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EXPLORING GUIDELINES TO IMPROVE THE EXISTENCE AND EFFICAY OF WHOLE SCHOOL EVALUATION AT A FREE STATE SECONDARY SCHOOL

by

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BLOEMFONTEIN

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DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis, “Exploring guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in Free State secondary schools”, hereby submitted for the degree Doctor of Philosophy at the University of the Free State, is my own, independent work and has not previously been submitted to any other university/faculty.

I furthermore cede copyright of the dissertation to the University of the Free State.

Signature:

Date: 28 August 2023

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my loving family, who has been a source of inspiration through the challenging circumstances. My loving wife, Kenosi Mlangeni, who was always a shoulder to lean on when despondency crept in; my loving sons – Kamohelo, Katleho, and Siyanda, who stood by me during sleepless nights I endured in conducting this study. Thank you very much for your constant support.

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ABSTRACT

The study was aimed at exploring the guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation (WSE) at Free State secondary schools. The study is underpinned by socio-constructivist theory and collaboration theory, as hybrid theoretical frameworks. The two hybrid theoretical frameworks were chosen for their support of stakeholder collaboration in addressing the social challenges that impact communities. The study is located in interpretivism as a research paradigm, which gives a voice to a range of participants' subjective beliefs and lived experiences. A qualitative approach underpinned by the interpretive paradigm was utilised to explore the perceptions of the stakeholders regarding the implementation of the whole-school evaluation guidelines. The study was located in participatory action research design to prioritise an ownership of the research project by the stakeholders. A purposive sample of twelve participants selected from one secondary school in the Motheo District, Free State province was utilised. Individual probes and the focus group discussions were used to generate data. The findings reveal an inadequate application of WSE guidelines and minimal training, poor commitment, lack of parental involvement in policy implementation and an inadequate funding from the trusted stakeholders in positions of authority as sources of underperformance in the implementation of the whole-school evaluation guidelines. It is recommended that stakeholder collaboration and social interactions that encompass motivation, teamwork, empowerment and critical reflection be adhered to at the school to ensure effective implementation of the WSE guidelines.

Keywords: Explore, Guidelines, Improve implementation, Whole-school evaluation, Secondary school

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION....ii
DEDICATION....iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS....iv
LIST OF FIGURES....xv
LIST OF TABLES....xv
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS....xvi

CHAPTER 1: ORIENTATION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY....1

1.1 INTRODUCTION....1
1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY....1
1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT....6

1.3.1 Research questions....8
1.3.2 Aim of the study....8
1.3.3 Objectives of the study....9

1.4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK....9
1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN....12

1.5.1 Research methodology....12
1.5.2 Research paradigm....13
1.5.3 Research design....17

1.6 SELECTION OF THE RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS....19

1.6.1 Definition of population of the study....19
1.6.2 Description of target population....20
1.6.3 Recruitment of participants and processes....23

1.7 DATA GENERATION....23
1.8 DATA ANALYSIS....**ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.**
1.9 INSTRUMENTS USED FOR DATA COLLECTION....24

1.9.1 Definition of data collection instrument....24
1.9.2 Description of and justification for choosing instruments....24

1.10 VALUE OF THE RESEARCH....26

1.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS 28
1.12 LAYOUT OF CHAPTERS 35
1.13 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER 36

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS: SOCIO-CONSTRUCTIVIST THEORY AND COLLABORATIon THEORY 37

2.1 INTRODUCTION 37
2.2 SOCIO-CONSTRUCTIVIST THEORY AND COLLABORATION THEORY AS THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS.....**ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.**

2.2.1 Historical origins of socio-constructivist theory and collaboration theory 37

2.3 OBJECTIVES OF SOCIOCONSTRUCTIVIST THEORY AND COLLABORATION THEORY 39

2.3.1 Socio-constructivist theory is interactive 39
2.3.2 Socio-constructivist theory embraces social activities 40
2.3.3 Socio-constructivist theory endorses cultural and social transformation 41
2.3.4 Value of language in socio-constructivist theory 42
2.3.5 Problem-solving nature of sociocultural theory 43

2.4 JUSTIFICATION FOR USING SOCIOCONSTRUCTIVIST THEORY AND COLLABORATIVE THEORY FOR THE STUDY 45
2.5 FEATURES OF SOCIOCONSTRUCTIVIST THEORY 47

2.5.1 Role of scaffolding in sociocultural theory 49
2.5.2 Cooperative/collaborative learning perspective 50

2.6 PRINCIPLES OF SOCIOCONSTRUCTIVIST THEORY 51

2.6.1 Knowledge accumulation activity 51
2.6.2 Cognition development 52
2.6.3 Modifiable aspect of cognition 52
2.6.4 Social and cultural interactions of knowledge 54

2.7 ONTOLOGY OF SOCIOCONSTRUCTIVIST THEORY 55

2.8 EPISTEMOLOGY OF SOCIOCONSTRUCTIVIST THEORY 57
2.9 ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER 59
2.10 RELATIONSHIP WITH CO-RESEARCHERS..... 62
2.11 LANGUAGE OF THE RESEARCH..... 64
2.12 DEFINITIONS AND DISCUSSIONS OF OPERATIONAL CONCEPTS **ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.**

2.12.1 Exploration stage .....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**
2.12.2 Guidelines.....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**
2.12.3 Improve implementation.....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**
2.12.4 Whole-school evaluation.....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**
2.12.5 Secondary school .....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

2.13 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER .....**ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.**

CHAPTER 3: REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE 68

3.1 INTRODUCTION 68
3.2 POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION 69

3.2.1 National Education Policy Act 27 of 1996 69
3.2.2 South African Schools Act 84 of 1996..... 70
3.2.3 South African Qualifications Authority Act of 1995..... 70
3.2.4 Assessment Policy of 1998 71
3.2.5 Community Education and Training of 2013 71
3.2.6 White Paper No. 1 of 1995..... 72
3.2.7 Education White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education 72

3.3 NEED TO EXPLORE THE GUIDELINES TO IMPROVE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION..... 73

3.3.1 Need to explore the guidelines..... 73
3.3.2 Demands of a whole-school approach to change in Canada..... 74
3.3.3 Effects of a whole-school approach in the United States of America 75
3.3.4 Need to explore guidelines in whole-school evaluation in Ghana ... 76
3.3.5 Demands of whole-school evaluation change in Zambia..... 77
3.3.6 Effects of changes in whole-school evaluation in South Africa 78

3.4 CHALLENGES FACING THE EXPLORATION OF GUIDELINES TO IMPROVE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION .. 80

3.4.1 Inadequate training 80
3.4.2 Lack of commitment by school management teams 82
3.4.3 Inadequate funding 87
3.4.4 Lack of parental involvement 90

3.5 CONDITIONS CONDUCIVE TO THE EXPLORATION OF GUIDELINES TO IMPROVE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION .. 94

3.5.1 Conditions conducive to sound training 94
3.5.2 Conditions conducive for school management teams 96
3.5.3 Conditions conducive to funding 97
3.5.4 Conditions conducive to parental involvement 99

3.6 STRATEGIES FOR EXPLORING GUIDELINES TO IMPROVE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION 101

3.6.1 Strategies on training 101
3.6.2 Strategies to support school management teams 104
3.6.3 Strategies to support funding 106
3.6.4 Strategies to improve parental involvement 107

3.7 ROLES OF STAKEHOLDERS IN IMPROVING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION 109

3.7.1 Roles of senior education specialists 110
3.7.2 Roles of the SMT 111
3.7.3 Roles of teachers 113
3.7.4 Roles of parents 114

3.8 DETERMINING INDICATORS OF SUCCESS OF THE GUIDELINES 117

3.8.1 Best practices in the United States of America 117
3.8.2 Best practices in the United Kingdom 118
3.8.3 Best practices in Ghana 119
3.8.4 Best practices in Zambia 120
3.8.5 Best practices in South Africa 122

3.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY 125

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN 126

4.1 INTRODUCTION 126
4.2 PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH AS A RESEARCH APPROACH .. 126
4.3 HISTORICAL ORIGINS OF PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH 128
4.4 OBJECTIVES OF PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH 130

4.4.1 Participatory action research is democratic 130
4.4.2 Participatory action research empowers stakeholders 131
4.4.3 Participatory action research is transformative 132
4.4.4 Participatory action research is problem-oriented 133
4.4.5 Participatory action research supports social justice 134

4.5 CHARACTERISTICS OF PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH 135

4.5.1 Participatory action research is participatory 135
4.5.2 Participatory action research supports diffusion of power relations 136
4.5.3 Participatory action research encourages equality, equity and teamwork 136
4.5.4 Participatory action research is reflexive in nature 137
4.5.5 Participatory action research awakens critical consciousness 138
4.5.6 Participatory action research supports enlightenment 139

4.6 ONTOLOGY OF PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH 140
4.7 RESEARCH DESIGN 141
4.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS 141
4.9 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE RESEARCHER AND CO-RESEARCHERS 143
4.10 SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS 144

4.10.1 Process of recruiting co-researchers 145
4.10.2 Credentials of the co-researchers 145

4.11 SWOT ANALYSIS 150

4.11.1 Strengths 151

4.11.2 Weaknesses 152
4.11.3 Opportunities..... 152
4.11.4 Threats..... 153

4.12 CONCEPTUALISING THE RESEARCH DESIGN..... 154

4.12.1 Prioritising research team activities..... 156
4.12.2 The strategic plan 156

4.13 DATA GENERATING INSTRUMENTS..... 163
4.14 DATA ANALYSIS..... 164

4.14.1 Origins of critical discourse analysis 166
4.14.2 Levels of critical discourse analysis 167

4.15 TRUSTWORTHINESS 169

4.15.1 Credibility 170
4.15.2 Transferability 171
4.15.3 Dependability 171
4.15.4 Confirmability 172

4.16 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER 172

CHAPTER 5: DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION, AND INTERPRETATION.... 173

5.1 INTRODUCTION 173
5.2 ANALYSIS OF CHALLENGES 174

5.2.1 Challenges justifying exploration of the guidelines..... 174

5.3 CONDITIONS CONDUCIVE TO THE EXPLORATION OF GUIDELINES TO IMPROVE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION 185

5.3.1 Conditions conducive to training of stakeholders 186
5.3.2 Conditions conducive to the school management team to commit 188
5.3.3 Conditions conducive to funding 190
5.3.4 Conditions conducive to parental involvement..... 191

5.4 5STRATEGIES TO EXPLORE GUIDELINES TO IMPROVE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION..... 193

5.4.1 Strategies relating to training 194
5.4.2 Strategies relating to commitment of the school management team 195
5.4.3 Strategies relating to funding 197
5.4.4 Strategies in relation to parental involvement 198

5.5 ROLES OF STAKEHOLDERS IN THE EXPLORATION OF GUIDELINES TO IMPROVE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION 200

5.5.1 Roles of the senior education specialist 200
5.5.2 Roles of the school management team 202
5.5.3 Roles of teachers 204
5.5.4 Roles of school governing body members 206

5.6 INDICATORS OF THE SUCCESS OF THE EXPLORED GUIDELINES 208

5.6.1 In-service training and workshops 208
5.6.2 Stakeholder and community mobilisation 209
5.6.3 Monitoring and evaluation 211

5.7 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER 213

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS 214

6.1 INTRODUCTION 214
6.2 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY 214

6.2.1 Problem statement 215
6.2.2 Research question 215
6.2.3 Aim of the study 215
6.2.4 Objectives of the study 216

6.3 FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS 216

6.3.1 Inadequate training 216
6.3.2 Lack of commitment by school management team 219
6.3.3 Inadequate funding 222
6.3.4 Lack of parental involvement 224

6.4 SOLUTIONS TO THE CHALLENGES 227
6.4.1 Solutions for inadequate training 227
6.4.2 Solutions to a lack of commitment by the school management team 229
6.4.3 Solutions to inadequate funding 229
6.4.4 Solutions to lack of parental involvement 230
6.5 CONTRIBUTION OF METHODOLOGY TO THE EXPLORATION OF THE GUIDELINES 232
6.6 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS 235
6.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY 236
6.8 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH 237
6.9 CONCLUSION 237
REFERENCES 238
APPENDICES 321
APPENDIX A1: TRANSCRIPT 1 (INTRODUCTORY MEETING) 321
APPENDIX A2: TRANSCRIPT 2 (INTERVIEW PROTOCOL WITH A PRINCIPAL: ONE-ON- ONE) 323
APPENDIX A3: TRANSCRIPT 3 (INTERVIEW PROTOCOL WITH THE SMT: FOCUS GROUPS) 325
APPENDIX A4: TRANSCRIPT 4 (INTERVIEW PROTOCOL WITH TEACHERS: FOCUS GROUPS) 327
APPENDIX A5: TRANSCRIPT 5 (INTERVIEW PROTOCOL WITH SGB MEMBERS: FOCUS GROUPS) 329
APPENDIX A6: TRANSCRIPT 6 (INTERVIEW PROTOCOL WITH SENIOR EDUCATION SPECIALIST (SES): FOCUS GROUPS) 331
APPENDIX B1: CONSENT LETTER FOR THE PRINCIPAL 333
APPENDIX B 2: CONSENT LETTER FOR TEACHERS 339
APPENDIX B 3: CONSENT LETTER FOR SGB MEMBERS 345
APPENDIX B4: CONSENT LETTER FOR RECORDING SPECIFIC DATA GENERATION METHOD 351
APPENDIX B 6: CONSENT LETTER FOR THE SENIOR EDUCATION SPECIALIST 352

APPENDIX C1: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE 358
APPENDIX C2: LETTER FROM LANGUAGE EDITOR 359
APPENDIX C3: TURN IT IN REPORT 360

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 4.1: The elements of PAR 155

Figure 4.2: The PAR cycle 162

Figure 4.3: The Model of Teun A. van Dijk's CDA 165

LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1: The first priority: The action plan 158

Table 4.2: Coordination of activities for participants 159

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CDA	Critical discourse analysis
FET	Further Education and Training
HOD	Head of departments
NEPA	National Education Policy Act
PAR	Participatory action research
SASA	South African Schools Act
SCT	Socio-constructivist theory
SES	Senior education specialist
SGB	School governing body
SMT	School management team
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
USA	United States of America
WSCC	Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child
WSE	Whole-school evaluation
ZEST	Zambian Education School-Based Training
ZPD	Zone of proximal development

CHAPTER 1: ORIENTATION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The study explored guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation (WSE) in selected secondary schools in the Motheo district of Free State province. An improvement in implementation of the WSE guidelines would ensure the ability of stakeholders to overcome the manifestation of critical barriers, thus enhancing active participation of the school management team (SMT), teachers and the school governing body (SGB) members in the WSE programme (Diez, Iraurgi & Villa 2018:1). Developmental appraisal, performance management and WSE are the processes that constitute an integrated quality management system (IQMS) (Phage 2014:6). WSE is “a process of external evaluation of the work of a school carried out by the Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Science (DES)” (Metu 2017:1).

