without consulting them.

> CCD2 emphasised, "*Mookameli a ke ke a etsa liqeto a sa re bolella."*

The responses from the participants clearly indicated that the relationship with the principal is quite good to a certain extent, because they sit together with them and do not come up with solutions without consulting them. However, participants miss elaborating on different types of solutions that are suggested as they do not always get the chance to do so. This relationship seems limited, because it focuses on solving problems about certain issues of the schools. It is important to consider interpersonal communication where everyone expresses their personal needs and understands the needs of others, makes decisions, solves problems and regulates power. This relationship can enhance cooperation, mutual trust and support, and help to work successfully as a team (*cf.* 3.4).

To the question on working cooperatively with SMT, teachers, parents and community chief and counsellor responded thus:

CCA 1, CCB 2 and CCC 1 were of the same view, namely that they worked together with the SMT, teachers, parents and community because they sat together, sharing problems and seeing to it that teachers treated their children in an appropriate manner and took care of their education. Nevertheless, CCD1 and CCD 2 mentioned that not all of them worked cooperatively, because people had different issues. Teachers had to know about solutions from the board and the board should know about teachers' issues, but it was not like that.

> CCD2 emphasised, *"Tsebelisano moho e teng empa e seng kaofela hobane batho bana le maikutlo a fapaneng boto e tlameha ho tseba litaba tsa litichere le litichere li tsebe litaba tsa boto empa ha ho joalo."*

It is clear that working cooperatively with stakeholders is limited because it seems as if

they only sit together when they have problems; without problems they do not sit to discuss any interesting issues such as achievements of the learners or developments of the school. Communication is the foundation of effective partnerships and therefore, building effective partnership with SMTs, parents, teachers and the community would ensure the success of such relationships. It goes without saying that the Chief and Councillor should speak and listen to teachers, parents and community and establish a strong working bond. NSPRS (2006:6) supports this by saying that successful partnership requires sustained mutual collaboration and support from school staff, families at home and the community (*cf.* 3.2).

To the question on feeling about being a chairperson of the board, they responded thus:

CPBA 1 and CPBC 3 concurred that they felt proud, but it was difficult to lead people with different characters; to see to it that they managed their work adequately.

> She emphasised, *"Ke ikutloa ke le motlotlo empa ho thata ho etella batho ba bang pele ka li kelello tse sa tsoaneng, hore ba etse mosebetsi oa bona ka nako kapa ka pele."*

CPBB 2 and CPBD 4 agreed that they saw it as a challenge in terms of development of the school, the welfare of teachers and parents as well as acting as a link to between staff members.

> CPBD 4 said: "I took it as a challenge of my intellect in terms of how to come up with suggestion in order to work cooperatively with staff members and parents as a whole."

The responses above show that chairpersons of boards had to know their roles and responsibilities as well as their limits. CPB 1 and CPBD 4 stated that they saw it as a challenge and ability to think in a logical way in terms of development of the school, welfare of teachers, parents and community. However, CPBA 1 and CPBC 3 reported that they felt proud, but it was difficult to lead people with different characters and to ensure that such relationships prosper. It seems as if they were not knowledgeable about their work. It was important to act as leaders. An act of sharing one's ideas, attitudes or perceptions with one another is essential (*cf.* 3.2). This is supported by Battilan *et al*. (2010:232), in stating that in order for the chairperson of the board to be involved in the

school, there should be effective communication among teachers, parents and community.

To the question on working relationship between teachers, parents and the community regarding communication, chairpersons of the board responded thus:

CPBA 1, CPBB 2 CPBC and CPBD 4 agreed that a working relationship between teachers, parents and the community regarding communication seemed quite well, because they held meetings with them to discuss problems they encountered and they communicated twice a year.

> CPBC 3 explained it as follows, *"Rea kopana re buisaneng ho lokisa liphoso, le ho ntlafatsa boithuto ba ngoana."*

It is clear that the four chairpersons of the board thought that holding meetings and sharing problems encountered should be the best if trust, teamwork respect and communication, the keys of effective working relationships, were emphasised. Communication is essential for working relationship because is the cornerstone of strong, healthy relationships. No relationship can take place without communication (*cf.* 3.3.1.2). This is supported by Kellet (2007:54), stating that relationships begin and develop through communication.

To the question on communication with principals about learners' performance, parents responded thus:

PRA 1 and PRB 2 were of the same view that they worked together with the principal on how to help a child to perform better because if they could work together, sharing ideas about the child, they would be able to come up with better solutions to give a child a better future.

> PRB 1 emphasised, *"Ngoana o fa matichere bothata joale ba shebisana ho haha bokamoso ba ngoana."*

PRC 1 and PRD 1 mentioned that it was good to communicate with the principal about learners' performance because they all wanted to see the child performing well and achieve better results.

PRD 1 emphasised, *"Ho joalo, ho bohlokoa ho motsoali le mookameli ho buisana ka tsebetso ea ngoana."*

It was clear that parents saw to it that communication with the principal about learners' performance was good, without considering how they did it in terms of planning. The success of any school certainly depends on the type of leadership that the school has (Bush, 2011:515). It is important to the principal to communicate with parents about learners' performance, as well as how to do it, for instance, scheduling it within the school calendar, because the principal has a direct impact on the success of the school and learners' academic performance.

To the question on parents, community members and school boards' contribution to improving learners' performance, parents responded thus:

PRA 1, PRB 1, PRC 2 and PRD 1 agreed that calling meetings, sitting together, sharing ideas and working together could help them to improve learner performance.

PRB 1 emphasised, *"Ka ho lula moho ho rera, le ho arolelana mosebetsi le ho shebisana seo re se hlokang."*

From the responses above it is clear that parents believed in teamwork; a group could solve problems better than a principal alone (*cf.* 2.5). This is supported by Smylie *et al.* (2007:503) stating that a school where power is shared, where decisions are made jointly and parents, teachers and community members lead with the principal, can only occur with climate of trust, which leads to learners' academic performance. Successful distributed leadership comprises collaboration, communication, joint problem solving and honest feedback (ibid).

To the question on updated regularly about school improvement or matters, chief and counsellor responded thus:

CCA 1 and CCC 1 concurred that they were not always informed.

CCC 1 emphasised, *"Hare tsebisoe ka mehla ka lintlafatso tsa sekolo."*

CCB 2 and CCD 1 mentioned that the principal wrote letters to them tell them about the conclusions they reached pertaining to learners' performance.

The responses from the participants clearly indicated that CCA 1 and CCC 1 were not regularly informed about school improvements, while CCB 2 and CCD 1 indicated that the principal told them about the conclusions they arrived at considering learners' performance. It is important that principals ensure that the chief and counsellor are regularly updated on school improvements. Marishane (2013: 24) support this by saying that enhancing parental involvement is an essential goal for schools and schools should take the lead in providing parents with the opportunities and supported needed to be effective in increasing student achievements (*cf.* 3.3.1.2).

To the question on parents, community members and school board contribution to improving learners; performance, the chief and councillor responded thus:

CCA 1, CCB 2, CCC 1 and CCD1 agreed that sitting together, sharing ideas, and discussing some difficulties that they encountered would be helpful to contribute to improving learner performance.

CCA explained, *"Ka ho kopana moho ho arolelana maikutlo le ho hlalositsana mathata."*

The responses above indicate that teamwork would be helpful to contribute to learners' performance by sharing ideas, sitting together and discussing some difficulties about the learners. As a result, successful relationships are built on communication, and when stakeholders express themselves, understanding the needs of others, make decisions, work collaboratively, misunderstandings will be cleared up (*cf.* 3.4). It is important for the chief and councillor to work as a team, sitting together, sharing ideas, building trust, respecting each other and sharing the responsibility of leading schools towards improving learners' performance.

To the question on school board initiatives with business people and the community, chairpersons of the board responded thus:

CPBA 1, CPBC 2 and CPBD1 agreed that they invited them to discuss the problems they had with learners and asked them to assist.

CPBA 1 emphasised, *"Re ea ba mema re bontsana mathatha le ho kopa lithuso."*

However, CPBB said, "I am not sure principal can elaborate on that."

It was clear from the responses above that three chairpersons of the board invited businesspersons and the community to initiate activities with them, but it seemed limited, because they invited them only if they had problems. However, one chairperson said he was not aware of that, which shows lack of communication. Communication channels need to be constructed at schools, which must be always open to accommodate staff and channel participation in any decision process related to the school (*cf.* 3.3.2).

To the question on mechanisms to follow up on complaints raised by parents, chairpersons of the board responded thus:

CPBA 1 and CPBC 2 were of the same view, namely that they called parents, teachers and the principal to sit together and discuss learners' performance.

> CPBA 1 emphasised this, "*Re lula fatse ho sheba litaba moho."*

CPBB 2 and CPBD 4 mentioned that the school leadership, on behalf of the parents, consulted the teachers regarding the performance of their children; also, when reports were collected, the parents came to the school with their children to discuss ways of improving the performance of their child.

The above responses indicated that the board had mechanisms, even if limited, because performance should be communicated regularly, not only when the reports were issued. It was therefore important for the chairperson of the board to implement more strategies to follow up on complaints, issues and concern raised by parents (*cf.* 3.4).

To the question on teachers' opportunity to invite parents to discuss learners' academic weaknesses, chairpersons of the board responded thus:

CPBA 1, CPBC 3 and CPBD 4 concurred that teachers were given opportunities to invite parents to discuss learners' academic weakness. It was done only when the reports were issued every semester.

> CPBC 3 explained, *"Ee, litichere li fuoa monyetla oa ho kopana le bana ke boto ho buisana ka mosebetsi oa ngoana."*
>
> CPBB 2 said: *"it is not actual the board but the principal with the teachers."*

It was clear from the participants' responses that three chairpersons agreed that the board

gave teachers opportunities to invite parents to discuss learners' academic weakness. The exception was CPBB 2, who indicated that it was not actually the board who has the responsibility to elicit parents' participation, but that the principal and teachers should assume responsibility for this. Therefore, that opportunity seemed insufficient, because it was done only to discuss learners' academic weakness every semester. As a result, to ensure the effective running of schools and outcomes, it was important that teachers should always communicate with learners and their parents out of school (*cf.* 3.3.2.1).

To the question on working relationship between parents, community and school board with regard to learners' performance, chairpersons of the board responded thus:

CPBA 1 CPBC 3 and CPBD 4 agreed that their working relationship was quite well, because they allowed parents and the community to be involved in meetings by asking questions, sharing ideas and helping with suggestions on how to improve learner performance.

> The exception was CPBB 2, who said, *"Only principal, teachers and parents concerned, not school board."*

The responses above show that three chairpersons allowed parents and the community to be involved by asking questions, sharing ideas and helping with suggestions on how to improve learners' performance. The exception was CPBB 2, who mentioned that only parents, teachers and principal should be involved. It seemed as if other board members were not concerned about learners' performance. A working relationship should include all members of the board, not only the principal and teachers. In order to facilitate improvement in working relationships, chairpersons of the board should make use of all members and ensure that they worked together as a team towards learners' academic performance. An effective chairperson of the school board would influence student achievement significantly and he should work hand in hand with a principal (*cf.* 3.4.1)

To the question on parents', community members' and school board's contribution to improving learners' performance, chairpersons of the board responded thus:

CPBA 1 and CPBB 2 concurred that they should meet on a quarterly basis, not only every

semester, because they were parents who were knowledgeable about activities related to the school that could assist teachers in executing their tasks. The chairperson of the board could go to classes to observe how teachers taught their children. CPBD 3 and CPBD 4 mentioned that parents, community and the school board had to sit together to share ideas on how to contribute to improving learners' performance.

From the responses it is clear that meeting on regular basis, observing teachers, sitting together and sharing ideas can contribute better to improving learner performance. It is therefore important for the chairperson of the board to see to it that all stakeholders are involved in strategic planning of the school by communicating with them (*cf.* 3.3).

To the question on the school inviting parents and the community to school activities, parents responded thus:

PRA 1 and PRB 2 agreed that this did not always happen, but when they had ceremonies such as cultural days and parents' meetings, they usually attended them.

> PRB 1 emphasised, *"Ha re mengoe ka mehla re mengoa ka mekete ea bochaba kapa kopanong ea batsoali."*

PRC 1 and PPRD 1 mentioned that they met twice a year to discuss learners' progress report and they always attended.

The responses show that inviting parents and the community to school activities seemed limited because they were invited twice a year and on cultural days only. It was therefore important to encourage parent participation and community involvement in the school because it enhanced team spirit. The principal should ensure that parents and community were regularly invited to the school. The school climate was associated with the culture, values and beliefs that prevailed among stakeholders (*cf.* 3.8).

To the question on management team working cooperatively with parents and the community, parents responded thus:

PRA 1 and PRB 2 concurred that they worked cooperatively with the management team and community if there was a need at the school. Parents and the community were told to contribute in order to overcome the problem; even if the community had a problem the

school was willing to assist. For example, the school assisted the community by helping old people to clean their surroundings and gave them blankets, food and clothes. PRC 1 and PRD1 indicated that they called meetings if they had problems.

PRB 2 explained, *"Re bitsa batsoali ha mathata a le teng."*

It was clear that work cooperatively with parents, the community and management team was not always about solving problems that the parents encountered, even if there was a need such as helping old people. A healthy school climate is characterised by friendly and enthusiastic teachers who are always available, approachable and willing to help. As a result, learners learn from them (*cf.* 3.8).

To the question on involvement on decision-making concerning school activities, parents responded thus:

PRA 1 and PRC 1 were of the same view that they were involved in decision-making concerning school activities by practising on the cultural day to lead students on how to prepare tradition food, how to wear clothes and even to dance.

PRB 2 explained, *"Re ba ruta ho pheha lijo tsa sesotho, moaparo, ho riba le ho hobela."*

PRD 1 indicated, *"Parents are called to the meetings to discuss about learners performance and parents suggested that the school should allow the parents and community to use school grounds."*

It was clear that the involvement of parents in decision-making concerning school activities was limited because they were only involved on cultural days and when they were called to meetings about learners' performance. It is important for a school to involve parents regularly in decision-making, discussing school activities and helping learners with assignments at home, thus enhancing learners' academic performance (*cf.* 3.3.1.2).

To the question on encouraging pupils to take part in community projects, the chief and councillor responded thus:

CCA 1 and CCB 1 concurred that the school encouraged pupils to take an active part in any community projects by allowing learners to help old people and planting trees. CCC1 reported that the school encouraged pupils to attend meetings about community

developments and security protection of the community.

CCD 2 explained, *"Re ba khothaletsa ho baballa lintlafatso tsa sekolo."*

It was clear from responses above that the school encouraged pupils to take an active part in any community projects such as planting trees, helping old people and attending meetings of the community, even if this was limited and did not contribute directly to their learning. Therefore, it was important for the school to involve the community in school activities, because the community played an essential role at the school. This is supported by Boot (2011:20), stating that when the school made the community feel a part in decision-making, the community helped the school to improve (*cf.* 3.5). As a result, the community ended up caring for that school by meeting the social and emotional needs of learners and providing effective communication for learning (Hlalele, 2012:115).

To the question on welcoming members of the community at any school activities, the chief and councillor responded thus:

CCA 1, CCB, 1 CCC 2 and CCD 1 agreed that their school welcomed members of the community only on cultural days to come and teach learners norms and values such as dances. CCD 2 indicated that the school did not always welcome members of the community at any school activities.

The responses above indicate that welcoming members of the community is very limited because it is only done on cultural days, while CCD 2 indicated that this did not always happen. In order for relations the community be effective, there should be effective communication, including respect and trust (Capon, 2008:181) As a result, the principal should take into account that there should be respect and trust among school boards and community members (*cf.* 3.4.3).

To the question on providing support or security to the school, the chief and councillor responded thus:

CCA 1, CCB 1 and CCC 1 were of the same view, namely that they provided any support or security to the school, such as securities of the village (*mahokela*) to see to it that they protected the school and provided a conducive learning environment for learners, by not allowing the villagers to graze their animals in the school yard. CCD 1 and CCD 2

indicated that they did provide support to the school, but they did not work cooperatively with the proprietor who are always against their decisions.

> CCD 1 emphasised, *"Ee re fana ka tsireletso ho sekolo empa ha re sebetse hantle le baruti ka mehla ba fetola lintho tseo re buileng ka tsona."*

The responses from the participants clearly indicated that they provided security to the school by not allowing villagers' animals to graze in the school yard and providing insecurities to the village inhabitants (*mahokela*). CCD 1 CCD 2 indicated that they did not work cooperatively with the proprietor, which showed lack of cooperation. It was important for members of the board to work cooperatively and communicate effectively amongst themselves (*cf.* 3.4). This is supported by MOET (2006:5), stating that the school board should oversee the management and the proper and efficient running of the school.

To the question on regular updates of parents and the community about school developments, chairpersons of the board responded thus:

CPBA 1 and CPBC 3 agreed that this was not always done by calling meetings and writing letters.

> CCPA 1 explained, *"Re ba ngolla magolo kapa re ba bitsetsa liphutheho empa e seng ka mehla."*

CPBB 2 and CPBD 4 were of the same view that parents and the community were updated about school development every semester.

It was clear that parents and community were updated about school developments, but in rare cases, even if they wrote letters or called meetings, but this did not always happen. Therefore, it was important for the principal to ensure that parents and the community were regularly updated on school developments. This is supported by Marishane (2013:24), stating that parents and community can play a crucial role in providing financial support and security to the school, provided the principal knows how to work cooperatively with them.

To the question on school board communication with stakeholders to promote a culture of collaboration, chairpersons of the board responded thus:

CPBA 1 and CPBC 3 were of the same view, namely that they invited stakeholders to meetings to discuss with them how they could promote a culture of collaboration.

> CPBA 1 emphasised, *"Re ea ba mema ho tla buisana ka mokhoa oa ho ntlafatsa bo mong ba kopano."*

CPBB 2 and CPBD 4 mentioned that it was not done effectively; in most cases it was not done.

The responses above revealed that a culture of collaboration was not yet practised, even if they invite stakeholders to the meetings to discuss with them. Leaders need to communicate with stakeholders to develop a common and shared school vision in order to promote a culture of collaboration (*cf.* 3.3.1.2).

5.6 SUMMARY

This chapter presented different opinions gathered from the individual in-depth interviews conducted with the following participants: principals, teachers, parents, the chief and counsellors, as well as the chairpersons of the board of four sampled schools. Different participants' responses to their separated, though interrelated schedules were presented, analysed and reported. All participants shared their views regarding the issues and challenges facing their schools addressing the research question: What distributed leadership communication strategy may be effective in improving learner academic performance?