In this chapter, I will first present a brief background to the study. The chapter will also outline the problem statement, research aim and objectives of the study, explain operational concepts and give a review of related literature. The chapter will also provide an outline of the study design, methodology, tools and the techniques utilised for data generation and analysis. The value of the research, ethical considerations and the layout of chapters will also be described.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Internationally, the reviewed literature depicts various models utilised by different countries to improve the quality of education. Such models and steps undertaken by education authorities are efforts to make a positive difference to the management and control of aspects of teaching and learning on school premises. A plethora of research perused for this study suggests that little research has been done to explore collaborative guidelines to improve schools holistically, as highlighted in this section.

The United States of America (USA) adopted the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) model, which seeks to support a systematic, integrated and

collaborative stance on learning and health (Lewallen, Chesa, Hunt, Potts-Datema, Zaza & Giles 2015:730).The WSCC model was designed to provide a collaborative approach to decision-making and action, to work together by placing the learner at the centre, as a focal point. In California, the implementation of WSCC, similar to WSE, is used as a measure for teacher evaluation in terms of learner achievement in all assessments (Darling-Hammond, Amrein-Beardsley, Haertel & Rothstein 2015:8). This model addresses the pertinent issues of teacher development, and thus enhances teacher and school qualities.

Research by Lewallen *et al.* (2015:2) identified the principal as a key factor in the facilitation of the WSCC model if schools were to achieve the intended outcomes. Researchers stress the point that the principal's leadership skills are beneficial, as they coordinate district and school policies in order to enhance learning specific to local needs (Cardina & Fegley 2016:2). Hunt, Barrios, Telljohann and Mazyck (2015:808) posit that the WSCC model entails 10 action planning steps equivalent to the nine key areas of WSE in the South African context. The model assists districts and schools to focus on the basic functionality of the schools, in order to achieve academic outcomes. Descriptions in the literature emphasise a comparison of the WSCC and WSE models.

Despite the implementation of the WSCC model in the USA with the aim of involving different stakeholders in education in supporting academic outcomes, there has been little research on guidelines to improve optimal functioning of the whole school. This study intended to close this knowledge gap by exploring guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE on school premises through the involvement of the SMT, teachers, parents and district officials as responsible stakeholders.

A review of related literature in Singapore strengthens the argument that little research has been done on guidelines to improve the whole school. Sheng (2010:481) posits that, in Singapore, a paradigm shift occurred, from traditional teacher evaluation programmes to a system approach that entailed a multidimensional model that impacted administration and sustainable teacher evaluation and development. According to Roffey (2017:60), the Quality Implementation Framework is a process in Singaporean schools that focuses on social and emotional learning of the whole child.

The model or process entails five key aspects that are intended to help teachers and learners to feel safe and engage positively in school activities.

By its definition, WSE is a structured process by which judgements regarding academic attainment and social development of learners are reached (Mathaba 2014:2). The envisaged guidelines seek to strengthen WSE by improving the quality of education provision for learners. The literature reviewed above defines and explains the model used in Singapore. Since there is little research on guidelines to improve implementation of WSE, this project intended to close this literature gap by exploring guidelines to improve implementation of WSE on school premises.

Canada and Cyprus are two other countries with clear mandatory models to improve the standard and quality of their respective schools. The scholarly literature indicates that these two countries also fall short on research addressing guidelines to improve implementation of WSE. Matorera (2018:21) suggests that, in Canada, a quality management system, as a teacher development tool, emphasises the effectiveness, efficiency and maximisation of teachers' capabilities. Cyprus uses a dynamic approach to school improvement, which emphasises the importance of collecting data on factors at school level, in order to identify teacher and school improvement needs (Creemers & Kyriakides 2015:105). Research by Creemers and Kyriakides reveals that implementing this dynamic approach to school improvement supports the roles of teachers to achieve school improvement; they make little reference to the role of other important stakeholders. This study will, therefore, explore guidelines that can bring on board other stakeholders, such as parents and district officials, in the implementation of the WSE process.

In Africa, Kenyan and Nigerian models on the improvement of WSE to ensure quality education rate among the best. Despite these two sub-Saharan African countries being developing countries with good educational models that emphasise the value of education on school campuses, little research has been conducted to explore guidelines to improve the implementation of the WSE programme on school premises.

In Kenya, evaluation is used to determine the worth, the value and the quality of programmes offered by schools to improve teaching and learning (Ndungu, Allan & Bomett 2015:10). Some Kenyan secondary schools use school-based management training that focuses on empowering parents and teachers to subsequently participate

in decision-making towards the enhancement of the quality of teaching and learning (Andiva 2019:3).

Duflo, Dupas and Kremer (2015:8) state that school-based management training empowers stakeholders, such as SGB members, for the recruitment of contract teachers as part of policy involvement in order to reduce teacher–learner ratios. Research by Duflo et al. (2015:8) reveals that empowerment that focuses on contract teachers comes at the expense of the appointment of permanent teachers, which may, subsequently, result in poor performance by learners in some subjects. This study identifies this practice as a gap to be closed through an exploration of guidelines on WSE. All the key areas of a school are equally important for ensuring optimal functioning.

Nigerian schools have adopted an integrated evaluation model for quality assurance of effective teacher development. The integrated evaluation model involves an approach that takes cognisance of teacher competence, creativity, commitment, teamwork and effective communication, as well as educational leadership in the realisation of staff members' full potential (Ejiounueme & Oyoyo 2015:103). The integrated evaluation model uses integrated forms that concentrate on self-evaluation, peer rating, supervisor rating and student rating for teacher evaluation (Bichi 2017:108). One of the limiting factors of this approach is that the functionality of the school cannot be measured by teacher performance only, but should consider other key areas too, such as infrastructure, teaching and learning environment, finances, and learner and teacher discipline. This study intended to explore guidelines that are inclusive of an improvement of the whole school, in order to close the gap in the literature.

In the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region, a review of the related literature on Zambia and South Africa found that the two countries do have models to improve the quality of education in schools. Zambia uses total quality management, whereas South Africa has introduced WSE.

At secondary schools in Zambia, quality assurance is practiced through the application of total quality management. Teamwork during total quality management activities is strengthened by holding regular meetings; the resolutions of such meetings are collaboratively discussed and implemented (Nawela, Sichinsambwe & Mwanza

2015:729). Nawela *et al.* (2015:718) describe total quality management as a process that hinges on performance, suitability, reliability, endurance, utility, aesthetic and credit. In order to ensure quality service at secondary schools, the Zambian Ministry of Education (2010:24) introduced initiatives such as teacher grouping meetings and subject meetings at resource centres. Despite all these intervention strategies, the efforts did not produce results that indicate success. This study intended to explore guidelines to close the knowledge gap on the best way to improve the implementation of WSE at schools.

Bobo (2015:253) postulates that, in a South African context, WSE is regarded as "a shift from a system of inspection to self-evaluation and external evaluation". In addressing inspection as a means of an external evaluation from an Apartheid era, a consensus for the new educator appraisal model was reached. The consensus gave rise to integrated quality management system (IQMS), emerging from an ineffective implementation of Performance Management (PM), Developmental Appraisal System (DAS) and Whole School Evaluation (WSE) (Rabichund & Steyn 2014:348). Guidelines provide a code of practice for carrying out the evaluation (RSA 2001:5). WSE in this paradigm seeks to emphasise joint collaboration between schools and district departments, to improve schools holistically and, hence, improve the standard of South African education. The WSE policy "enables a school and external supervisors to provide an account of the school's current performance and to show to what extent it meets national goals and the needs of the public and communities" (De Clercq 2007:3).

WSE alerts the South African education system when areas need improvement and assists the public sector to secure the schooling system that the country desires (Mathaba & Dorasamy 2015:155). Since schools do not exist in isolation, it is the function of the district office to support schools to improve the education achievements of the learners (Van der Voort & Wood 2016:1). Scherman and Fraser (2017:53) posit that the nine key areas of WSE for school improvement, namely, the basic functionality of the school; leadership, management and communication; governance and relationships; quality of teaching and learning, educator development; curriculum provision and resources; learner achievement; school safety, security and discipline; school infrastructure; and parents and community, are the cornerstones for responding to external accountability measures. For schools to perform their duties optimally, the

production of the desired outputs entail ensuring the right inputs at all levels of the system (Westraad 2011:3). The education system is expected to provide the necessary support to schools and teachers to fulfil their mandates.

The review of literature of countries in Africa and elsewhere found that different countries use different models for quality assurance in their education systems. Studies reveal that different terms are used for these models that are intended to improve schools holistically in different countries. What is not clearly articulated by this research, are the guidelines for improving the implementation of these models in these countries. I will, therefore, explore guidelines that can be used collaboratively to improve implementation of WSE in Free State secondary schools.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Literature studied as background to the study reports on the existence of various models that are used to ensure the smooth running of schools in various countries. Studies also indicate that different countries use different terminology for WSE. However, it is clear that little research has been conducted on guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE. Some schools concentrate too much on specific key areas at the expense of others. The literature, furthermore, reveals that stakeholders, such as parents, are not adequately involved in the implementation of WSE.

The study explored the failure of the stakeholders to implement the existing guidelines to improve the efficacy of the WSE at a secondary school. The exploration of the existing guidelines assisted in the ramping up of knowledge regarding an improvement on the efficacy of the WSE at the school.

In some instances, schools do not indicate in their drafted WSE plans whether their implementation is still on track. For this study, the research problem derived from the findings of Aspers and Corte (2015:142), namely that, in order to address the challenges that lead to failure to implement WSE effectively at a secondary school, a holistic and integrated approach needs to be implemented. Therefore, I explored the existing guidelines to improve the efficacy of WSE in the selected secondary school of the Motheo district of the Free State province. I therefore, attempted to close the gap in the literature on this research topic.

1.3.1 Research questions

1.3.1.1 Primary research question

The overarching research question in this study is: ***Which explored guidelines can be used to improve implementation of WSE in Free State secondary schools?***

Flowing from this central research question are the following subsidiary questions:

1. What are the challenges facing the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools?

2. Which conditions are conducive to improving the implementation of WSE at schools?

3. Which strategies can be used to improve the implementation of WSE at schools?

4. What are the roles of different stakeholders in the improvement of implementation of WSE at schools?

5. How can the success of the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools, as informed by best practices, be demonstrated?

1.3.2 Aim of the study

1.3.2.1 Primary aim

The study aimed to explore guidelines for improving the implementation of WSE in Free State secondary schools.

1.3.3 Objectives of the study

To achieve the aim of the study, the following objectives were pursued:

1 To justify the need to explore the challenges facing the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at secondary schools;

2. To determine conditions conducive to the improvement of the implementation of WSE at schools;

3. To develop strategies to improve the implementation of WSE at secondary schools;

4. To identify the roles of different stakeholders in improving the implementation of WSE at schools; and

5. To demonstrate the success of the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools, as informed by best practices.

1.4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was underpinned by a hybrid of two theoretical frameworks, namely socio-constructivist theory (SCT) and collaboration theory. The two theories complement each other in that they support cooperation amongst participants. They served as the lenses through which this research was viewed. While SCT emphasises construction of knowledge and meanings through participation in interpersonal interaction, collaboration theory involves the sharing of views on decision-making in a problem-solving approach (Kiraly 2014:4).

The SCT originated from social development theory as espoused by the Russian psychologist Vygotsky. The grand narratives that contributed significantly to this theory are those of Lev Vygotsky, Jean Piaget, Seymour Papert, John Dewey and Jerome Bruner, amongst others (Bada & Olesegun 2015:66). SCT rests on the premise that knowledge construction evolves from a conversation or an encounter between two or more individuals (Lynch 2016:1).Thus, using SCT ensured that the researcher and co-researchers could explore reality creation regarding guidelines to improve

implementation of WSE at secondary schools, based on individuals' life experiences, and societal and cultural expectations (Teater 2015:1).