Each school emphasised challenges facing them as members, even though most of them seemed to be interrelated. School principals should acknowledge that leadership cannot belong to a single person, but it should be team-based and thus collaborative. Distributed leadership practices increase interaction among stakeholders in decision-making, leading to the improvement of learners by emphasising others to lead. As a result, effective communication with the school depends largely on collaboration and teamwork. The school has to create a wider path and wide opportunities for school boards, parents, teachers and the community to be involved in school operations and processes to improve learners' academic performance. One school seems to be effective because of

the role played by members of the school board; they are knowledgeable about their roles and responsibilities as well as Educational Act 2010. The members of the other three schools need good management structure and manpower planning in order to achieve the goals and objectives of the school.

CHAPTER 6
FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The preceding chapter presented an account of the discussion of results on responses from principals, teachers, parents, chairpersons of school boards, chiefs and councillors, focusing on how the leadership of high schools could use distributed leadership practices and communication strategies to improve learners' academic performance. Four high schools in the Berea district in Lesotho were selected to participate in the study. The study was based on an interpretivist paradigm. Conclusions and recommendations based on the theoretical and empirical studies are discussed below.

6.2 RESEARCH FINDINGS

The findings are presented as they relate to the four research questions below, namely (i) the nature and scope of distributed leadership practices; (ii) interpersonal communication strategy improving learners' academic performance; (iii) perceptions of school board members, teachers and parents with regard to distributed leadership practices; (iv) interpersonal communication as contributing factor to the improvement of learners' academic performance; and (v) a distributed leadership communication strategy proposed to improve the academic performance of learners at Lesotho high schools.

6.2.1 What is the nature and scope of distributed leadership practices?

Pertaining to the above research question, the following findings emanated from the study:

The literature consulted for this study, together with most of the participants' responses showed that three principals considered themselves as transformational leaders because they motivate and inspire teachers. They consider teachers' opinions in decision-making and emphasise a collaborative approach, as well as encourage teamwork among teachers so that they can be successful in their teaching, a primary factor of distributed

leadership (*cf.* 2.3.1; 2.3.2; 2.3.3; 2.5.3).

In their understanding about distributed leadership practices, participants mentioned that they delegate duties to respective HODs and separate responsibilities to teachers according to their capabilities. However, the delegation of tasks or dividing responsibilities according to role is not distributed leadership; instead, they should spread, share and distribute work amongst individuals (*cf.* 2.3.1; 2.3.2; 2.3.3; 2.5.3).

Teachers revealed that distributed leadership is a good practice because it emphasises the sharing of work and ideas with different talents, which promote oneness, something which their principals endeavour to practise. Most of activities and responsibilities assigned hardly fails, and teachers feel that they enhance the smooth running of the school, which contributes to better learner academic achievement of Grade 12 learners. Teachers feel that it makes the school more organised, as it promotes the division of labour, recognising that no-one can function in isolation (*cf.* 2.3.3; 2.4; 2.4.1).

In addition, the response reveals that distributed leadership is a support tool that may improve learner academic performance, as it empowers teachers. As a result, teachers benefit the school and are knowledgeable about their subjects. Thus, when working together, they are better able to share common understandings and maintain a high standard of work for the benefit of all learners. It was clear that school boards, parents, teachers and the community were aware of the fact that teacher empowerment cannot be the domain of an individual and that collectively they should all assume responsibility (*cf.* 2.5; 2.4.2).

Moreover, responses from teachers revealed that they attended workshops (subject content) and mini-courses (focusing on teaching and learning aspects as well as the curriculum) where they frequently share ideas and come up with new skills and knowledge that actually promote a conducive atmosphere for teaching and learning. By doing so, it stimulates them into action and eliminates teacher isolation and learner drop-out, as well as influences learners' academic performance positively. Notably, distributed leadership emphasises teachers' commitment as an important factor that has a positive effect on school effectiveness and success of learner performance (*cf.* 2.4.2; 2.5.; 2.5.2).

Responses revealed that principals' practice of distributed leadership encourages open communication and interaction at the school, where the collective talents and experience of all members (school boards, teachers and community) are put into action to build cohesiveness. This cohesive relationship can foster cooperation, mutual trust and support, as well as enhance individual and group interpersonal skills to ensure successful team interactions (*cf.* 2.5.1; 3.4).

Furthermore, parents showed that they work cooperatively, sit together to solve problems they encounter, and share ideas on how to help learners to be involved in their learning, without emphasising how to do it. However, their sentiments reveal that there is room for a tighter and more unified connection with their children's particular school. To this end, distributed leadership practice may contribute positively to increased interaction among stakeholders in an effort to ensure that parents are clear about their roles and responsibilities (*cf.* 2.3.3).

Responses from the chairpersons of the board regarding distributed leadership practices reveal that working as a team produces better learner results. It also assists them to provide a leadership role that ensures the school abides fully with the educational acts relevant to the teaching service. It is important to the participants that they take their roles seriously by knowing their responsibilities and working harmoniously with the school leadership (*cf.* 2.4.3).

With regard to the empirical study, two out of four schools try to practise a distributed leadership approach, but it not been implemented in full yet (*cf.* 2.3.3; 2.4.5).

6.2.2 How does interpersonal communication contribute to improving learners' academic performance?

Pertaining to the above research question, the following findings emanated from the study

The responses of four principals reveal that interpersonal communication is very important and may improve teachers and learners' performance. If practised effectively, it ensures effective interpersonal communication amongst staff, which will increase

learners' academic performance. Teachers mentioned the importance of the principal to be a positive communicator, speaking and listening in a positive and consistent manner to them as well as the parents, school board and communities who also have a stake in learning (*cf.* 3.2).

Findings revealed that regular scheduled meetings with parents, school boards and teachers discussing learners' progress seem to be limited but consistent; therefore, it was important for school principals to have interpersonal communication skills, contributing to enhancing the academic performance of learners (*cf.* 3.2; 3.3).

Principals face different challenges that may ultimately impede learners' performance, such as limited leadership capacity of school boards to make significant contributions to leading the school. As a result, establishing and sustaining relationships that are closely interconnected with communication skills necessitate that they navigate through these challenges; however, it is necessary that school boards receive training to enhance their leadership skills (*cf.* 3.4; 3.3.2.1) to do so.

Furthermore, responses reveal that through communication, school boards, teachers, and parents may be able to understand their roles and responsibilities in order to improve learners' performance, provided the principal establishes and specifies the schools' direction with the participation of all concerned. Transparent and open communication among stakeholders builds an atmosphere of positive interpersonal relations. In terms of how this benefits learners, they learn to voice their academic needs and can therefore get the assistance they require from teachers. Typically, learners experience particular problems in mathematics and science subjects, signalling to the school leadership where the focus lies to improve their overall academic performance (*cf.* 3.3; 3.3.1.).

Teachers' responses reveal that working as a team, communicating about continuous progress of learner achievement is pivotal to the learning of a child and improves their working together towards a similar goal. It improves learners' academic performance and discipline; thus, interpersonal communication is important in enhancing academic performance, as it tears down the walls between stakeholders, breaks the silence, promotes collaboration and contributes a lot to learners' performance (*cf.* 3.4; 3.4.1).

In addition, responses reveal that frequent meetings with parents over individual learners should not only indicate complaints to the parents but, based on the academic success of learners and their socialisation, enhance learner performance. As a result, clear and understandable language should be used to maintain effective environment and learner performance (*cf.* 3.3.2.1).

Responses from the chairpersons of the school board revealed that working together with teachers, calling meetings, sharing ideas to enhance learner performance and providing leadership roles such as managing and administering the proper and efficient running of the school, as well as communication, enhance learners' academic performance, because these create trust among staff. As a result, relationships need communication and leaders who adopt change (*cf.* 3.4.1; 3.3; 3.3.2.1).

Moreover, the findings showed that communication with parents is inadequate, because sometimes they meet with the school board and teachers to discuss learners' academic performance or about school improvements, but other times they do not. It is important to invite and encourage parent involvement in the school, because lack of two-way, respectful partnership communication hinders learners' academic performance. As a result, schools should provide parents with opportunities and the support needed to be effective in increasing students' achievements (*cf.* 3.3.1.3; 3.3.2).

6.2.3 How do members of the school board, teachers and parents perceive distributed leadership practices and interpersonal communication as a contributing factor to the improvement of learner academic performance?

Pertaining to the above research question, the following aspects are outlined

Responses revealed that distributed leadership practice is an important approach in schools as it increases interaction with parents, teachers and school board members in decision-making processes. Through engaging everyone within the school to share their opinions, talents and experiences in order to improve learners' performance will enhance a learner-centred rather than a teacher-centred approach, and as a result promote cooperation in the school if practised well (*cf.* 2.3.3; 2.4; 2.4.1).

In addition to that, responses showed that distributed leadership practice is a contributor, as it supports oneness, where power is shared among stakeholders and expands the scope of leadership that leads to enhanced learners' performance, by increasing leadership development where teachers, parents and school boards work together to build a climate of trust. As a result, trusting relations among stakeholders promote students' achievements (*cf.* 2.4.2; 2.5).

In the same way, teachers perceive distributed leadership practice as a contributing factor, promoting good cooperation among them, because most activities and responsibilities are assigned to them. Therefore, when they are empowered with short courses, they are able to share ideas and experiences as well as be more committed to their work. This brings about change and ways of thinking about how to improve learners' performance. As a result, teachers may likely stay in the profession and continue to have a positive influence on students' achievements (*cf.* 2.4.2; 2.5).

Chairpersons of the board revealed that fostering team work with teachers, ensures that teachers are equipped with teaching materials and workshops in order to sustain and facilitate their development in order to enhance learners' academic performance. As a result, encouraging professional learning among teachers and perceived distributed leadership practice is a support tool for learning (*cf.* 2.3.1; 2.4.1).

Furthermore, parents' responses revealed that they believed in teamwork; a group can solve problems better than an individual. Thus, in order to improve learners' academic performance at Lesotho high schools, parents, teachers and school board members may assist the school in creating an optimal learning environment, by working together as a team, planning curricular activities and having management plans in place to execute them. Emphasising distributed leadership practice is the process of enhancing academic performance of learners and interpersonal communication, as discussed below (*cf.* 2.3.3; 2.5)

Responses from teachers show that communication plays an important role in enhancing learner academic performance. It should be a continuous progress, showing that parents and teachers have to communicate regularly about learners' progress. As a result, it monitors learners' progress and guides the teacher and parents on how to assist the

learner to achieve. This can be done consistently through effective communication (*cf.* 3.3.2.1).

The school board perceived communication as a good contributor, because they organise meetings, act as a link between staff members and the parents as a whole, as well as advise teachers, suggesting some ways of improving on their effective teaching of their learners. This creates a healthy climate where teachers and principals are committed to their welfare and the safety of their learners. Teachers noted that learners would benefit more if their professional knowledge and skills were enhanced through workshops that build their classroom teaching and leadership. As a result, learners will benefit directly from competent and confident teachers proficient in providing a learning context, and appropriate learning activities to improve academic performance (*cf.* 2.4.2; 3.2; 3.3.2.1).

The study recommendations are outlined in section 6.3.

6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

This section provides recommendations based on the research findings of the study, including conclusions arrived at from the literature and participants' responses, because there is still room for improvement where gaps are identified. As this study reveals, to assist leaders in developing adequate leadership and communication strategy in order to improve learners' academic performance is becoming more complex to bring about improving learners' academic performance at schools. The following recommendations, supported by the literature, were made:

6.3.1 Recommendation 1: Encouraging teachers' empowerment and collaboration

School leaders may encourage teachers to attend short courses and workshops, and even support their teachers to visit other schools that perform well to share ideas and skills about the teaching methods that they use. In addition, it would stand schools in good stead to familiarise themselves with the content and assessment standards of the subject(s) they teach. Knowledgeable and empowered teachers are in a better position to impart knowledge and stimulate learners to excel in their performance. Even within different department in their schools, departments whose subjects performs well can

share best practices and skills to those whose subjects performed poorly. By doing so, it creates balance in performance and an overall sense of confidence in ability, as well as a sense of pride in learners. When teachers meet regularly, share expertise and work collaboratively to improve their skills, they are better able to achieve outstanding performance towards a common goal (*cf.* 2.3.2; 3.3; 3.3.2.1).

6.3.2 Recommendation 2: Provision of training programs for teachers and leaders

The Ministry of Education and Training also can provide professional development training programmes and workshops for teachers. Schools (in collaboration with the (Ministry of Education and Training) could train teachers on content and teaching methodology and leadership strategies for a longer period (for example, three-week sessions during school holidays). Embarking on such extensive training and development may stand teachers in good stead to identify areas of improvement in practice; equipping them to serve learners better in the classroom. In addition, it motivates and restores teacher's self-worth, competence and confidence in teaching.

In terms of the leadership, such programmes should focus on distributed leadership, which promotes teacher leadership and their role to develop and instil a positive attitude to change at their individual schools. Specialists such as Effective Instructional Leadership Teams to facilitate the sessions may be considered (*cf.* 2.3.3; 2.4.1; 2.4.2).

In order to increase all stakeholders' understanding of the new approach (the phased COSC, which was renamed LGCSE) should be communicated with parents, teachers and school board members (*cf.* 3.3.2.1).

6.3.3 Recommendation: 3: Create a conducive environment for optimum teaching and learning in order to enhance learners' academic performance

Leaders may create a culture of collaboration at their schools, where teachers, learners and parents are working together towards common goal. *Team-teaching*, for instance, is one way in which teachers may encourage this collaborative spirit where teachers with specific skills teach in areas of expertise. Leadership should support teachers who embark on and engage learners in *supplementary learning* programmes after school,

block-teaching (during holidays) as well as on-site *boot-camp initiatives (*when preparing learners for the Grade 12 examinations). In a culture of collaboration, teachers may exercise creative leadership together and take responsibility for helping all learners to learn. In order to achieve this, leaders must always be open to accommodate staff participation in any decision process related to the school. When teachers realise that their decisions are considered, they become very positive, develop new skills and enhance unity, willing to help learners in any direction because there are motivated. Normally, learners within a healthy climate are able to do their work independently. As a result, they thrive in a learner-centred rather than a teacher-centred classroom (*cf.* 3.3; 3.4; 3.3.2.1).

6.3.4 Recommendation 4: Creation of a parent-community partnership

To ensure the effective of communication between teachers and parents about learners' progress report, there should be clear channels of communication between teachers and parents. Test policies should be well designed and focused. The school may use a series of systems by which parents can communication at ease. However, leaders may decide on the channel of communication that will suit their schools, such as one-way communication, home visits, parents' meetings, or e-mail, telephone and SMS communication (3.3.1; 3.3.1.2; 3.3.2.1).

An educational delivery system centred on equity and the provision of equal learning opportunities for all learners, which extends beyond the school to include parents and the community as well as government and district policies and practices is the ideal. Valuing each learner as a member of his/her community and school where he/she is, provided the necessary support required to achieve academic success, becomes all-important to ensure that individual learners excel academically. In this regard, schools may benefit from the increased resources, support and relationships resulting from the development of trusting school community partnerships (Gross, Hained, Hill, Francis, Blue-Banning & Turnbull, 2015:227).

6.3.5 Recommendation 5: Improving learner academic performance through school-community partnerships

A key leadership imperative is to make partnerships work where the emphasis is on the importance of particular leaders establishing trust.

Partnerships may be established with community organisations such as health-related organisations, sporting clubs and associations, and community support services. The latter, for instance, may assist learners who experience challenges at home, as learners may not readily approach these organisations on their own. In this case, the school may take the initiative to refer learners to these organisations. Small local businesses (e.g. local computer stores) and educational institutions such as universities could be approached for information on programmes and training opportunities offered to learners to enhance their learning during their holidays or over weekends. In addition, universities may run mathematics programmes geared towards Grade 12 learners, where their subject content knowledge may be increased and they may benefit from attending. Specific programmes that may be beneficial may include improving learners' literacy and numeracy skills, science-based projects to connect learners with the world outside school, assisting learners in developing a greater interest in mathematics and science. Furthermore, learners' general and specific knowledge may be enhanced by engaging galleries, museums and the like to increase knowledge and appreciation of other cultures as well as to develop a better understanding of local history in Lesotho.

Section 6.4 outlines the limitations of the study.

6.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

In conducting this research, the researcher experienced some limitations to the study. Firstly, three schools out of four could not allow members of the focus group to be ten members, as originally decided upon by the researcher. Only one school had the targeted number of members.

At three schools it was not easy to find the participants at the same time and in the same place. The researcher had to go to the village to find them, without having a venue in

which to conduct the interviews. Only one school fulfilled the requirements.

At two out of the four schools the interview took place in the staffroom. As this is an open space, the process was frequently interrupted with staff and learners moving in and out of the staffroom. Other teachers were busy marking books and, equally disturbing, answering private cell-phone calls.

One school out of four kept on postponing the interview due to reasons beyond their control.

6.5 CONCLUSION

This study focused on how the leaders of the high schools may use distributed leadership practices and communication strategies to improve learner academic performance. School-community involvement may also be considered a critical component for learner achievement (Anderson, Houser & Howland, 2010). Research shows that schools that develop strong community partnerships have a higher percentage of learners performing on grade level. This interaction increases connections for learners to learning opportunities outside the school (Gross *et al.*, 2015:4). The study findings emanated from both the literature and the participants' responses. The findings revealed that working collaboratively, stimulating teachers to be creative by building unity with them around a clear collective vision and mission can lead schools towards improving the academic performance of learners.

Specifically, the atmosphere of collaboration and trust engenders a positive attitude and commitment to the task. Self-value is enhanced and overall competence and sense of accomplishment are increased. In addition, in a distributed leadership strategy, communication is central and a positive attitude to promote collaboration among parents, community partnership, school board members, and teachers at their school. It is the researcher's view that leaders who communication effectively with teachers and parents, and involve them in decision-making can be in a better position to enhance academic performance of learners. Hence, this study proposes a distributed leadership communication strategy that centres around the three core components, interpersonal communication, distributed leadership and learner performance.