The SCT was relevant to this study, as reported by Zaida (2018:67), as, during interactive sessions and stakeholder meetings, the researcher and co-researchers benefitted from ideas and lived experiences shared among themselves through discourse, thus, expanding their knowledge base on how guidelines to improve implementation of WSE at secondary schools can be navigated. Pocter (2019:23) indicates that knowledge and truth need a social structure and are not created outside a human mind. Powell and Kalina (2017:243) confirm the suitability of using SCT in this research by explaining that stakeholder interaction and linguistic attachment of meanings to concepts are socially embedded. This implies that, in outlining guidelines to improve implementation of WSE at schools, all the participants are engaged on an equal basis as far as expertise and experience of WSE processes are concerned. This active participation ensured that a diffusion of power was entrenched in the research, and every participant was assured of confidence and free participation.

The SCT entails a zone of proximal development (ZPD). ZPD is the support one participant gets from a more knowledgeable one in the learning of a concept or skill (Smagorinsky 2018:70). Stakeholder social interaction acted as a platform on which more concepts and skills in a WSE programme were gained. The ZPD ensures that the stakeholder collaboration on how to explore guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools occurs in the presence of capable peers or colleagues (Amineh & Asl 2015:14). Demiral (2018:180) states that words, whether spoken or written within the social structure and environment in which they exist, influence image formation in people's minds. Words, concepts and terminology used in communication and discussions between the researcher and co-researchers assisted to explore guidelines to improve implementation of WSE at schools. For guidelines to improve implementation of WSE at schools, they must be contained in a viable and working document, and participants had to be actively involved, which meant the internalisation of artifacts of the processes had to be enhanced (Karahan & Roehrig 2015:105).

Empirical study of the socio-constructivist perspective indicates that salient aspects of human functioning are sociocultural influences (Hickey 1997:175). Through SCT,

participants are influenced to engage in fruitful communication that involves the usage of spoken or written words. Words are used in image formation in the minds of research participants. Mishra (2015:16) point out the relevance of SCT in this study, in that, through the involvement of different stakeholders in exploring guidelines to improve implementation of WSE, such dialogues or discourses are shared by community members with common goals. The socio-constructivist approach is relevant to this study, because it emphasises the impact of participant collaboration, social context and negotiation on thinking and learning (Hickey 1997:176). It was relevant as a lens through which this study could be viewed, and influenced knowledge building that was produced culturally through collaboration with other people within a social context (Asamoah & Oheneba-Sakyi 2017:2).

In turn, collaboration theory originated from the neo-Piagetian socio-constructivism, the neo-Vygotskian approach to intersubjectivity, and the model of distributed networking (Roselli 2016:275). Vygotsky, who advocated for the ZPD, considers learning as being social and assisting participants to gain social skills, if they engage in learning in a group of peers (Daneshfar & Moharami 2018:601). Learning among the participants on strategy and role development towards the exploration of guidelines took place through communication and social interactions. To corroborate SCT, Frydlinger, Nyden and Vitasek (2016:14) posit that collaboration theory, with its autonomy principle, promotes egalitarianism. This implies that collaboration theory ensures that research power is equally distributed among the research participants during collaborative engagements in a research project. Stakeholder collaboration is goal-oriented. Collaborative theory assists participants with the cultivation of teamwork and cooperation towards exploration of guidelines to improve implementation of WSE at secondary schools (Jessup-Anger 2015:19).

Cycles of collaboration theory emphasise face-to-face dialogue, trust building, commitment and shared understanding amongst the participants (Purbani 2017:138). According to Sedgewick (2017:3), collaboration theory is relevant to this study because it promotes the setting up of decision-making processes and participation in group brainstorming sessions by collaborative partners. Participants are encouraged to identify and know their roles in connection with developing strategies to enhance the exploration of guidelines to improve WSE implementation at schools. Hakkarainen, Paavola, Kangas and Seitamaa-Hakkarainen (2020:58) state that the participation

metaphor of collaboration theory acknowledges knowledge creation as collaboration of multiple and diverse participants, during which social interaction is learning-driven through joint problem-solving efforts. Co-researchers' intersubjective interactions are explored for shared ideas and experiences, to generate suggestions for strategies and roles in exploring the envisaged guidelines.

From a collaboration theory point of view, the study underpins four aspects as tenets: researcher and participants working together on all phases of the study; a collaborative effort that is focused on schools and WSE challenges as the real world; the effort of the study that is concerned with both research and implementation issues throughout; and both the researcher and informants gaining an understanding of and mutual respect for the exploration of guidelines to improve implementation of WSE at schools (Dredge 2017:562). Collaborative theory complements SCT by attempting to move research from rhetoric to implementation issues of WSE on school premises through embracing notions of stakeholder inclusivity, participation and collaboration (Farsari 2023:362).

1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

1.5.1 Research methodology

Mohajan (2018:27) refers to research methodology as "the logical development of process used to generate theory". The development of such a theory becomes a framework within which research is conducted. Long (2014:428) states that research methodology is a scientific way that entails "the general logic and theoretical perspective" of a research study. It assists a researcher to plan their research according to logical steps towards the formulation of a scientific theory. Research methodology is vital in that it guides the selection of the research methods for a study. Abutabenjeh and Jaradath (2018:250) explain research methodology as steps followed by a researcher for data generation and analysis. According to them, the steps include deciding when and how often to collect data, developing or selecting measures for each variable, identifying a sample or test population, choosing a strategy for contacting subjects, planning the data analysis and presenting the findings.

Sileyew (2019:1) explains research methodology as the path a researcher follows in conducting research. The path follows the formulation of the research problem and objectives, and the presentation of the study results obtained from data generation during the study. In this journey of exploring guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at secondary schools, I facilitated the research by involving research participants who adhered to the steps of the research methodology.

1.5.2 Research paradigm

Kivunja and Kuyini (2017:26) elucidate a research paradigm as a philosophical way of thinking, which describes a researcher's worldview. This is the researcher's school of thought that encompasses shared beliefs pertinent to the interpretation of the research data. These abstract beliefs and principles assist the researcher in shaping their world. Antwi and Hamza (2015:218) describe a research paradigm as a research culture entailing beliefs, values and assumptions of a researcher on how to conduct research.

The relevant selection of a relevant paradigm assisted the participants to follow a pattern and social structure that guided them in discussing ideas, values and assumptions on how to conduct research on exploring guidelines to improve WSE implementation at schools. This study is located in interpretivism as a research paradigm. Section 1.5.2.1 briefly delineates the justification of a constructivist approach to this study.

1.5.2.1 Justification of interpretivism

Interpretivism was used because its stance is the methodological approach of participatory action research (PAR), as one of the qualitative approaches. This research paradigm affords multiple subjective realities, and gives voice to a range of participants' subjective experiences (Nelson, Groom & Potrac 2014:13)

I explored guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at secondary schools, which I believed was a practical challenge at many schools. The study focus was on the "what'', "which" and "how" questions emanating from the research problem. I explored how district officials, teachers and parents collaborated in improving implementation of WSE at schools; the conditions under which such implementation thrived; what the relevant strategies the stakeholders applied in improving the implementation of WSE were; what the role of each stakeholder was in improving

implementation of WSE at schools; and what opportunities and strengths were pertinent to improving implementation of WSE at schools.

Interpretivists believe in the notion that research stakeholders are able to construct their social reality (Dammak 2015:5). Furthermore, interpretivism was chosen because it holds the premise that, through collaboration, the world is constructed through the involvement of individual participants. Carr (2015:234) points out that the application of interpretivism enables an in-depth exploration of participants' narrative beliefs and ideas through open-ended questions that assist in responding to the research questions. Blaikie and Priest (2017:26) explain that interpretivism supports an inside or bottom-up approach to research, by affording the researcher an opportunity to facilitate the research from within the participants' social worlds. In this instance, the researcher became fully part of the co-researchers' social world. The relevance of interpretivism to this study is reflected in its ability to assist the participants in generating context-based, subjective meanings of the phenomena in the WSE process (Qutoshi 2015:169). The participants were able to construct subjective meanings based on thoughts, beliefs and values within their life worlds at their workplace. Through interpretivism, the prevailing school environment was regarded as a lens through which the social world of the stakeholders was reviewed in relation to how to explore the envisaged guidelines.

1.5.2.2 Ontology of interpretivism

An ontological point of view of interpretivism emphasises that reality construction depends on the presence of social actors. Social actors rearrange the reality to fit their perception of their world (Montessori & Morales-Lopez 2015:204). I chose interpretivism for this research because it supports the involvement of marginalised people to become active social actors in exploring guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at secondary schools, thus, contributing to rebuilding the education system (Mahlomaholo 2015:58). Moudden, Khaldi and Souhaib (2015:1) state that socio-cognitive conflicts stimulate collaborative learning on key areas and concepts of, in this case, WSE amongst participants. This dialogue affords the co-researchers an opportunity to review their views and share their experiences on exploring guidelines to improve implementation of WSE at schools through negotiation and argument. According to Marais (2016:3), the experiences and narratives thus

obtained during social interaction of stakeholders contribute to reality construction, in that it affords them the opportunity to acquire open minds to solve WSE-related challenges.

An ontological assumption enhances the study's view that exploring the guidelines for improved implementation of WSE involves the creation of a reality that is lacking on secondary school premises. Therefore, the study also sought to investigate the suitability of roles and strategies used by the SMT, teachers, district officials and parents in exploring the guidelines to improve implementation of WSE at secondary schools.

1.5.2.3 Epistemological assumptions of interpretivism

Miller (2016:377) posits that interpretivism acknowledges the role of language in epistemic production of reality. The researcher and co-researchers use spoken and written words as part of their discourse to construct knowledge when exploring guidelines to improve implementation of WSE at schools. Interpretivists view the use of a interpretivist approach by SMTs, parents, teachers and district officials in the construction of radical epistemological knowledge as social interaction contributing to meaning making in support of exploring of guidelines to improve implementation of WSE at schools (Qutoshi 2015:169).

Interpretivists view the perusal of legislated policies such the WSE policy, and the artifacts as the support material to construct knowledge relevant to the improved implementation of the WSE guidelines (Greene, Sandoval & Braten 2016:331). Epistemological assumptions of interpretivism are used in this study to delineate the role of the researcher as a facilitator in the research, to consistently ensure exploration of guidelines by SMT members, parents, teachers and district officials through active collaboration (Sheehy, Kasule & Chamberlain 2019:10).

Interpretivism focuses on processes of understanding and addressing social change in a postmodern society (Galbin 2015:51). The utilisation of interpretivism gives participants more freedom to express their own views in co-creating the new knowledge to enhance their roles and strategies regarding the improved implementation of the WSE guidelines (Vogl, Schmidt & Zartler 2019:612). The nature of knowledge thus created played a pivotal role in the exploration ofj guidelines to

improve the implementation of WSE at secondary schools, as all the participants were actively involved in the research proceedings.

1.5.2.4 Methodological assumptions

Methodology embraces foundations of knowledge regarding perception and understanding of reality. In any scientific inquiry, many interpretations are done, leading to foundational processes on the determination of truth (Avramidis & Smith 2006:28). Relativism supports the belief that there is no absolute truth, but only the truth that an individual or a culture happens to believe. While positivists support the assumption that there is an objective world in which things exist independently of their description, in constructivism, constructivists have the freedom to choose a method that ensures construction of reality (Berg, Paige & Lou 2012:94). Constructivists attend to language, symbols, collaborative discourses and attachment of meaning in data generation and analysis (Forcey 2008:4).

The use of case study, methodology justifies the use of constructivism. Participant collaboration during focus group discussions ensured that the participants learned from their experiences, ideas and beliefs, and contributed to an elicitation of inferences responding to the research questions (Arghode 2012:159). The interviews conducted in the form of focus group discussions and the written texts as data for the study were analysed to uncover tacit ideologies garnered in discourse with research participants (Ahmed 2008:5). Constructivist methodological assumptions were adopted because they espouse inductive reasoning as an epitome of a qualitative research.

1.5.2.5 Research approach

This study is rooted in a qualitative approach undertaken with descriptive research. Khaldi (2017:21) describes qualitative research as “a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem”. Maharaj (2015:38) defines qualitative research as the collection of non-numeric data based on “subjective assessment of attitudes, opinions and behaviour”. A qualitative study uses a scientific approach that reveals how participants communicate, act, react or collaboratively make decisions within their social world (Galkienee, Monkevičienė, Lakkala, Albert, Kyrö-Ämmälä, Kijak, Navaitienė, Cierpiałowska, Jäggle, Tomecek, & Kossevska , 2017:32)

1.5.3 Research design

Creswell and Poth (2016:41) describe research design as scientific and logical steps that a researcher follows when conducting a study. The steps entail stating a problem, reviewing related literature, posing questions (main and subsidiary questions), data collection, data analysis and report writing. Maxfield and Babbie (2017:241) describe a research design as a plan or blueprint for conducting a research. Abutabenjeh and Jaradat (2018:241) articulate a research design as a plan a researcher needs to follow to determine how, why and what to observe and analyse in research. The intentions of the researcher are achievable by rigorously following the steps of the research process. According to Babbie (2016:117), a research design encompasses a set of decisions a researcher should take on methods and a purpose in order to conduct research on a particular population. It helps to focus a researcher's perspective on the purpose of their study.