CHAPTER 7
DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

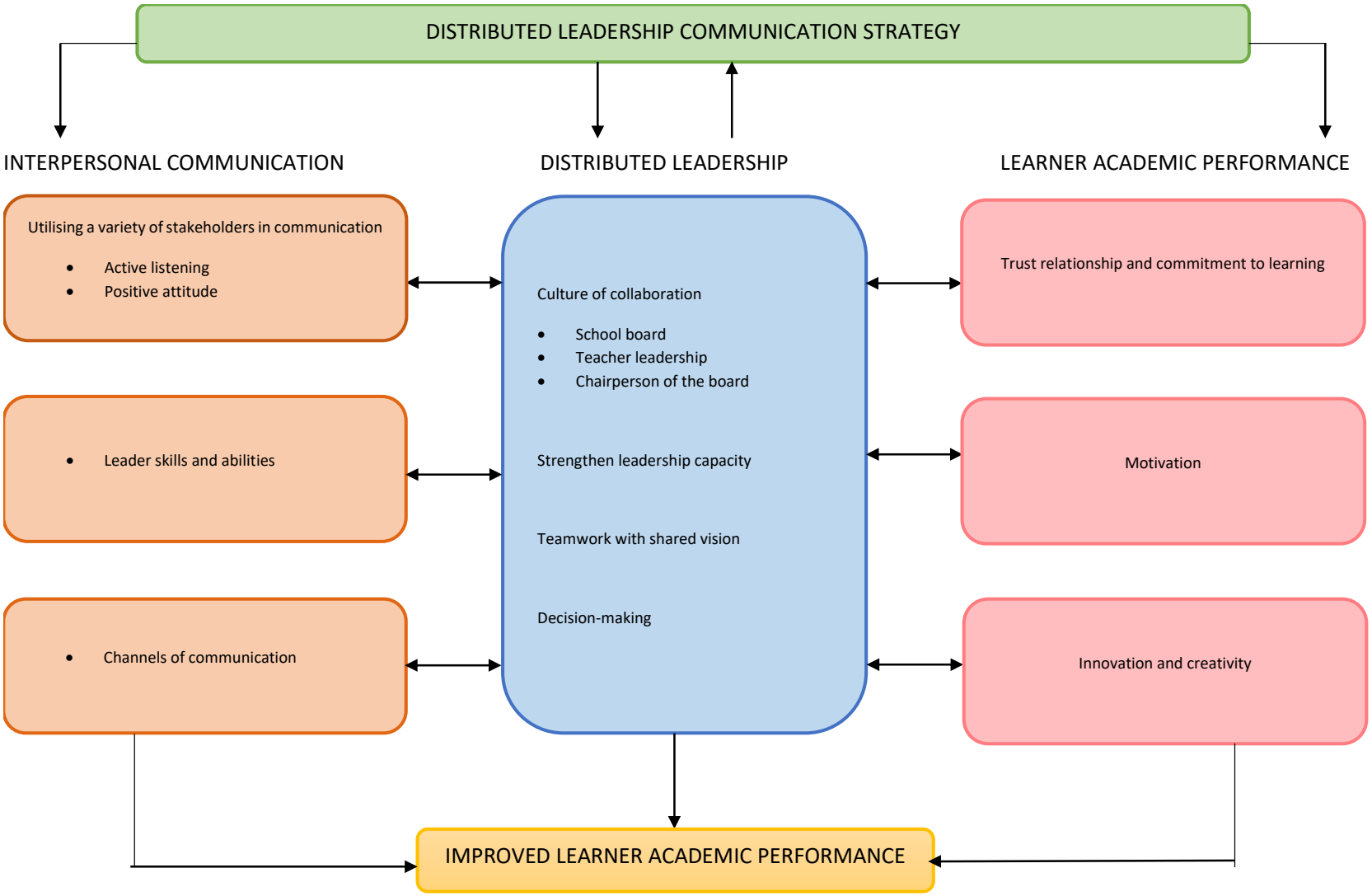
7.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter seeks to respond to the fourth research question, namely *How can a distributed leadership communication strategy be proposed to improve the academic performance of learners at Lesotho high schools?* The strategy in Figure 7.1 provides an empirically grounded, distributed leadership communication strategy to address this question.

The strategy shows that distributed leadership practice and interpersonal communication are effective when they are cyclical, following the lines in the strategy. It should be noted that the type of interaction required by the leadership of schools in this process is vigilant monitoring.

The distributed leadership communication strategy is presented in Figure 7.1

Figure 7.1: A distributed leadership communication strategy



Own construction: Letholes' distributed leadership communication strategy

The following sections highlight the importance, function and application of each of the components of the strategy. It is significant to note that the three main components, namely *distributed leadership* (core) *interpersonal communication* and *learner academic performance* are the main components of the strategy. It is anticipated that the leadership of the school should apply the individual components of each of these core elements to the school environment to achieve the desired outcome, namely improved academic performance for Grade 12 learners.

7.2 DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP

This is the core component of the strategy. This study advocates for a distributed leadership as the key leadership strategy to improve learner performance at Lesotho high schools. Central to the execution of a distributed leadership practice are: (1) creating a culture of collaboration; (2) strengthening the schools' leadership capacity; (3) creating teams with a shared vision; and (4) practising sound decision-making.

In sections 7.2.1 to 7.2.4, the individual components are elaborated upon.

7.2.1 Culture of collaboration

A culture of collaboration provides for open-minded stakeholders, as the imperative is that ideas, opinions and views are shared among those who interact regularly. During these interactions, emerging with solutions, establishing trust among themselves through open and consistent communication, encouraging teachers and learners to reach out to each other to solve problems and sharing knowledge all become important.

In practice, school leaders may need both personal and school-community support to handle open, transparent communication with all stakeholders.

Consequently, a distributed leadership application of a culture of collaboration engenders deeper learning and understanding, where learners are given an opportunity to discover things for themselves, a sense of shared responsibility and a commitment to learning among teachers and learners are encouraged, all which directly result in improving learners' performance.

In the Lesotho school context, ensuring a culture of collaboration at schools may stand

teachers, learners, school boards and community in good stead to establish their schools' direction, thus creating a conducive learning environment where stakeholders will be able to know their roles and responsibility.

The school board may collaborate with teachers, share understanding on aspects of teaching and learning, challenges, implementation and support strategies (in collaboration with the Ministry of Education) to assist Grade 12 learners in excelling in their learning. A structured form of deliberation and collaboration, such as creating a valuable forum for discussing core instructional issues and providing teachers with much-needed support, is imperative. Typically, such fora are also designed around teams doing work together, which can help to promote learning and improve performance (*cf.* 3.4.1; 3.4.2; 3.4.3).

Equally valuable are PLCs (Dimmock & Goh, 2014:233), where teachers meet regularly, share expertise and work collaboratively to improve knowledge and teaching skills, to help every child to learn in order to improve the academic performance of learners. School board members should provide hands-on, day-to-day coaching and support that help teachers to make a real difference in their students' lives by strengthening their leadership capacity (*cf.* 2.4.2; 2.4.3). In addition, a climate of high expectation for teachers and learners is important for improving the academic performance of learners, as it sets the scene for concrete action for teachers to implement.

Therefore, the success in mobilising human resources (teachers) to a distributed leadership approach is related with the interaction between the schools and individual resources, i.e. the application of trust and collaborative efforts of a school's leadership.

In section 7.2.2, the creation and strengthening of leadership capacity is discussed.

7.2.2 Create and strengthen leadership capacity

Creating and strengthening leadership capacity may dispose of old assumptions about leadership and who can lead. As a result, emphasis that leadership does not belong to a figurehead only, but that it should be distributed implies that principals cannot generate leadership that improves education on their own. As a result, it emphasises leaders' skills such as creativity and motivation. The most important part of being a leader is to develop and assist people in reaching their potential, where they can lead

themselves and others effectively (Avolio, 2011:12).

Therefore, the school board may be able to distribute power to empower others to assume leadership responsibilities throughout the school, by welcoming and inviting teachers, parents and community members to serve as leaders at the school. Many members of the community have the knowledge, skills and talents that could contribute to the development of the school. At the same time the learners should, by their appearance and activities, be a source of pride to that community (*cf.* 3.3.1.1).

Parents who are involved in the education of their children in one way or another can help create a climate that is conducive to teaching and learning activities; specifically, knowledge of the circumstances of learners at home can help the teacher in his or her instructional task and parents can lighten teachers' workload by checking that homework and other tasks are done on time (Beeka, 2009:49).

Ensuring that teachers have the necessary content, pedagogical knowledge and skills (through the provision of professional training opportunities), they need to be effective in the classroom, providing them with multiple opportunities to acquire tacit knowledge and practical skills from experienced teachers at the schools is key (Whelan, 2009:147). As a result, working as a team produces better decisions than working as an individual. It provides access to a larger pool of information, which leads to enhanced learner academic performance, especially when a team have a shared mission (Harris, 2008:34).

The creation of teams with a shared vision is outlined in section 7.3.2.

7.2.3 Create teams with a shared mission

Creating teams with a shared vision equips and develops stakeholders as transformative change agents, committed to the learning of their learners at their schools. Vision and goals ensure the design of strategies and monitoring of progress made.

The school board may communicate the mission of the school to the staff, learners, parents and community, the relevance of the mission to the school context, as well as demonstrate creativity, motivation and commitment to the achievement of educational goal in order to gain the teachers' trust (Joubert & Bray, 2007:50). By doing so,

collegial support and shared responsibility for success are secured. The school where teachers, parents, school boards and the community members work together is likely to bring about changes that leads leaners to success (Spillane *et al.*, 2008:99). When learners realise that they enjoy support and may engage in collaborative activities with their teachers, they feel secure and become motivated and willing to study (Marishane, 2013:73).

As a result, learners develop positive attitudes towards their teachers and grasp the importance of teamwork and collaboration as pillars of a sound school climate (Van Deventer & Kruger 2010:160). In addition, it reduces the need for parental supervision and learners have a strong inclination and a positive attitude to attend school and focus on their learning. Consequently, learner drop-out and learners engaging in social activities that may influence their learning negatively are reduced. Rather, it contributes to improving their academic performance (Thomson & Sanders, 2010:73).

Section 7.2.4 discusses the application of decision-making in the strategy.