By drawing on the participants' experience and innovation that ensured the group's actual capacity for independent problem-solving, using means at their disposal, I used PAR as a qualitative approach to the study. Section1.5.3.1 outlines the rationale behind choosing PAR for this study

1.5.3.1 Justification of using participatory action research for the study

This study is located in PAR ideologies – a research design that is inclusive of the experiences, skills and knowledge claims of the participants, as they interact subjectively with social reality. PAR embraces cooperation and encourages collaboration of all stakeholders in exploring guidelines to improve implementation of WSE at schools.

PAR was used for this study because, as a participatory and qualitative approach, it ensures that the research is conducted with the participants, and not for them. As a collaborative method, PAR prioritises empowerment and self-determination for participants, and subsequently fosters a sense of ownership in the research group, leading to better outcomes on the research questions (Madden, Cadet-James, Atkinson & Watkin-Lui 2014:33). PAR was a suitable methodological research approach for this study because it could be used to focus on enacting and facilitating change in a school setting. PAR involved relevant stakeholders in exploring the

guidelines to assist schools to address the problems that hinder them from improving the implementation of WSE. The PAR research approach emphasises reflection and improvement situated in a collective endeavour, where all individuals have a stake in influencing their own social and physical contexts (Haverkate, Meyers, Telep & Wright 2020:33). PAR's collaborative nature advocates for the generation of knowledge through a more participatory and problem-solving-oriented approach, in which the participants could explore the guidelines and propose solutions to improve the implementation of (Brydon-Miller, Kral & Ortiz Aragon 2020:106).

One of the reasons why I chose PAR for this research design is its cyclical nature, which uses prototypes to test the feasibility and potentiality of problem-solving strategies through reflection on various steps in the research (Burmeister & Eilks 2013:67). The cyclical steps of PAR assisted the researcher and the participants during a research process to observe, reflect, act, evaluate and modify their approach to achieving the objectives of the research. This type of collaboration among participants with diverse knowledge, skills, and expertise fosters the sharing of knowledge development (MacDonald 2012:40). PAR is regarded as an embodiment of reinvention of a praxis embracing co-participation and negotiation among the participants in the research project (Brydon-Miller *et al.* 2020:106). This implies that the PAR research design allows the participants to negotiate and share ideas, experiences, beliefs and thoughts on the common problem or challenge within the school and community contexts.

PAR was appropriate for his study because it utilised stakeholders' actual capacity for independent problem-solving, through using all the means at their disposal (Chevalier & Buckles 2019:163). The problem-solving skills were achieved by the researcher and co-researchers in using scientific inquiry and real-life experiences to understand and shape their worlds, thus, exploring guidelines regarding an improvement of WSE implementation at schools (Chevalier & Buckles 2019:21). Guy, Feldman, Cain, Leesman and Hood (2020:143) postulate that, as a form of human inquiry, PAR engages researcher and research participants by focusing on collaboration and reflection in order to bring about meaningful change in the context of social justice.

PAR empowered the researcher and co-researchers in this research to attain equal status as participants. Empowerment, through being considered equal partners in the

research, motivates participants to bring about action to solve a real-life problem, such as exploration of guidelines to improve implementation of WSE at schools (Quy 2018:21). PAR engaged the participants in social change and transformation of WSE challenges to realise user-friendly guidelines for effective implementation in schools (Worthen, Veale, McKay & Wessels 2019:156). Janes (2016:72) states that PAR allows co-researchers to voice their contributions in research during knowledge creation through the assimilation of differences in their life experiences.

In mapping the way forward, the research team met the researcher, who briefly introduced the research topic to all team members. Furthermore, the roles of co-researchers and the schedules of meetings were outlined, in order to consolidate the data thus generated on the exploration of guidelines to improve implementation of WSE at schools. The planning phase focused on setting the priorities to be used in the research, and the time frames for the completion of the envisaged activities as a point of departure. The proposed mission statement for the research team, to work co-operatively and be encouraged to achieve success in this research was, “Nothing about us without us is for us”, in accordance with the premise of PAR (Aiken 2017:5).

In mitigating the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the study used the latest technology relating to videoconferencing services to elicit the lived experiences, perceptions, feelings and thoughts of participants as qualitative data. Videoconferencing platforms were suitable to be used in PAR as a qualitative methodological approach, and they replaced the traditional face-to-face interviews and focus group discussions (Lobe, Morgan & Hoffman 2020:2). Tools that were used during this era of COVID-19 will be clarified further in section 4.13

1.6 SELECTION OF THE RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

1.6.1 Definition of population of the study

A research population is the “universe of units of analysis” available for drawing a study sample (Van Rijnsoever 2017:4). Units of analysis refer to information sources that can provide data to respond to the research questions. Ary, Jacobs, Irvine and Walker (2018:147) regard a population as all members of any well-defined group of people, events or objects. Palinkas, Howirtz, Green, Wisdom, Duan and Hoagwood (2015:534) state that a population is a group of individuals within a locality affected by

a phenomenon of social interest. Asiamah, Mensah and Oteng-Abayie (2017:1607) affirm a population as a group of individuals with one or more characteristics of interest to the researcher.

1.6.2 Description of target population

A target population is composed of a group of participants who possess attributes relevant to the research questions of the study (Asiamah *et al.* 2017:1612). The target population is obtainable by refining a general population of a study. A target population is a group of members of a community on which a researcher intends to conduct research and draw conclusions (Gregory, Stevens & Fraser 2017:1). A target population is a total group of individuals from which the study sample is drawn (McLeod, S.A. 2019:3). Frick (2012:3) defines a target population as a group of elements about which the researcher wants to make inferences in research.

The target population of the study comprised SMTs, teachers, and school governing bodies of secondary schools of Motheo district office, and district officials overseeing WSE. SMTs and teachers were selected as a target population of the study because of their managerial and implementation roles in the WSE process at school level. The SGB represents the majority of parents and learners. District officials represent the Department of Basic Education, due to their managerial capacity for implementing WSE from the district office. Collaboration of all these stakeholders in the research assisted the study to respond scientifically to the research questions that addressed the WSE challenges that emanated from the problem statement, and subsequently explored the guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at secondary schools.

1.6.2.1 Justification of target group of the study

The target population was appropriate for this study, because it warranted an exposition of participants' inferences about their experiences, opinions and ideas on the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE processes as their social challenge. Liu, Davidson, Bhopal, White, Johnson, Netto and Sheikh (2016:328) state that, due to its nature after being refined from the general population, the target population ensures that diversity is maximised, and that participant representation is favourable. Such attributes outsource relevant inferences from the informants on the best way guidelines to improve implementation of WSE at schools could be explored.

Using a target population in a case study involving one secondary school was appropriate for generating data in the informants' natural setting (Santha, Sudheer, Saxena & Tiwari 2015:83).

The study was conducted as a qualitative case study at a secondary school in the Free State province. A single case study was used, because it offered rich data for in-depth analysis and rigour to improve the implementation of the WSE guidelines by participants, as real-life issues unfolding on school premises, which was their real world (Gaya & Smith 2016:529). According to Houghton, Murthy and Casey (2015:8), the utilisation of a case study assisted the participants to explore the lived experiences, beliefs and opinions, amongst themselves, that could contribute to the improved implementation of the WSE guidelines. When a case study method is used, the target population affords the researcher and the participants the opportunity to discuss issues pertinent to theory formulation from data analysis, on a face-to-face basis in the school setting.

1.6.2.2 Definition of study sample

A sample is a representative subset or portion of a total population from which a researcher selects the informants to represent the perspectives of the whole population (Altinay, Paraskevas & Jang 2015:113). Tracy (2019:134) defines a research sample as sources of data that fit or aid in responding to the research questions. According to Ingham-Broomfield (2015:37), a research sample does not always only involve human participants, as the research methodology may use various sources such as diaries, media articles, documents and text analysis.

1.6.2.3 Description and justification of the study sample

A purposive sampling technique was used to select the research participants. The purposive sample afforded both the researcher and co-researchers an opportunity to identify available resources to assist in generating useful and rich data on the exploration of the envisaged guidelines (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim 2016:2). The research site of the study was a secondary school in the Motheo district of the Free State province. One secondary school was a sufficient sample size to meet the requirements of the study, since the study used a purposive sample. Choosing one

secondary school as a research site assisted in mitigating time spent on a series of meetings with stakeholders to effect the cyclical process of PAR.

The participants nominated for this study consisted of the school principal, as an overseer of WSE process on behalf of the Department of Education at school level, and all other SMT members. The deputy principal was included as a controller of all heads of departments (HODs), as were three HODs who were responsible for overseeing the work of teachers in various departments of the school. The research sample also included three teachers in the Further Education and Training band (FET, Grades 10–12) and two from General Education and Training band (GET, Grades 8 and 9). Teachers were involved to ensure that each grade in the school was represented. Including teachers ensured, furthermore, that they were empowered, and served as an acknowledgement of a diffusion of power in the research proceedings.

The involvement of three SGB members in the research fostered power sharing through the generation of democratic knowledge and the forging of solutions to explore guidelines to address challenges on implementation of WSE at schools (Aiken 2017:22). In order to complete the composition of the research team, a district official heading WSE section of the Department of Education was also selected. A separate meeting with a district official and the school stakeholders was arranged to collaborate on the reinforcement of data. The inclusion of a district official in the research increased the richness and diversity of data and ensured the incorporation of feedback on the research questions from the perspective of the district office (Pacho 2015:46).

Setia (2016:507) explains that a purposive sample supports the ability of participants to communicate experiences, knowledge and opinions pertinent to the objectives of the study, in an expressive and reflective manner, thereby upholding one of the principles of PAR. Valerio, Rodriguez, Winkler, Lopez, Dennison, Liang and Turner (2016:3) corroborate the appropriateness of a purposive sampling as a strategy to select informants who are affected by a specific issue addressed by the research. The implication is that participants in this research were stakeholders who volunteered to participate in order to contribute to the exploration of guidelines to improve implementation of WSE at schools.

Literature by Grove and Gray (2019:317) suggests that that purposive sampling, also known as judgemental or selective sampling, assisted the researcher and participants

to gain insight into meanings and experiences and gain an in-depth understanding of roles and strategies earmarked for exploration of the envisaged guidelines. Flick (2018:88) confirms the appropriateness of purposive sampling for selecting instances and co-researchers who are rich in information that responds to the research questions. The diverse range of participants in the case study could offer their lived experiences, opinions and beliefs on strategies to explore guidelines to improve implementation of WSE at secondary schools.

1.6.3 Recruitment of participants and processes

I received permission and an ethical clearance certificate from the ethics committee of the University of the Free State before I started with the recruitment of the study participants. I sent an email to the senior education specialist (SES) requesting his participation, his contact number and that of the participating school. I visited the school as a research site to request the participation of the principal, deputy principal, three HODs, five teachers and the three SGB members, and to obtain their cell numbers from the principal.

1.7 DATA GENERATION

Data were generated using Zoom as an online qualitative method of videoconferencing. The Zoom online platform was chosen because it enabled audio recordings, and control was limited to the host of the meeting, who could decide to share it with other participants (Lobe *et al.* 2020:3). Access to the recordings was restricted to the host. Furthermore, a Zoom platform was user-friendly because it allowed each participant to click on the invitation link and type a name in order to join the meeting. This type of an online qualitative method was preferred for responding to the aim and objectives of the study on understanding experiences, opinions, attitudes, values and processes of geographically distant participants at a time of unprecedented disruptions due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Lo Iacano, Symonds & Brown 2016:10).

Participants resolved that focus group discussions would take place on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays. The choice of the days was based on the availability of the participants. Of crucial importance was the agreement that all the sessions would take

place outside school hours, in order to prevent disruption of teaching and learning activities at the research site.

Free attitude interviews were used to allow both the researcher and co-researchers to contribute unique skills, perceptions and experiences to the research (Penrod, Loeb, Ladonne & Martin 2017:146). In order to mitigate the risk of participants contracting COVID-19, we adhered to the recommended guidelines for safety issued by the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention when we generated data for the study. At all material times, participants were encouraged to use the recommended personal protective equipment such as face masks, gloves, and eye protectors (Adams & Walls 2020:1439). The rich data thus generated were analysed as will be outlined in section 1.9.

1.8 INSTRUMENTS USED FOR DATA COLLECTION

1.8.1 Definition of data collection instrument

Twining, Heller, Nussbaum and Tsai (2017:42) define an instrument as a tool or technique that is used to generate specific data in a qualitative research. A research instrument is a tool designed to extract data on a topic of interest from the research participants (Hashemnezhad 2015:59). Goodell, Stage and Cooke (2016:581) describe an instrument as a tool in qualitative research for gathering personal experiences of participants and record the impressions as data. Taber (2018:1) defines an instrument as a tool that is used by participants to explore a phenomenon of interest in qualitative research.