7.2.4 Decision-making

Involving stakeholders (teachers, parents and community) in decision-making benefits everyone involved as it serves as a platform for creative thinking. It enables everyone to come up with new ideas and views that provide a genuine conclusion, which leads to improve learner's performance.

This is the process of identifying and selecting a course of action to be taken in order to solve a problem. The school board may provide a pleasant and collegial school climate better for decision-making, whereby teachers adopt the habit of discussing their work and matters with one another and spend time discussing what they have learnt in their workshop in order to gain new knowledge. In this way, discourse about learners' performance becomes a collective work (Harris, 2009:12). Therefore, teachers need to be directive, effective, caring and enthusiastically engaged in the passion of teaching and learning. Teachers' mission should be that of making learning a meaningful experience for each learner, coupled with their proficient knowledge their subject content to provide appropriate and relevant feedback to learners so that each learner gradually moves through their levels of learning.

In order to achieve this, the school should provide a healthy environment with open

channels of communication where teachers, parents and the community help one another in shared decision-making and participate in school-wide decision-making through a variety of teams and committees that benefit the learners (Hallinger, 2013:126). This may be achieved through the collaborative effort of school leaders where classroom environments are regarded as platforms and opportunities for learning and interaction; where learners can be creative and actively contribute to the creation of knowledge and understanding.

The close relationship between stakeholders and shared decision-making seems to be a given, and a strong sense of community tends to facilitate empowerment processes (Harris, 2009:31). As a result of promoting collaborative work, school principals may encourage staff members to take the initiative to make appropriate decisions by engaging stakeholders, teachers in particular, in conversation providing opportunities for feedback and encouraging them to have a stake in decision-making in order to improve learners' academic performance through effective interpersonal communication.

7.3 INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

Interpersonal communication develops other key life skills such as creativity and innovation to enhance learners' academic performance. Being able to communicate well with others provides quality working relationships whereby stakeholders come up with new ideas, views and opinions that open up communication, as well as increase commitment, motivation and trust relationship, which lead to improved academic performance of the learners.

Interpersonal communication is the process by which people exchange information among one another. It involves the ability to relate effectively with others. In this context, to be effective, the school board may, among others, consider the following aspects: utilising a variety of stakeholders in communication, active listening, a positive attitude, leader skills and abilities, as well as channels of communication.

Section 7.3.1 discusses the utilisation of stakeholders in decision-making.

7.3.1 Utilising a variety of stakeholders in communication

Communication is identified as a critical leadership skill. The positive results of effective communication are well documented and are essential in achieving, amongst others, increased self-confidence and recognition of others. Schools that use a distributed leadership practice show collaboration with all stakeholders. The school board, parents, teachers and community partnership should share ideas to enhance learners' performance; working as a team produces better results (Harris & Spillane, 2008:31). Utilising a variety of stakeholders can build trust, which leads to final decisions as well as increased transparency and better decision-making.

Active listening is discussed in section 7.3.2.

7.3.2 Active listening

Active listening is a two-way process that enables learners to learn when they listen, rather than when they are speaking. It improves mutual understanding, shows respect towards the teacher, shows that learners genuinely want to understand his/her point. It enables the learner to receive and accurately interpret the teachers' messages by asking questions, allowing learners to listen attentively to the teacher. This avoids misunderstandings, as learners have to confirm that they do really understand what the teacher says, and tends to open learners' minds up to get them to say more. As a result, this increases motivation and creativity

The concentration level of learners is very important in active listening; learners should concentrate on the subject in question. People use the cognitive to listen. Learners should ask questions to himself/herself during courses, and analyse topics in detail (Habaci, 2013:272).

Active listening enables teachers to gain more in-depth information, motivate learners and develop an open working relationship in the classroom, because teachers possess the knowledge and skills to help every child to learn. Moreover, teachers with content knowledge are better able to be effective in the classroom and produce better learner results, because they understand that the content of their learning areas should be related to the learners and be incorporated into their everyday lives. The classroom should therefore be comfortable and conducive to learning, and should stimulate learners' desire to learn (Tong, 2010:19).

Teachers should use pedagogical knowledge when assessing learners' learning outcomes and respond to them in a positive way when learners ask questions or solve problems in class (*cf.* 2.4.2; 2.4.4).

Listening skills are important skills that should be taught to learners. When learners realise that teachers are interested, pay attention to their questions and solve their problems, they develop a positive attitude towards their teachers, become motivated and enthusiastic, and consequently develop higher-order skills in managing their learning activities in order to improve their learning academic performance (Marishane, 2013:95). Limiting it to the classroom is not the ideal. It should be utilised in casual conversation where learners have the skill to give their undivided attention to the person(s) they communicate with. Active listening builds positive relationships, keeps communication alive and active, shows respect and creates a culture where learners feel that their input are valued and encouraged with positive feedback. It builds rapport, understanding and trust. As a result, positive attitude is developed (*cf.* 2.4.2; 2.4.4)

In section 7.3.3, the influence of a positive attitude is discussed.

7.3.3 Positive attitude

A positive attitude can change the lives of learners, leading to success and happiness. It helps learners to cope more easily with their daily studies, to be positive thinkers and more confident in looking forward to meeting others and accepting daily challenges. They will also have a greater belief in their abilities and challenges, and opportunities will be regarded as possible rather than impossible. It will help learners to look forward to meeting the opportunities and experiences that life presents. As a result, it will enhance their academic performance, because they plan ahead to help themselves get closer to reaching their full potential. Believing in learners' intelligence (which acts as extrinsic motivator) will also contribute positively to learner performance.

Similarly, motivated teachers always have a more positive attitude towards work and are usually keen to improve the academic performance of their learners. They assist their learners in improving their academic performance by providing them with different books to read instead of their textbooks, encourage peer-learning among learners and

use teaching and learning resources more effectively, so that learners are able to understand the topic clearly (Bush, 2011:514).

Instead, when a teacher teaches a topic in accounting such as business documents, he or she should demonstrate it in class. The different types of business documents should either be authentic, duplicated, or even drawn (on transparency) so that the learners can understand the topic clearly and thoroughly. Teachers should organise their classes effectively and plan their work efficiently, as well as use various assessments types, such as formative assessment. When teachers and learners work cooperatively and communicate in person, they build confidence and trust among themselves. Learners feel secure, resulting in enhanced academic performance. As a result, leader skills and abilities contribute a lot to improving learners' academic performance (*cf.* 2.3.1; 2.3.2; 3.3.2.1).

A reflection on leader skills and abilities is presented in section 7.3.5.

7.3.4 Leader skills and abilities

Leaders may be able to communicate effectively with parents and teachers in order to enhance learners' performance. Consistent, frequent and well-planned meetings can play an important role and promote a more positive attitude among themselves, leading to trust relationships.

In order to achieve this, leaders are expected to play a leading role in improving the quality of teaching at their school in order to enhance learners' academic performance. Leader may be able to adopt to change, communicate effectively with stakeholders, and stimulate teachers to be creative, by building unity with them around a clear collective vision and accepted mission and purpose. These expectations and guidelines should be written down so that they provide a clear indication of what the school wishes to achieve in order to improve learner academic performance (Tassiopoulos, 2010:50)

Leaders may be able to formulate school development plans together with the participants concerned. It should bring together the school's priorities, the main measures it will take to rise standards of learners' academic performance, and what it intends to achieve in a clear and simple way. Leaders should appreciate that it is their responsibility to ensure that their school is an achieving school, meeting its objectives

in an effective manner by communicating with stakeholders (Lauring, 2011:231).

Feedback may be regarded as an element of successful communication, because it promotes dialogue and ensures understanding between teachers and learners. By giving and receiving feedback, teachers are able to determine the level of learning of learners, accommodate different learning styles and set learning goals accordingly. Learners should also be given an opportunity to act on feedback through engaging them in dialogue and reflection on their own learning. Studies on the impact of learner performance indicate that feedback has the potential to have a significant effect on learner achievement (Hattie & Timperley, 2007:81; Du Toit, 2012:32).

Leaders may be able to create a conducive learning environment for all stakeholders within the school to work harmoniously, interacting with staff to motivate them and resolve conflict between different departments, develop an open friendly atmosphere and collaborative school culture to enhance teachers' commitment that leads to learners' success (Capon, 2008:181). Clear academic and behavioural expectations should be set and commitment displayed to those expectations, using effective channels of communication (McGovern, 2014:9).

7.3.5 Channels of communication in-person meetings

Communication channels play an important role in increasing learner academic performance, because they are effective systems to enhance communication between parents and the school. Parents can communicate at ease about learners' progress report. It establishes partnerships with parents to support learners' academic performance. Strong and open communication is fundamental to this partnership and builds a sense of community between home and school.

a) **In-person meetings:** to ensure effective learner academic performance, teachers should always communicate with learners about how they can improve their work, by showing them how to use different types of communication, encourage them to use technology effectively for study purposes, join practice study groups where they share new skills consistent with 21-century competencies such as critical thinking, problem-solving and collaborative learning (*cf.* 3.2; 3.3.2.1).

b) **Home visit:** it may be more effective in a low-income community that has a high population of families who do not speak English as a first language. Teachers should choose face-to-face communication when communicating with parents, apart from meetings. They should visit their homes and use clear and understandable language in order to maintain effective environment and enhance learners' academic performance (Balay, 2009:15).

c) **Telephone conference:** it is effective with the majority of families who have access to phones at home and work. The telephone offers a practical way to communicate with parents, especially those who are unable or reluctant to attend a conference at school. This should be done regularly to share positive information about learners and see what questions parents may have (Henke, 2011:40).

d) **One-way communication:** The first technique that responsive teachers often use in their communication efforts with parents is one-way communication, such as weekly and monthly newsletters. Other than school handouts, this requires no response from parents. These types of communication can convey a lot of information in an efficient manner and keep parents up to date with what happens in the classroom or school (Bouffard, 2008:20).

e) **E-mail:** May be a very effective communication tool in a district that serves middle- and upper-class professional families is a quick and efficient way to communicate with families if they have easy access to computer, such as at work during the day. Information goes straight to the computer or phone (Ray, 2013:332). As a result, immediate feedback is communicated about learners' academic performance.