1.8.2 Description of and justification for choosing instruments

I used interviews and focus group discussions, audio-recorders and electronic documents as instruments for data generation. In the first instance, an appointment was secured with the principal telephonically, to request to use the school as a research site. On arrival at the school, the purpose of the research and methodology to be used were outlined to the principal. Emails outlining the research aim and methodology used, as well as the invitation letters, were forwarded to the participants. A one-on-one probe on the research topic was conducted with the principal and the SES. Probing questions and participant responses from one-on-one discussions

provided rich data, because participants narrated their lived experiences, beliefs and feelings in relation to the research objectives (Stofer 2019:4).

A focus group interview is a planned conversation that is spearheaded by a researcher, who guides a small group of stakeholders to respond to questions focused on the objectives of the research (Krueger & Casey 2015:506). Focus group discussions on the interaction among a group of participants explored the collection of deep, strongly held beliefs, experiences and perspectives on the guidelines to improve implementation of WSE at schools (Carey & Asbury 2016:17). In qualitative research, cooperation and teamwork among the research participants are ingredients, as espoused by Viygotsky's SCT, to achieve the objectives of the research (Yusof & Mohamad 2018:2061).

Wibeck, Hansson and Anshelm (2015:25) corroborate the view of Krueger and Casey by indicating that a focus group interview as a facilitated discussion among the members of a small group of which the members are relevant to a study that wishes to achieve an in-depth analysis and sense-making of the research topic. The open-ended questions asked during focus group interviews were appropriate for eliciting useful information, and they assisted in maximising the narrative details provided by the participants (Brubacher, Powell, Skouteris & Guadagno 2015:96). Participants were able to construct their social world through reporting their lived experiences and beliefs on the best way to explore guidelines to improve WSE at schools.

The rationale for using the focus group discussions, as posited by Rosenthal (2016:510), is that semi-structured focus group discussions, with open-ended questions, can capture the in-depth experiences of co-researchers. According to Constantinou, Georginou and Perdikogianni (2017:573), free attitude interviews assist participants voice their experiences and knowledge freely, thus, in this case, giving them a deeper understanding of processes for exploring guidelines to improve WSE implementation at schools. Krueger and Casey (2015:510) corroborate the assertion by Contantinou *et al.* that focus-group discussions offer a permissive and non-threatening environment that encourages participants to air their views and opinions freely.

The discussions that took place during the meetings and social interactions of participants were audio-recorded for further analysis. Permission was sought from the

participants before discussions during the meetings were recorded. Minutes, memos and notes of meetings were also used as sources of data in this research.

1.9 DATA ANALYSIS

I used Teun van Dijk's critical discourse analysis (CDA) to analyse data generated during focus group discussions. CDA was used to discourage domination, abuse of power and social inequality during social interaction of research participants (Tannen, Hamilton & Schiffrin 2015:466). CDA views study participants as having equal status in relation to the properties of text, talk and communication during data analysis.

CDA supported the research in exploring the connection between education practices and social culture. CDA was used to analyse the influence of teachers' ideologies and perspectives on teaching practice through the implementation of WSE (Mullet 2018:117). For data coding, the textual level was used to attach meaning to the text, while discursive practice was applied for the interpretation and transformation of text, and sociological analysis constructed social information as a shared product among the co-researchers (Amoli 2016:658).

CDA uses linguistic analysis to attach meaning to texts and talk provided in the in-depth interviews of the participants in the research process. Recorded versions of interviews were transcribed into text. This is in line with Van Dijk's opinion that CDA supports the collaborative action of co-researchers in using spoken and written language as texts to elicit categories in the data. From the expression of ideas resulting from the participants' arguments during interviews, the categories were subsequently coded according to themes emerging from the data (Siregar, Rahmadiyah & Siregar 2021:52).

1.10 VALUE OF THE RESEARCH

The study sought to explore and reveal the debilitating lived experiences of teachers and learners on school premises, which, if not addressed timeously, could prevent schools from becoming sites of excellence (Maitlis 2017:319). Presently, WSE at schools is perceived as a time-consuming programme that lacks value for education practice. Teachers treat WSE as a process of compliance through completion and submission of paperwork. Involvement of all stakeholders of a school community,

inside and outside the school, through collaborative engagement that encompasses in-depth narratives and ethnographic immersion, could assist in increasing awareness of the value of the WSE process.

Through an exploration of guidelines to improve WSE implementation at schools, the study intended to educate stakeholders about the guidelines of WSE and instil a sense of ownership of the programme. Exploring guidelines emerging from the study presented all the stakeholders with an opportunity to gain valuable knowledge and skills on how best district offices, SMTs, teachers and parents could improve the implementation of WSE at schools. Using stakeholder social interaction, as complemented by SCT, the participants learned that learning was socially situated, and the construction of knowledge could happen in the presence of other participants (Richards, Bebeau, Sarnoff, Stewart, Thomas & Legg 2019:511).

The envisaged guidelines intend to reinforce current WSE tools. The senior education specialist, SMT members, teachers and parents acquired new skills and aptitudes that consequently became experiential knowledge. The explored guidelines complemented the WSE processes for the provision of high-quality teaching and learning (Van Schalkwyk, Leibowitz, Herman & Farmer 2015:4). Teachers and learners alike are the instant beneficiaries of the guidelines to improve implementation of WSE, once they are put in practice during teaching and learning. Crow, Day and Möller (2017:270) suggest that the professional dimension of a good principal reflects social and policy expectations on the professional development of teachers. The principal represents the Department of Education at school level. In the context of this study, the principal was expected to implement WSE policies and guidelines to the fullest in order to achieve success regarding teacher development and the school as a whole. The guidelines we explored are vital to the principal and their team for augmenting what is lacking in current policies.

I also anticipated that the study would empower parents, since education is a societal issue. Central to SCT is the belief that empowerment of parents to collaboratively engage in school matters elevates their status as equal partners in research (Turner & Maschi 2015:152). The explored guidelines can assist the Free State Department of Education to review and revamp policies on WSE, in order to eliminate negativity associated with WSE at schools.

1.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Letters requesting clearance and permission to conduct this research were sent to the ethics committee and title registration committees of the University of the Free State respectively. Furthermore, letters requesting permission to conduct research at a selected secondary school as a research site were also be forwarded to the Faculty of Education of the University of the Free State and the research office of the Department of Basic Education of the Free State province. In addition, permission to access teachers and parents of the selected school was sought from the principal.

The study protected the rights of participants and the school that took part in this research. Participation of co-researchers was purely voluntary and consensual. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the research at any time. Confirmation of their willingness to freely participate in the research was obtained by informing them about the purpose of the study, and their completion of a written consent form (Øye, Sorensen & Glasdam 2016:456). Participants were treated with respect, dignity and care through all the stages of the research (Pearson, Albon & Hubball 2015:3). Co-researchers' autonomy as human beings was respected, and they were treated equally during the course of the research (Rahamn, Lee & Xiao 2017:107) The research was conducted in a conducive and non-threatening school environment that protected the participants from any possible harm and ensured anonymity (Ketefian 2015:165). Memos outlining the purpose of the research and protocol to be followed were made available to each participant in advance.

Co-researchers were assured that their credentials would be concealed to maintain anonymity. Names of participants and the participating secondary school are disguised as pseudonyms to assure anonymity. In order to ensure confidentiality, data were safeguarded by the removal of any identifiers (Eyisi 2016:98). Regarding data storage, a protocol was communicated to the participants prior to data generation and analysis. Furthermore, all qualitative data in the form of transcripts, notes, and recorded versions are locked up in my home to prevent any form of unauthorised access. In upholding good practices, as contained in a Declaration of Helsinki, a meeting was convened that informed participants fully about the dissemination of the research findings (Harriss & Atkinson 2016:1124).

1.12 DEFINITIONS AND DISCUSSIONS OF OPERATIONAL CONCEPTS

This section provides definitions and discussions of operational concepts that formed the cornerstones of the study, as indicated by the title. The definitions and discussions will clarify the roles of key concepts in the study and how they supported the achievement of the objectives of the research project. The focal operational concepts are exploration, guidelines, improve implementation, whole-school evaluation and secondary school.

1.12.1 Exploration stage

The exploration stage was a stage of the study in which the co-researchers planned to discover or learn about the challenges that hindered the successful implementation of WSE at schools as social structures (Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus 2020). Central to the objectives of the research project was that participants, for the purposes of discovery, intended to investigate the guidelines as ways to improve the implementation of WSE at secondary schools (Dictionary.com 2021). From the perspectives of the district office and school, it was crucial to support the participants in their roles, to enable the research project to achieve the intended objectives. The advantages of this stage, according to Jones, Edwards and Hounsome (2014:2), is that it allows in-depth observation and investigation of the envisaged guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools, in order to enhance understanding and to put results into a meaningful context.

This stage of the research afforded co-researchers an opportunity to probe why and what are challenges facing the implementation of the guidelines successfully and how best the study can inquire about new guidelines to augment the existing ones. In order to achieve these objectives, the study delved into the meanings, experiences and views of the participants on the school premises, as their natural setting (Bush, Amechi & Persky 2020:334). Such a rigorous approach to this qualitative research assisted in capturing co-researchers' meanings via rich, thick descriptions (Bush et al. 2020:335).

1.12.2 Guidelines

In a work situation, personnel need information on how to perform their duties satisfactorily and diligently. Such information must be clear and succinct in order for an organisation to fulfil its mandate. A guideline refers to information intended to

advise people on how something should be done (Cambridge Dictionary 2021). Guidelines entail collective ideas and opinions of stakeholders on how to act in relation to the challenges that impede the smooth running of WSE at schools (Collins Cobuild Advanced American English Dictionary 2016). Guidelines are official and collaborative recommendations or principles that embrace knowledge production that informs policy decisions (Heimbach, Kulik, Finn, Sirlin, Abecassis, Roberts, Zhu, Murad & Marrero 2018:358). Through robust and reliable research, participants explored guidelines that sought relevancy for the daily implementation of WSE activities that would lead to an improvement of a school as a whole (World Health Organization 2018:18).

Webster's New World College Dictionary (2010) defines guidelines as standards or norms by which research participants embark on a course of action regarding the determination of a policy. Guidelines provide a framework for designing specific and detailed WSE protocols (World Health Organization 2015:16). The protocols are earmarked for effective and improved implementation of WSE on school premises, as societal structures. According to Kredo, Bernhardsson, Machingaidze, Young, Louw, Ochodo, and Grimmer (2016:123), guidelines are a convenient way of packaging evidence and presenting recommendations to policy decisionmakers on the best way for schools to eliminate the challenges of implementing WSE effectively. In improving the effectiveness and quality of work rendered by all stakeholders at schools, participants sought to collaboratively explore guidelines against which the overall school performance could be judged.

Guidelines are systematically developed statements that are intended to incorporate the experiences, opinions and beliefs of co-researchers on knowledge construction, to effectively improve the implementation of WSE at schools (Tetreault, Nater, Garwood, Badhiwala, Wilson and Fehlings 2019:53). Steel, Abdelhamid, Stokes, Edwards, Fleetcroft, Howe and Qureshi (2014:1251) define guidelines as recommendations that optimise the quality of work rendered by schools through the use of performance indicators. Guidelines based on a rigorous review of the best available evidence, and the provision of recommendations, was expected to facilitate decision-making among the participants (Tetreault et al. 2019:54). Boeck, Castellani and Elborn (2014:496) state that guidelines assist to determine a course of action by streamlining the implementation of WSE into sound practice, on and off the school premises. Stakeholders were capacitated to carry out their duties successfully in

accordance with the prescripts of the explored guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools.

Based on the narratives that emerged from the review of the literature, guidelines need to provide a comprehensive description and guidance on how specific tasks are to be carried out in a school setting (Gorna, MacDermott, Rainer, O'Hara, Evans, Aygen, Nutland, Rogers and Hastie 2021:456). In order to avoid uncertainty and confusion among policymakers and stakeholders, as decision-makers, the explored guidelines must enhance quality assurance and practicality on and off school campuses. All stakeholders earmarked for the effective implementation of the explored guidelines must engage in collaborative endeavours that benefit the schools as professional spaces.

1.12.3 Improve implementation

Implementation is an action in response to a call for change (May, Johnson & Finch 2016:3). Participants in this research collaborated on exploring the guidelines, to inspire other stakeholders to perform their responsibilities differently and to effect changes in the school community. The call for change seeks to initiate and sustain a commitment by co-researchers to explore the guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools, as a collective action. As explained by Lindblad and Guerrero (2020:478), active involvement of participants, as knowledge creators, in the research project will help to facilitate the implementation of the explored guidelines. In assuming their various roles as key players in the research process, participants will take the lead in coordinating the explored guidelines and the implementation process pertinent to the objectives of the study.

According to Hull, Goulding, Khadjesari, Davis, Healey, Bakolis and Sevdalis (20119:7), to improve and implement WSE successfully at schools, the research team needed to identify the contextual factors that were likely to impede implementation efforts. Identifying barriers responsible for impediments to the improved implementation of WSE at schools assisted the research team to devise implementation strategies to overcome these challenges. The research team explored guidelines that suggested solutions to the challenges schools encounter in effectively implementing the WSE. In doing so, the research team was in line with responses to the "what" questions in the research questions of the study.

Implementation appeals to teachers, parents and learners to put the plan into operation, as recommended by the explored guidelines (Cambridge English Dictionary 2021). The revised and revamped guidelines will assist in invigorating these stakeholders to lead schools to become centres of excellence through active and collaborative participation. The Oxford English Dictionary (2021) defines implementation as an obligation of stakeholders to put an agreement or plan into practice in order to achieve the desired goals.