In section 7.4, the components for improving learner performance are outlined.

7.4 LEARNER PERFORMANCE

Learner performance involves many factors to be taken into account by the school board, teachers, parents, as well as community partnership. However, there are other factors at play that account for learners' academic performance, such as the following: trust relationship and commitment to learning, motivation, creativity and innovation as discussed below.

A focus on trust relationships and commitment to learning is provided in section 7.4.1.

7.4.1 Trust relationship and commitment to learning

Trust relationship assists stakeholders in being committed to their work. It creates open communication and builds a positive attitude among themselves to discuss problems that they come across, sharing responsibility in order to enhance learners' performance, because working as a team produces better results than working as an individual. This builds a culture of collaboration.

Generally, interpersonal communication is essential to ensuring career success. Learners should show positive habits, set goals and persist with their work and engage in consistent, two-way communication with their teachers. For instance discussing learners' progress reports the teacher should explain to the learner the different methods he/she can use to strengthen their minds. When teaches work with learners harmoniously they enhance their academic performance. For example, they could suggest strategies alternative to reading text books, such as utilizing the internet for completing tasks (David, 2009:249). As a result, learners within such healthy learning environments are able to do their work independently and maintain high levels of commitment.

When the school board, teachers and parents work together, share power and decide jointly to enhance learners' academic performance, it creates a healthy climate that enables learners to feel free to approach them whenever they experience challenges in any form. This helps learners to realise that parents, teachers and the school board are interested in and committed to their academic performance, welfare and safety (Marishane, 2013:57).

For the same reason, they develop a positive attitude towards their teachers and the school also develops higher-order skills in managing their learning activities. As a result, a trusting relationship is built among their teachers, parents and the school board, leading to enhanced learners' performance. A school where leaders work together with teachers can only exist and function effectively within a climate of trust that leads to learners' motivation (Smylie *et al*., 2007:469).

7.4.2 Motivation

Motivation is an individual's desire to pursue a goal and has an impact on how an individual performs (Van Niekerk, 2009:71). It improves the level of efficiency, making the learning process effective, stimulates learners' interest, attitude and willingness to learn more, especially when they are appreciated by their teachers and leaders.

The school environment can also affect levels of motivation. Learners feel motivated when they are assured of care and protection at the school; they like a certain amount of challenge and opportunities for creativity and development. Chances of promotion such as becoming head girl or head boy, or other positions of responsibility can increase motivation, such as their efforts in class and in other school activities that are appreciated by the teachers and the principal (*cf*. 2.4.2; 3; 3.4.3).

The quality of the leadership can affect learners' behaviour, attitudes and learning efforts. Sound communication and positive relationships are regarded as strengthening and motivating. Learners like to know what is expected of them. Their problems should be treated with understanding and justice, and teachers should show patience and sincerity in guiding them. Teachers should be competent and settings out clear guidelines and accepted tasks for them. As a result, it is important that a school board should involve learners in a partnership that allows them to play a greater role in the decision-making (*cf.* 3.2; 3.3.2.1; 3.4; 3.4.3).

The school board as leaders should do everything in their power to raise the level of learners' belief in themselves and eradicate perceptions of low self-efficacy. This can be done in various ways, for example acknowledging work done, delegating some work to learners whom he or she thinks can do the work and perhaps need a boast of morale, discussing learners' difficult subjects with them and addressing these by arranging relevant topics and inviting subject specialist to discuss their learning problems (*cf.*3.4.1; 3.4.2; 3.4.3).

The school board should encourage innovation in terms of learners' learning and attempt to streamline those tasks that do not focus on learning to provide learners with more time to be creative, as well as give their parents a chance to see what they are doing at the school, thus enhancing their academic performance through creativity and innovation (*cf.*3.4.1; 3.4.3). The school board as part of the leadership should take

decisive action (in collaboration with the parents and communities) to ensure that learners are provided with the necessary learning tools, facilities and resources to facilitate their learning and advance their academic achievement.

Section 7.4.3 discusses innovation and creativity.

7.4.3 Innovation and creativity

The creation of a learner-centred classroom environment where creativity and innovation is encouraged, where learners actively engage in decision-making and take charge of their learning may only result in enhancing learners' academic performance.

Creativity is a mental characteristic that allows a person to think outside the box, which results in innovation. Co-teaching can be effective, as it involves learners actively. Teachers should be able to use different approaches to help learners to acquire new ideas, engage them in creative problem solving, not criticise their ideas and mistakes and encourage them to try their ideas, as well as stimulate them to view problems as challenges. As a result, learners develop higher-order skills in managing their learning activities, enhancing their academic performance (*cf.* 2.3.2; 2.4.2).

Head of departments should be able to manage the curriculum in such a way that learners at different levels of development are accommodated. Adopting the content of the curriculum in such a way that it is manageable for a wider range of learners will allow learners to explore their talents. Teaching methods provide learners with a wide range of materials that cater for different abilities, interests and learning styles (*cf.* 2.3.1; 2.3.2; 3.4.3).

A learning environment should indicate two dimensions of the learning environment namely the physical and the psychosocial (Department of Education, 2011:6). The physical environment includes factors such as class size, infrastructure, arranging of furniture, level of noise and class space. A psychosocial learning environment covers psychological and social factors that have consequences for satisfaction, health, well-being and the ability to perform effectively. This includes interpersonal cooperation and effective communication (*cf*. 2.4.2; 3.3; 3.8). Technology such as electronic learning or e-learning offers a range of options for differentiated instructions that must be tailored by the teacher to meet learners' individual academic needs. Teachers can also assist learners to utilise a computer in order to devise programmes that enable them to be

creative and innovative (*cf.* 2.4.2).

7.5 SUMMARY

Distributed leadership plays an important role at schools and its application acts to establish and increase a culture of collaboration among stakeholders. Its emphasis should be on teamwork at the school and its propensity to involve teachers, learners, parents, school boards and communities in a partnership to improve learner performance. Interpersonal communication contributes to creating positive attitudes among stakeholders, building leaders' capacity and skills, as it opens channels of communication between the school and communities. Distributed leadership and interpersonal communication enhance self-awareness in learners and motivation in teachers to make an active difference in their learning. Constructive feedback, open dialogues and belief in learners' ability to achieve, stand central to leaders achieving this collaborative partnership that distributed leadership practice seeks to achieve. The establishment of a school-community partnership as a driver of learner achievement is notable. In addition, recognition by the leadership of schools of their responsibility to empower teachers to create meaningful learning and instil in learners a sense of accountability for their learning is an all-important consideration.

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ANNEXURE A

Faculty of Education

16-Mar-2017

Dear **Miss Lieketseng Lethole**

Ethics Clearance: **A Distributed Leadership Communication Strategy for improved learner academic perfomance**

Principal Investigator: **Miss Lieketseng Lethole**

Department: **Education (Bloemfontein Campus)**

APPLICATION APPROVED

With reference to you application for ethical clearance with the Faculty of Education, I am pleased to inform you on behalf of the Ethics Board of the faculty that you have been granted ethical clearance for your research.

Your ethical clearance number, to be used in all correspondence is: **UFS-HSD2017/0157**

This ethical clearance number is valid for research conducted for one year from issuance. Should you require more time to complete this research, please apply for an extension.

We request that any changes that may take place during the course of your research project be submitted to the ethics office to ensure we are kept up to date with your progress and any ethical implications that may arise.

Thank you for submitting this proposal for ethical clearance and we wish you every success with your research.

Yours faithfully

Dr. MM Nkoane
Chairperson: Ethics Committee

Education Ethics Committee
Office of the Dean: Education
T: +27 (0)51 401 9683| F: +27 (0)86 546 1113 | E: NkoaneMM@ufs.ac.za
Winkie Direko Building | P.O. Box/Posbus 339 | Bloemfontein 9300 | South Africa
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ANNEXURE B

Tsoana-Makhulo Secondary school

P.O Box 859

Teya- teyaneng 200

20 December 2016

Senior Education Officer

P.O Box

Berea 200

Dear Sir/Madam

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH STUDY

I humbly request a permission to conduct a research in four high schools under your jurisdiction.

I am a registered Masters in Education (MEd) student of the University of the Free State. My research topic is: *A distributed leadership communication strategy for improved learner academic performance.*

The study focuses on how principals could use distributed leadership practices to improve learner academic performance in Lesotho High Schools. This study is further aimed at assisting principals to develop adequate leadership and communication strategies in order to address learner performance in schools.

I hope my request will meet your favourable consideration.

Yours faithfully

.....