There is a need for the district office, as the external supervisory body, to dispatch stakeholders to monitor the progress on WSE implementation on school premises. For schools to accomplish the effective implementation of WSE programmes and, hence, to achieve their objectives, the district office and SMT members needed to offer teachers and SGB members the necessary support. Various stakeholders need to understand their roles, in order to achieve success on the effective implementation of WSE at schools.

1.12.4 Whole-school evaluation

WSE is a collaborative and transparent process that entails guidelines of evaluation that are known to the participants prior to the process of evaluation (Msezane 2020:721). Madikida (2016:14) defines WSE as an element of the quality assurance system of schools. Metu (2017:1) explains WSE as the process that "monitors and assesses the quality, economy, efficiency and effectiveness of the education system provided by the state in recognised schools and centres for education".

According to the Oxford English Dictionary (2021), WSE involves making a judgement about the amount or value of assessment of work done by a school. The WSE is a holistic rating of school performance, which informs the type of support a school needs (Collins English Dictionary 2021). Cambridge English Dictionary (2021) explains WSE as the process by which the importance or overall quality performance and information of a school as a societal structure is judged.

WSE is a collaborative, reflective process that encompasses both external and internal school reviews regarding school improvement (Skerritt, O'Hara, Brown, McNamara & O'Brien 2021:3). This intellectual document is based on the premise that policy enactment includes the creative processes of interpretation and translation, which support transforming the abstract policy ideas into contextual practices (Skerritt et al.

2021:4). The implication is that both the interpretation and translation embrace meaning-making processes and the practical implementation of the explored guidelines by stakeholders who ensure quality assurance at schools. Teachers, parents and learners on school premises were expected to translate the written texts of the envisaged guidelines into actions that actualise the objectives of the study.

According to Goldberg, Sklad, Elfrink, Schreurs, Bohlmeijer and Clarke (2019:756), WSE aims to integrate skills development into daily interactions and practices, using collaborative efforts of key role players such as SMT members, teachers, learners, and parents. The involvement of these key role players is sought because they are hands-on implementers of the WSE programme, on and off school premises. Hunt and King (2015:10) define WSE as a multicomponent, multiyear approach that impacts positively on facets such as organisation, governance, staffing, instructional programmes, curriculum, and assessment procedures. In its current form, WSE provides school members with a shared sense of purpose through the shared responsibilities of the entire school and the surrounding community.

WSE is a quality assurance system that enables schools and external supervisors to provide an account of the performance of various schools (Department of Basic Education 2015a:1).The policy intends to improve the overall quality of education by strengthening the accountability of relevant stakeholders. By strengthening accountability and promoting functional schools, the policy seeks to offer every learner an equal opportunity to use their capabilities optimally (Department of Basic Education 2015b according to Fullan (2016:539), it is of the utmost importance that the explored guidelines were seen to embrace SMT, teachers and SGB members' capacity building, accountability, and collaboration with other school policies on the provision of quality education at schools. The involvement of parents in this study afforded the participants the opportunity to create knowledge from a social life that is in close proximity to the school. Furthermore, teacher and learner participation acts as a lens through which school performance quality is perused and measured. The inclusion of a district official in the research project centralised the expertise and support of the district office at the school premises.

A plethora of studies indicate that WSE is a school-based programme that embraces accountability, active collaboration and coordination, for the achievement of quality

education at schools (Kelcey & Shen 2016:493). Studies reveal that, for the achievement of effective implementation of WSE at schools, relevant stakeholders need to participate in collaborative teams that support school-based programmes intended to achieve holistic school change. The expertise of parents from the community may make valuable contributions regarding a variety of experiences and beliefs. Parental involvement in the research represents the ideas and expectations of the community each school serves. The reviewed literature also suggests that teachers, who represent the professional wing, are expected to endorse teamwork in school policies. Teacher teamwork and collaboration are indispensable for exploring guidelines for the effective implementation of WSE at schools. Therefore, it stands to reason that the envisaged guidelines will be viewed as a wind of change to leverage support for stakeholders to fulfil their mandate with regard to the implementation of WSE at schools.

1.12.5 Secondary school

American Heritage Dictionary (2011) defines a school as an institution at which young people are equipped with skills for future use. A school is an institution for the formal education of young learners, adults and young workers (Columbia Electronic Encyclopaedia 2013). According to the Oxford English Dictionary (2021), a school is an “institution for educating children”.

The South African Schools Act (SASA) (quoted by Maithufi 1997:4) refers to the school as “a public or an independent institution which registers forty leaners in one or more grades between grade zero and grade twelve”. According to Tomazetti and Schlickmann (2016:333), a secondary school seeks to strengthen the basic education acquired in the primary school, in preparation for entry into higher education, and ensuring readiness for social life and the labour world. The Encyclopaedia Britannica (2015) regards the secondary school as an institution of teaching and learning that offers a formal education for children between the ages of 11 and 18. Capel, Leask and Younie (2019:1) posit that a secondary school is a professional space that renders a body of knowledge which shapes the values, rights and responsibilities of young people. In the context of this study, the exploration of the guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at secondary schools in the Free State offered participants an

opportunity to hear their voices and further understand the situation from their perspectives (Strand 2019:14).

1.13 LAYOUT OF CHAPTERS

In pursuit of achieving the aim and objectives of the study, the chapters will unfold as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction and background to the study

This chapter gave an introduction and provided the background to the problem that necessitated this study. The aim and objectives of the study, as well as a brief explanation of the SCT and collaboration theory, as theoretical frameworks that underpin this study, were also presented. The study also explained the research design and methodology, data generation, selection of the research participants, data analysis, the value of the research and ethical considerations applicable to this study.

Chapter 2: Theoretical framework

The chapter will outline the theoretical framework that underpins the study, and discuss the origin, objectives, and components of the theoretical framework, a justification for exploring the guidelines improving implementation of WSE, as well as the need to explore the envisaged guidelines. The principles, ontological and epistemological aspects of SCT, as well as the role of the researcher and the relationship of the researcher with co-researchers will also be discussed. The chapter will conclude with definitions and discussions of operational concepts.

Chapter 3: Review of the related literature

The chapter will introduce literature on guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at secondary schools. The related literature will be reviewed and discussed in line with the objectives of the study.

Chapter 4: Research methodology and design

The chapter will explain how the study responded to the research question by using PAR as an approach and methodology. The chapter will discuss the research design as outlined by PAR principles. Chapter 4 will also present the method and processes

that were used by co-researchers for data generation and data analysis, namely CDA for the latter.

Chapter 5: Data analysis, presentation, and interpretation

This chapter will present the data analysis and discussions emanating from the data that were generated by the research participants, on guidelines to improve implementation of WSE at secondary schools. The study used three levels of CDA for data interpretation and analysis.

Chapter 6: Discussion of findings, conclusions, and recommendations

This chapter will present an overview of the study, with the intention to encourage the implementation of its findings and recommendations. Chapter 6 will summarise the findings and provide recommendations that address the objectives of the study. It will also outline the limitations of the study and make recommendations for future research.

1.14 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

Chapter 1 outlined the background to the study, explained the researcher's interest in completing the research, provided the main research question, and subsidiary questions and the theoretical frameworks underpinning the research. It also reflected on how the research was designed, and the data generated and analysed. The value of the research and ethical considerations were also outlined. Finally, the chapter provided a brief layout of the chapters to follow. The next chapter will address the theoretical frameworks used by the study, in detail.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS: SOCIO-CONSTRUCTIVIST THEORY AND COLLABORATION THEORY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The study explored guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at Free State secondary schools, with SCT and collaboration theory interchangeably as frameworks. The two theories complemented each other regarding knowledge generation on how guidelines to improve WSE at schools could be explored and effectively implemented. I shall outline the origins and objectives of SCT and collaboration theory. Furthermore, I will expound on the ontology and epistemology of the two theories, as well as on the role of the researcher and co-researchers. This chapter will close with discussions and explanations of operational concepts as reflected in dictionaries and the technical literature, as well as explanations of how they fit into this study.

2.1.1 Historical origins of socio-constructivist theory and collaboration theory

The SCT originated in the ideas of Russian psychologist, Lev Vygotsky, who espoused the ideology that human development is socially located, and knowledge construction happens through interaction with others (McKinley 2015:184-185). The emergence of constructivism occurred during a time of education reform in the USA, which emphasised individual sense making of the world (Harasim 2017:12). Vygotsky's socio-constructivism supports Piaget's theory that cognition and development are socially and culturally embedded, rather than individually situated. One of the components of Vygotskian theory is the notion of the ZPD, which regards the researcher as a human mediator in the facilitation of research and assists participants in an independent exploration of guidelines to improve implementation of WSE at schools (Banda & Demani 2015:10).

Jerome Bruner, a supporter of Vygotsky's socio-constructivism, uses scaffolding to emphasise that constructed knowledge and reality are culturally rooted (Banda &

Demiani 2015:11). In the context of this study, this notion implies that the participants used data that were based on their beliefs, experiences and opinions to transform the school culture using the strategies recommended in the envisaged guidelines. Other supporters of SCT, such as Mutarana, Varela and Capra, support the premise that communication is a process that is interconnected with human action and mental activity (Morales-Lopez & Floyd 2017:230). The implication is that co-researchers communicated and discussed issues among themselves and attached meanings to the emerging categories and themes from the transcribed texts during data analysis, thus, upholding the principles of CDA.

The term collaboration comes from the Latin word *collaborare*, meaning to work in conjunction with others to cooperate (Robutti, Cusi, Clark‑Wilson, Jaworski, Chapman, Esteley, Goos, Isoda & Joubert 2016:652). Collaboration theory as rooted in the work of Piaget and Vigotsky emphasises "a situation in which two or more people learn or attempt to learn something together" (Lai 2011:4). An explicit premise of the theory is that such a partnership endorses a phenomenon of shared views on decision-making regarding problem-solving strategies.

According to Pappas (2014:1), other social theories, such those of Allport, Watson, Shaw and Meadow, contributed to the development of collaboration theory. These theorists assert that collaboration enhances teamwork and the team spirit of participants, towards the achievement of a common goal when they work as a group. Brisbois and De Loe (2016:1) articulate that collaboration theory encourages face-to-face interaction of participants in research, in order to arrive at informed decisions based on shared knowledge. Lupu (2011:15) posits that, in collaborations with other participants in research, each member had an opportunity to engage in ideas exchange through reflective dialogue. In that way, collaboration contributed to the growth of co-researchers after their exposure to an exploration of diverse viewpoints, and the requirement to defend their ideas.

The two hybrid theoretical frameworks were adopted by this study, because each theoretical framework complements and reinforces the other. While SCT encompasses construction of social knowledge in the presence of other community members as a solution to a problem, collaboration theory explicitly embraces the working together of members to arrive at a shared and informed decision to solve a

problem. I used SCT in the study to “lay emphasis on the facilitation of knowledge construction through connecting new concepts with prior belief” among the participants (Asamoah & Oheneba-Sakyi 2017:3). One of the reasons for deciding to use SCT in this study is to indicate that knowledge was actively constructed by the participants, and not passively received from the environment (Kumar 2012:1). It is against this background that I used these hybrid theoretical frameworks interchangeably in the context of this study.

2.2 OBJECTIVES OF SOCIO-CONSTRUCTIVIST THEORY AND COLLABORATION THEORY

The SCT is grounded in the premise that knowledge construction occurs in an individual‘s social world through social interactions (Mogashoa 2014:52). The research environment is expected to stimulate the participants’ curiosity, so that they narrate their ideas, opinions and lived experiences in relation to the objectives of the study. Through the facilitation role of a researcher, constructivism guides the co-researchers in an exploration of instructional strategies to be incorporated in the guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools. In this section, the objectives of SCT and collaboration theory will be expounded.

2.2.1 Socio-constructivist theory is interactive

Shah (2019:49) asserts that SCT ensures refinement of informants’ knowledge, and development of their inquiry skills through critical thinking, which subsequently leads to the emergence of ideas and opinions on the research questions. The support of SCT enhances the notion that the study embraces the participants’ perceptions and shares their meanings, to develop insights into an exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools, as a social challenge.

The SCT emphasises that knowledge evolution occurs as a result of a process of negotiation and evaluation (Liu, Hedges & Cooper 2023:1). Informants’ learning in this type of qualitative approach becomes interactive, as it builds on what they already know about WSE processes. In that way, participants were afforded the opportunity to

reconcile their previous knowledge with new knowledge, and they also questioned the feasibility of their strategies to correctly inform the envisaged guidelines.

In turn, collaboration theory, through collaborative learning, influenced and shaped the course of this study by promoting participant collaboration in small groups in order to optimise members' own and each other's learning (Le *et al.* 2018:103). The rationale behind participant collaboration in this study was to foster collaborative skills that contributed to trust building and sharing of useful and rich data, in order to respond to the research questions successfully. Collaborative participant engagements enhanced the critical thinking skills needed for data analysis during the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at the school.