Lieketseng Lethole

(58123826)

ANNEXURE C

Ministry of Education and Training

22/12/2016

Lieketseng Lethole (Ms)
Tšoana-Makhula Secondary School
P. O. Box 859
Teya-Teyaneng 200

Dear Maoam,

APPROVAL TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH IN BEREA HIGH SCHOOLS

I received your letter dated 20th December, 2016 and after consideration I have decided to grant your request to conduct a research in four Berea High Schools. Your research topic is insightful and relevant to the current situation facing Principals in this country. Leadership and communication strategies for Principals is a national concern. The topic therefore seems to be a worthwhile line of research and I hope to see it come to fruition.

I wish you all the best in your research and look forward to viewing the finished work.

Sincerely,

Nea Monese (Ms)
Senior Education Officer - Berea District

ANNEXURE D

THE PRINCIPAL

(Name and address of the school)

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I am a student at the University of the Free State currently registered for the master's Degree (M-Ed) in Education Management in the Faculty of Education. In fulfilment of the requirements of the aforementioned degree, I intend to conduct research on the topic titled: A DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP COMMUNICATION STRATEGY FOR IMPROVED LEARNER ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE.

I would therefore request your permission to conduct in-depth interviews, focus group and group discussions with the following school board members: parents' representatives, chairperson of the board, counsellor, chief, principal and grade 12 teachers.

I hope my request will meet your favourable consideration.

Yours faithfully

…….. ……..

L.G. LETHOLE Date

ANNEXURE E

CONSENT FORM

TO ALL PARTICIPANTS: Please print and sign your name in space provided before you participate in this study.

I ……..... Voluntarily give my consent to participate in this study titled: A DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP COMMUNICATION STRATEGY FOR IMPROVED LEARNER ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE.

I have been informed about, and feel that I understand the basic nature of the study. I therefore give my written consent to be interviewed by L.G. Lethole on the following conditions:

My identity will not be revealed, I may withdraw from the study without furnishing reasons for such withdrawal, the interview will be audio-recorded and I will have access to transcripts of the interview.

…… ……..

Signature of Participant Date

ANNEXURE F: INDIVIDUAL IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW SCHEDULE: PRINCIPAL
PERSONAL INFORMATION:

1. Date……\.....2017
2. Position ……
3. Age of the principal……
4. Gender: Female\Male (Tick appropriate gender)
5. Nature of appointment ……
6. Academic qualification(s) (Tick highest qualification e.g.

M.Ed. … Hons … PGDE\ BA. Ed.\B.Ed.\ Dip Sec Ed \STC …

7. Leadership and management qualification …….

Distributed leadership:

8. Who is responsible for formulating school policy? (e.g. admission policy)
9. What procedure is followed to construct a vision, mission values and purpose of the school?
10. Do you consider yourself a transformational leader? Can you tell me more about how you practise a transformational leadership style?
11. How do you support teaching and learning at your school to ensure learners are successful academically?
12. How do you feel about involving teachers in leadership practices?
13. Tell me more about the nature of leadership practices in your school?
14. What impedes the practice of distributed leadership?

Communication:

15. How often do you meet with the chairperson of the board?
16. Do you give the school members a chance to draw their own agenda? Why do you think it is a necessary practice?

17. Do you encourage community participation in school activities? How is this done?

Learner performance

18. How often do you hold teacher, parent, and learner meetings to discuss academic performance?
19. Do you agree that effective communication improves staff and learners' performance? In which way?
20. Does the school have homework policy, weekly test policy? How does it influence your learners' performance?
21. What are the particular problems issues or challenges that contribute to learners' performance?
22. Which systems are in place at your school to support teachers in their teaching practice?
23. What do you think parents, community members and the school board can do to improve learners' performance?

Parent community partnership:

24. What does your school do to ensure full parental involvement/community at school activities?
25. Do you develop a positive relationship with parents and community? How is this done? Why do you think it is important?

Thank you very much for your support and cooperation.

ANNEXURE G:
FOCUS-GROUP INTERVIEW SCHEDULE: TEACHERS

Personal Information

1. Date……../…….2017
2. School ……
3. Age of the teacher……
4. Gender: **Female/Male (Tick appropriate gender)**
5. Academic qualification **(s) (Tick Highest Qualification)** e.g. M.Ed. … Hons … PGDE/ B.A.Ed. / B.Ed. … Dip Sec Ed …, STC …

Distributed leadership

6. As a teacher, what are your personal views of distributed leadership? (Having many leaders, each in charge of an area of the school, like subject heads, extra mural activities instead of the principal at the top of the hierarchy) as practised at your school?
7. Describe the nature of opportunities provided to teachers to discuss new classroom and teacher leadership practices at schools.
8. Does the leadership of the school foster and facilitate a positive collaboration throughout the school? Could you tell me how this is done?
9. What's the normal/official workload for teachers according to the Lesotho educational policy?
10. What impedes the practice of distributed leadership?

Communication:

11. Do you share the vision, mission, values and objectives\purpose of the school often and do you subscribe to it? Can you indicate why it is important for you to do so/not to do so?
12. Does the school invite oneness in shared decision-making process? What are your perceptions about sharing in the decision-making process?

13. Does the management team provide teachers with continuous job-embedded professional development opportunities? Do you regard this as important and necessary to developing teachers?

Learner performance

14. What, in your opinion, are the benefits of parent-teacher interactions in discussing Individual learner academic performance? Can you cite your experience of parent/teacher interactions over the years?
15. What do you think parents, community members and the school board can do to contribute to improving learners' performance?
16. Which systems are in place to ensure that learners are supported in their learning?
17. How do you as teachers solve problems or address challenges related to learners' performance?
18. Describe the nature of collaboration (as well as the value thereof) between the different departments at your school. Is a sharing of ideas in terms of teaching and learning promoted by leadership?

Parent community Partnership:

19. How you ensure the participation of parents and community improving learning outcomes?
20. How should parent and communities become involved in school activities, specifically with the aim of improving their children's school performance?
21. How to you share responsibilities with parents and community members at the school?

Thank you very much for your support and cooperation.

ANNEXURE H

INDIVIDUAL IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW SCHEDULE: PARENTS

Personal information

1. Date ……/…….. 2017
2. School ……
3. Age ……
4. Gender: Female/Male (Tick appropriate gender)
5. Qualifications: Form E… Form C … STD7

Distributed leadership:

6. How do you perceive the role of the principal regarding distributed leadership practices?
7. Do you work collaboratively with teachers, school boards, and community members? Why is it important to do so?

Communication:

8. How often does the school communicate with you as a parent regarding your child's performance?
9. Do you participate in school matters such as resource persons providing a sense of stability to the school? Elaborate.

Learner performance:

10. Do you communicate with the principal about learners' performance? Why is it Important to do so?
11. What do you think parents, community members and the school board can do to contribute to improving learners' performance?

Parent community partnership:

12. How often does the school invite parent community to school's activities? Do you always attend these session meetings?
13. Does the management team work cooperatively with parents and the community? How is this done?
14. In which way are you involved in decision-making concerning school activities?

Thank you very much for your support and cooperation.

ANNEXURE I:
INDIVIDUAL IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW SCHEDULE: CHIEF AND COUNSELLOR

Personal information:

1. Date ……/…….. 2017
2. School ……
3. Gender: Female/Male (Tick appropriate gender)
4. Age: ……
5. Qualifications: Form E… Form C … STD7…. Other …….

Distributed leadership:

6. Does the management team share leadership responsibility within the school? How is it done?
7. How do you perceive distributed leadership in your school? Is it practised?

Communication:

8. Describe your relationship with the principal?
9. Do you work cooperatively with SMT, teachers, parents and community members?

   What would you attribute to the success of your relationship?

Learner performance:

10. Are you updated regularly about school improvements or matters concerning schools such as learner's performance? How is it done and by whom?
11. What do you think parents, community members and the school board can do to contribute to improve learner performance?

Parent community partnership:

12. Does the school encourage pupils to take part actively in any community projects? What type of projects are they typically involved into these involvements contribute to their learning?
13. Does the school welcome members of the community at any school activity? How is this done?
14. As a chief, do you provide any support or security to the school, such as protecting the school garden from being misused by community members, e.g. animals grazing? Why is it important to do this?

Thank you very much for your support and cooperation.

ANNEXURE J:
INDIVIDUAL IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW SCHEDULE: CHAIRPERSON OF THE BOARD

Personal information

1. Date ……./…….2017
2. School……
3. **Gender:** Female/Male tick the appropriate
4. **Age**……
5. **Academic qualifications:** e.g. FORM E …….FORM C….. STD7……

Distributed leadership:

6. In which way does the school board encourage teacher leadership capacity within the school?
7. How does the school board foster team-work with teacher, parents and the Community?
8. Discuss the type of support the chairperson of the board is expected to provide to the school?

Communication:

9. How do you feel about being a chairperson on the board?
10. Describe the working relationship between the teachers, parents, community and school boards regarding communication?

Learner performance:

11. In which way does the school board initiate activities with business people and the community to assist vulnerable/ non-performing learners?
12. Does the school board have mechanisms to follow-up on complaints/issues/ concerns raised by parents related to their children performance? How is this done?

13. Does the board give teachers an opportunity to invite parents to discuss learners' academic weakness or areas that require improvement? Can you describe a typical session like this?
14. Describe the work relationship between the parents, community and school board with regard to learners' performance?
15. What do you think parents, community members and the school board can do to contribute to improving learners' performance?

Parent community partnership:

16. Does the school regularly update parents and the community about school developments? (e.g. aspects related to school building or resources, etc.) How is this done?
17. Does the school board communicate with stakeholders to promote a culture of collaboration? Will you please describe the nature of this communication?

Thank you very much for your support and cooperation.