One of the reasons for the application of collaboration theory for learning by the study was to improve the co-researchers' metacognitive skills. The development of metacognitive skills was an antecedent to tackling an exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools through the application of appropriate skills and proposing strategies as solutions (Zheng, Zhang & Gaysi 2019:530). Collaboration of research stakeholders ensured monitoring of comprehension of texts and themes as developed from data analysis, and self-evaluation of progress towards the completion of the task at hand. Gan, Menkhoff and Smith (2015:1) state that, through the creation of positive interdependence, group accountability and promotion of social interaction among the participants on a face-to- face basis, collaboration theory seeks to embrace the importance of working together to achieve a common goal and make an informed decision. Since collaboration theory supports the notion that people do not exist in isolation (Malek, Laroussi & Ghezala 2019:260), I encouraged participants to work together in an interdependent manner to generate data to respond to the research questions.

2.2.2 Socio-constructivist theory embraces social activities

A premise of socio-constructivist theory is that learning takes place in a social environment. The secondary school that was chosen as a social environment is regarded as a tool through which the learning of participants on an exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE was mediated. According to Hall (2007:96), for the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools, as a professional and social activity to be soundly facilitated, the interaction

of co-researchers used mediatory tools, such as language and texts, to respond to the research questions. SCT regards such a school environment as a ZPD, because social interaction among the informants as social beings while they explore guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE takes place on school premises.

The justification for choosing SCT is that teachers could, through this theory, voice their contributions to the envisaged guidelines, and such discourses would construct knowledge in a social context in interaction with other research participants (El-Deghaidy *et al.* 2015:3). In the context of this study, the discourse in the social context sought to afford co-researchers the opportunity to share previous knowledge, skills and beliefs that were pertinent to the research questions. Engagement of participants in such a supportive social context links knowledge construction with a willingness to reflect on sound research procedures for exploring guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE, in order to create effective schools.

Schoor, Nariss and Korndle (2015:9) regard collaboration theory as influencing the collaboration of informants; informants externalise skills, beliefs and opinions on the research questions to others, so that receivers internalise them. The exchange of these concepts occurs within a socially supporting environment. Research participants, as social constructivists, construct knowledge collaboratively in processes of information sharing, negotiation, and discussion (Zheng *et al.* 2016:3).

2.2.3 Socio-constructivist theory endorses cultural and social transformation

The participating secondary school acted as a research site for the design of an investigation space for the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools. Once such an investigation space has been designed, the research participants can work in collaborative, causal interaction with the problem at hand, to achieve the testing and determine the viability of the radical ideas involved in the exploration of the envisaged guidelines that were deliberated on in this social space (Eronen 2019:31).

By using SCT, society's subjective meaning is viewed as a product of the cultural frame of social, linguistic, discursive and symbolic practices (Galbin 2015:48). The collaborative interactions of participants at a school, as a social space, contributed to

the formation of concepts and mental representations of their actions during focus group discussions. Vygotsky (as quoted by Mcleod, S.A 2018:5) states that “the importance of cultural and social context for learning on cognitive development of participants stems from social interactions from the guided learning” as they co-construct knowledge based on the envisaged guidelines.

A fundamental premise of SCT is that knowledge is a human construction. The knowledge creation that occurs through social and environmental interactions contributes to knowledge exchange among the participants in a mutually created social context (Thomas, Menon, Boruff, Rodriguez & Ahmed 2014:2). El-Deghaidy *et al.* (2014:1540) corroborate this statement by pointing out that SCT ensures the voices of the voiceless are heard in a social context where learning occurs through discourse with others. This assertion implies that the discourses and interactions among the participants in a social context focuses on skills, beliefs and opportunities for reflection and feedback, as espoused by PAR. To facilitate a sound study, I ensured the social environment was welcoming and non-threatening for all the participants. Creating an unthreatening social environment at a research site instilled confidence and a sense of belonging in the participants to narrate their life experiences and opinions on the best way the guidelines could be explored.

2.2.4 Value of language in socio-constructivist theory

Language plays a significant role in shaping thought during social and collaborative interactions. Since SCT emphasises the importance of collaboration, language is regarded as a tool that ensures the cognitive presence for participants to construct meaning through sustained communication (Gil-Jaurena, Domínguez Figaredo, Theeraroungchaisri and Yamada 2018:53). In active engagements in relation to critical discourses, the use of language contributes to communicating the beliefs, values and opinions of the participants. Through language, researcher and co-researchers were able to communicate and reflect on the viability of strategies, which can be incorporated in the envisaged guidelines (Gil-Jaurena *et al.* 2018:54). This implies that dialogic interactions give the study participants impetus to reach consensus and to share meanings using language.

Vygotsky (in Panhwar, Ansari and Ansari 2016:183) views language as crucial for the intellectual capacity of stakeholders in interpsychological development, which refers

to the communication between them. Language is a tool that participants used when communicating and exchanging ideas, opinions and experiences regarding the guidelines to be explored. Socrates (as cited by Amineh and Asl 2015:9) believed that, for learning to take place in a teaching–learning situation, teachers and learners need to talk among themselves, and interpret and construct hidden knowledge by asking questions. In the context of this study, the cognitive stance of SCT fortified the importance of language in the social interaction of the research participants further. Co-researchers were able to use language as medium through which their life experiences made sense and emerged from their discussions in social interactions regarding the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools.

The collaborative learning theory, furthermore, embraces the use of language in communicative interactions of individuals among them. According to Roselli (2016:258), an individual consciousness that emerges from such a communicative interaction is a social interaction that is mediated by language. The use of language strengthens the argument that, through collaboration and teamwork, research members were able to explore guidelines, inclusive of roles and strategies of different stakeholders, to improve the implementation of WSE at schools. Having discussed the value of language according to SCT, the problem-solving nature of SCT will be outlined in section 2.3.6.

2.2.5 Problem-solving nature of sociocultural theory

In this study, SCT was complemented by collaboration theory, in order to enhance its influence in the research. While collaboration theory proponents put more emphasis on the working together of participants to achieve a common goal, SCT narratives view such collaborative interactions as occurring in a socially constructed environment, through communication among the stakeholders. It is against this background that Griffin and Care (2015:38) define collaborative problem-solving as a means of approaching a problem responsively by working together and exchanging ideas. For the purpose of this study, the participants engaged in sharing social and cognitive skills in collaborative interactions. While social skills enhance participation and willingness of co-researchers to share information, cognitive skills ensure that the envisaged

guidelines, as the social challenge at hand, are explored through the employment of relevant reasons and responses (Griffin & Care 2015:42).

SCT and collaboration theory are compatible with each other. This implies that the two theoretical frameworks can coexist or occur together without conflict. In establishing social norms that encompass participants' responsibility to suggest solutions based on life experiences and opinions in collaborative social interactions and discussions with fellow co-researchers, SCT is a prerequisite for enacting problem-solving strategies (Van den Heuvel-Panhuizen 2020:230). Collaborative theory authenticates the learning experiences of participants in productive interactions, such articulations, questioning, explaining and justification of opinions and argumentations (Häkkinen, Järvela, Mäkitälo-Siegl, Ahonen, Näykki & Valtonen 2017:9). Collaboration in such activities results in the construction and sharing of knowledge, which contributes to the creation of joint understanding and shared meaning-making. According to Polk (2015:112), the ability of SCT to support collaboration that embraces a shared purpose, and the identification of roles and strategies among the participants, were regarded as crucial components to assist to explore guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools.

From an interpretivist perspective, in a research project, participants' previous knowledge is integrated with new knowledge. A research project presents the research questions to participants with the intention of addressing a social challenge. According to Sharma (2015:80), co-researchers who are grounded in SCT are expected to share, justify and discuss the problem-solving strategies in their group discourses. The researcher's role is to guide the proceedings, such that the research is conducted with participants who collaboratively achieve the objectives of the research. SCT emphasises collective reasoning and evidence-based research, which focuses on social action to bring about the solutions to the research problem (Chevalier & Buckles 2019:4). In the context of this study, I facilitated the research in collaboration with the participants in order to explore the guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools.

2.3 JUSTIFICATION FOR USING SOCIOCONSTRUCTIVIST THEORY AND COLLABORATIVE THEORY FOR THE STUDY

The SCT was viewed as a relevant and suitable theoretical framework for this study, as it promotes a qualitative approach that supports groupwork, discussions, negotiation of meanings, and knowledge construction (Bourgoin 2012:1). SCT emphasises that feedback should be dialogic and help to develop the participants' ability to monitor, evaluate and regulate their learning in dealing with the exploration of the guidelines within a social field (Ajjawi & Boud 2017:252). SCT explores feedback from social interactions as a dialogical process focusing on artefacts in setting up a social field from which human–human and human–material activities could be understood.

One of the reasons why SCT influenced this study is because of its stance on allowing the research participants to communicate their thoughts and feelings on the research questions in the presence of their peers within a social context (Sutton & Austin 2015:226). The nature of collaborative interactions of stakeholders enabled the development and ascription of meaning to their experiences. Such social interactions were beneficial to the co-researchers, to their work together, and for creating a motivating social environment to respond to the "how", "which" and "what" questions of the research project. The collaborations of participants in social contexts investigated whether it is possible to improve the implementation of WSE, which was expected to contribute to the effectiveness of the school as a whole. Greater effectiveness of schools will be achieved by exploring relevant strategies that support the guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE. In order to address the "what" and "which" questions in a socially constructed environment, SCT ensured that the participants discussed among themselves the opportunities and strengths brought by the roles of various stakeholders to the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools.

The relevance and suitability of SCT for this project was enhanced further by considering the strong role that was played by the language in the social interactions of participants. Weber (2016:87) posits that SCT supports social reality being accessed through language. This was evident and enhanced by the application of CDA, during which participants used textual analysis to attach meanings to texts

emanating from their discourse. The sociological analysis through language in their discourse during social interactions assisted the co-researchers to endorse the strategies and roles, which considered their efforts as a commonly shared product (Amoli 2016:658). Such group-based collaborative stakeholder engagements afforded them opportunities to discuss their views, opinions and suggestions, which subsequently contributed to conversations and lead to agreements on the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools.

The SCT embraces the notion that the participants construct their own understanding and knowledge of their world through experiences and by reflecting on those experiences. As for the constructivists, co-researchers remain active throughout the research process by noting the relevant elements in the new learning experiences, which can be used to modify the knowledge needed to respond to the research questions (Sarita 2017:184). The rationale behind choosing SCT for this study is that it embeds participant learning in the social experience through collaboration. In this way, SCT encourages ownership of the project and gives participants a voice in the social leaning process, because the co-researchers were actively involved, and not mere passive listeners.

Pereira and Sithole (2019:3) assert that, in constructivist research, participants work primarily in groups, and the emphasis is mostly on social and communication skills, and collaboration and exchange of ideas. Literature by Vallejo (2015:5) supports the claim that SCT offered each individual participant an opportunity to share their experiences pertaining to the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools. Brothers (2016:7) contends that participants can acquire new knowledge directly related to observing others within the context of social interactions, experiences and collaboration. The role of the researcher is that of a facilitator of the research proceedings, rather than an instructor. Through a constructivist lens, I facilitated the research such that the co-researchers were able to construct meaning from the texts in their collaborative conversations. The constructed meaning of the social interactions informed the creation of the themes that responded to the research questions.

2.4 FEATURES OF SOCIO-CONSTRUCTIVIST THEORY

Interpretivism is a theory that equates learning with the creation of meaning from experience. Interpretivists support the notion that the human mind can filter an input from the world to produce its own unique reality (Ertmer & Newby 2013:54). One of the prominent tenets of SCT is the belief that humans create meaning, as opposed to merely acquiring it. Interpretivists also contend that the creation of meaning from knowledge obtained from lived experiences happens within a social environment supported by culture. Alt (2014:3) asserts that SCT perceives the individual as an active and responsible agent in the collaborative interactions of knowledge construction. In this instance, knowledge creation is considered to be a product of dialogic stakeholder interaction; this enabled all the stakeholders to engage in social interactions and collaborations within the school as a social environment. The social culture of the school also assisted in the creation of a social environment to facilitate a successful project through collaborative participation. The social interactions and collaborative engagements of participants on school premises, as a social environment, assisted in skills sharing regarding the role of and strategies for the exploration of the guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools.

According to SCT, learning on the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE in social contexts is a social activity. Onyesolu, Nwasor, Ositanwosu and Iwegbuna (2013:41) suggest that such learning among the participants in a research project is collaborative, since their interaction is based on a shared understanding that is based on a common interest. The intersubjectivity of individual stakeholders in a research project aids in extending understanding of information to other group members. According to Noorloos, Taylor, Bakker and Derry (2014:324), SCT embraces the notion that the participant learning in the research cannot be segregated from social practices and must take place within certain communities of discourse. This feature of SCT implies that the creation of knowledge among the stakeholders on the exploration of the envisaged guidelines cannot be divorced from the social practices of the communities that the school serves. Since SCT regards the school as a professional and social space, the research project offered the co-researchers an opportunity to explore the guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE, such that the final product supports the provision of quality education for the learners and the community at large.

The SCT supports the stance that knowledge is not innate, passively absorbed, or invented, but constructed by the participants in the presence of peers through interaction with reality in a social environment (Topolovčan & Mativevič 2016:80). This feature of SCT embraces the notion that knowledge is not an inborn concept but is socially constructed. A human being needs to be in interaction with reality in a social environment to construct knowledge from their personal experiences. Since this study advocates a Vygotskian (i.e. socioconstructivist) approach, literature revealed that, an exploration of the guidelines to ensure the improved the implementation of WSE at schools, is facilitated through a collaborative effort by a research group, in this case consisting of SMT members, teachers, parents, and district officials, with a strong emphasis on culture and context (Mhlongo, Dlamini and Khoza (2017:6). SCT, therefore, emphasises collaboration and social interaction as cornerstones from which the lived experiences of co-researchers can be scrutinised in a research group setup. In the context of this study, each participant possessed pre-knowledge and personal experiences of the school as a centre for teaching and learning. Through collaborating with other co-researchers on school premises, as the social environment of the research site, the pre-knowledge and personal experiences were intertwined as precursors in a group discussion regarding the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools.

Lefstein, Louie, Segal and Becher (2020:4) posit that one of the most crucial features of collaboration theory as used in this study is the premise that participant learning is mediated by social interaction and discourse. A plethora of meetings and group discussions, as tenets of the PAR the study is rooted in, afforded the participants opportunities to collaboratively discuss beliefs and lived experiences pertinent to this project. It is through social interaction that collaborative groups of co-researchers were able share the tacit knowledge emanating from their collaborative engagements. Godbout (2023:506) construes the role of talking during collaboration as participants' learning process and the "tool of tools" of learning. Through the use of language, research members benefited from learning how others think, and they could imitate their peers' thinking strategies. Competency in collaborative problem-solving ensures the capacity of an individual participant to respond to the research questions through sharing knowledge and skills (Andrews-Todd, Forsyth & Steinberg & Rupp 2018:239). The defining features, for instance, mutual interaction, negotiations and shared

expertise in social interactions, ensure the production of a shared research product, in regard to which group members engaged in shared decision-making and taking responsibility for the project (Fung 2010:18).

2.4.1 Role of scaffolding in sociocultural theory

Scaffolding is a technique that involves changing the level of support for learning, so that, as one of the central tenets of SCT, learning becomes an active process (Bada & Olusegun 2015:67). Social constructivists refer to scaffolding as the minimum guidance offered to participants for the construction of knowledge from their social reality (Calvo 2015:308). Trif (2015:979) posits that scaffolding is a metacognitive, strategic and procedural support that an individual participant uses to build and share skills with other participants in a research project. In the context of this study, scaffolding means the involvement of all stakeholders in understanding the challenges that affect the implementation of WSE at secondary schools, in order to negotiate and explore guidelines that can remedy the situation through stakeholder collaboration. A collaborative task, such as exploring the guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools, will help participants to develop interpersonal skills and expertise.

Scaffolding, as espoused by SCT, is relevant to this study, as it assisted co-researchers to reach a certain level of understanding, and clear objectives for the study. The quality of discourse adopted by the participants instilled confidence to share their lived experiences, beliefs and opinions relevant to the research questions of the study. The role of the researcher as a facilitator and the assistance provided through scaffolding empowered marginalised stakeholders, such as parents, to actively participate in the collaborative interactions meant for exploring the guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools.

According to SCT, the participants needed to socially interact with peers in the construction of knowledge pertinent to achieving the research objectives. The learning process that is entrenched in observation and modelling of fellow co-researchers helped in using a communicating strategy based on developing a scaffold. This enabled participants to understand that, even though the WSE is practiced in schools, there are glaring challenges that necessitate an exploration of guidelines to improve its implementation.

2.4.2 Cooperative/collaborative learning perspective

Cooperative learning characterises individuals' organisation of learning conditions in small groups with verbal interaction (Darnis & Lafont 2015:459). Cooperative learning involves the social interaction of research participants in small teams, working together to support all members in the research project (Buchs, Filippou, Pulfrey & Volpe 2017:297). Positive member interdependence and mutual responsibility regarding the research project motivated the co-researchers to work together to achieve the goals and objectives of the research. Cooperative learning, as incorporated in SCT, ensures the face-to-face interaction of participants and the development of interpersonal and small-group skills. The co-researchers, as peers in the research project, were afforded an opportunity to exchange ideas and thoughts pertaining to the objectives of the study. The exchanges of thoughts and ideas subsequently culminated in informed decision-making emanating from the collaboration of stakeholders.

Social interpretivism emphasises the need for collaborative learning. Based on social constructivist perspectives, as participants share background knowledge in collaborative activities, they negotiated meaning and built knowledge, not as individuals, but as a group (Draper 2013:6). The influence of collaborative learning as embedded in social interpretivism was further strengthened in this study by its ability to stimulate critical thinking that led to higher-level thinking by co-researchers. McKinley (2015:15) asserts that, due to its reasonable and reflective nature, in making reasonable decisions, critical thinking, as supported by SCT, encourages participants to seek alternatives in response to the objectives of the study. One of the reasons collaborative learning is considered crucial and beneficial to this study was its ability to assist in assigning roles among the research members for the development of skills, such as information recording, communication of results, orally or in writing, distribution of materials and information to group members, encouraging member participation and brainstorming (Draper 2013:9).

The SCT influenced this study by embracing the cognitive activities of the participants, which were mediated by language in relation to meaning-making for knowledge construction (Myburg & Tammaro 2013:217). Such interaction, which supports experience and ideas, assists in knowledge creation through the discovery of WSE challenges at schools, with the sole purpose of exploring guidelines to improve its

implementation. The basic tenet of constructivism indicates that individual minds construct ideas and suggestions during collaborative discourses, in order to explain and support the reality regarding the exploration of the envisaged guidelines, to improve the implementation of WSE at schools (Myburg & Tammaro 2013:219).

From the preceding paragraphs it is evident that the prevalence of collaborative learning among the research project participants was crucial for guiding the research to solicit rich data in response to the research questions. As the project facilitator, I acknowledged the contribution of each co-researcher to the project. Doing so confirmed that teamwork and learning from peers' thinking and support are among the cornerstones of a successful collaboration, and for making informed decisions regarding the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools.

2.5 PRINCIPLES OF SOCIO-CONSTRUCTIVIST THEORY

2.5.1 Knowledge accumulation activity

The first principle contends that the construction of knowledge as controlled by the individual's cognition is an active process (Mohammed & Kinyo 2020:251). This implies that the creation of knowledge by stakeholders of schools and at the district offices is not a passive process, but involves, rather, the growth of knowledge through cognition processes, from simple to complex levels of understanding of the phenomenon (Nzilano 2015:32). Since collaboration theory was employed in this study, alongside SCT, the social interaction of participants ensured that their cognitive interaction was incorporated within their minds, to share beliefs, views and experiences pertinent to the objectives of the research project. Collaboration of co-researchers contributed to the development of teamwork skills and the enhancement of individual participant learning, which was essential for the success of group learning.

The SCT was relevant to this study because, through intersubjectivity as embedded in a ZPD, participants in a collaborative discourse start at different points, but eventually arrive at a shared understanding (Marshall 2015:26). As part of the mandatory aspect of ZPD, guided participation ensured the sharing of lived experiences, views and beliefs. Through scaffolding, a peer intensifies support to a

fellow participant in the co-construction of knowledge earmarked for the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools.

2.5.2 Cognition development

Partridge (2015:147) defines cognition as activities "connected to metal processes such as thinking, knowing, remembering, judging and problem-solving". Cognition development, as the second principle of SCT, encompasses language that assists the participants to understand and express their thoughts through spoken and written words. Incorporated in thought are the co-researchers' abilities to engage in decision-making, problem-solving and a high level of reasoning (Cherry 2014:1).

The aforementioned attributes of thought are essential ingredients of capacitating the research participants to reason out their inputs pertinent to problem-solving strategies for decision-making processes. From a social constructivist perspective, as stakeholders, such as SMT members, teachers, parents and district officials, share background knowledge and participate in collaborative activities, they are actually negotiating meaning and building knowledge, not as individuals, but as a research group (Draper 2013:11).

In the context of this study, social interactions of participants culminate in co-researchers learning from each other through the construction and sharing of knowledge. Since learning from each other requires the application of cognitive processes, I facilitated the research proceedings so that all the stakeholders were able to synthesise information and integrate it with pre-existing knowledge on the guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools.

2.5.3 Modifiable aspect of cognition

Barrouilet (2015:2) asserts that knowledge is not something fixed and stable, instead, it changes frequently, as individuals and groups continually make sense of the complex world around them. This assertion implies that the cumulative nature of knowledge among the research participants is ensured by creating knowledge from one step or level to the other in a collaborative discourse. The collaborative discourses motivated the co-researchers to share their lived experiences, beliefs and values with their peers, leading to knowledge construction. Furthermore, cognition as embedded

in SCT influenced this study, in that it emphasised teamwork through thinking together as a team, and supporting the quality of social interactions among the stakeholders (UKEssays 2018:3).

According to Dagar and Yadav (2016:2), SCT explains the development of interpretivist learning strategies that enhance high-order thinking skills and social and emotional skills of participants. Since co-researchers are distinct from each other in terms of thinking, SCT acted as lens through which the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools afforded them an opportunity to look at the research questions from different and multiple perspectives. By working in groups, the participants were able to experiment and share their beliefs and opinions on the research topic.

By using metacognition as entailed in SCT, the research project encouraged the learning of the main ideas of the research, which resulted from the participants' discovery learning through working in groups (Aljohani 2017:99). Interpretivist learning strategies thus developed assisted further in the presentation of others' viewpoints, promotion of a dialogue and understanding of concepts that had a bearing on the course of the research. Alanazi (2016:5) emphasises that the use of cognitive learning for designing, thinking about and rethinking the end product of research by co-researchers helps to sharpen their thinking and strengthen their knowledge co-creation. Using metacognition entrenched in SCT helped participants control their cognitive processes through organisation, monitoring and modification, which resulted in the utilisation of problem-solving strategies (Mugambi 2018:103).

The SCT played a pivotal role in affording the co-researchers an opportunity to engage in active participation in the research project. Collaborative interactions are cornerstones of a group dialogue that ensures usage of cognitive processes for effective negotiations among the research members before consensus is reached. SCT, like collaboration theory, emphasises the employment of groupwork, internship and collaboration, which is beneficial for stakeholder communication and face-to-face meetings. As a project facilitator, I ensured that every research member brought a diversified approach to the research, by allowing them to negotiate their experiences, beliefs and opinions. Involvement of an adaptive cognition from multiple perspectives assisted the participants to respond to the "what" and "which" questions. Working in

collaboration, al the co-researchers were able to generate rich data that responded to the challenges schools encounter in effectively improving the implementation of WSE. Furthermore, our collaborative interaction produced data that sought to support the strategies that embrace the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools.

2.5.4 Social and cultural interactions of knowledge

The SCT views construction of knowledge as an active process that creates cognitive structures during the interactions of SMT members, teachers and SGB members with the environment (Suhendi 2018:87). SCT regards learning of participants in research as a social process situated in physical and sociocultural contexts (Shah 2019:43). Suhendi (2018:88), furthermore, postulates that learning among the participants, and from peers, endorses the creation of knowledge from concrete experiences, collaborative activities, reflections and interpretations. This idea implies that learning is considered spiral, since the co-researchers are able to reflect on the created knowledge and retain knowledge relevant to the research, whilst eliminating aspects leading to the creation of the irrelevant knowledge.

Knowledge relevant to the objectives of the research project assists the research participants to explore relevant strategies to be incorporated into the guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools. Applying SCT to this study influenced the research, because SCT embraces learning among the co-researchers, which takes place in a social environment in which there is dialogue, discussions and problem-solving activities (Ramsook & Thomas 2016:129). Since the participants are social beings who co-create knowledge from their lived experiences through dialogue and discussions in a school environment, the learning that takes place is considered to be a social phenomenon. Such collaborative interactions enhance teamwork and the development of group skills, since they occur in social contexts. Participants benefited from the group skills by utilising the negotiated knowledge narrated from the different perspectives to address the challenges that pose a threat to the implementation of WSE at schools.

Finnegan and Ginty (2019:4) assert that, in a research project, much important learning by co-researchers occurs through social interaction and collaboration with peers. Zekri (2020:27) corroborates the assertion by Finnegan and Ginty (2019:4) that

“all higher functions originate as actual relations between human individuals”. One of the key tenets of SCT is that, in a research process, through scaffolding, co-researchers are afforded support until they gain confidence in the narration of their lived experiences.

Central to SCT are key tenets that influenced this study positively regarding the achievement of the objectives. One such tenet encompasses the notion that the participants learn from each other through active participation in research. Dialogue within a group setting gives rise to thinking, which affords the participants an opportunity to defend, prove, justify or communicate their ideas to their peers (Fosnot 2013:201). By conducting the research together with the participants, and not for them, I instilled a sense of ownership of the final product, which encouraged an openness by the co-researchers to discuss their lived experiences, which enhanced the data pertinent to the objectives of the study.

If the research facilitator creates a conducive environment for all to have a voice, the construction of new ideas is promoted. The creation of new ideas plays a pivotal role in the formation of extracts and themes and the identification of strategies that enhance the envisaged guidelines. Participants who participated in the research project came with a wealth of prior knowledge gained from their lived experiences, beliefs and values. By taking part in a research project, participants’ prior knowledge is linked to the new, co-created knowledge. During stakeholder collaboration and group sessions, an amalgamation of the two strands of knowledge guided the co-researchers in making shared, informed decisions.

2.6 ONTOLOGY OF SOCIO-CONSTRUCTIVIST THEORY

Ontology is the science or “study of being”, which deals with the nature of reality (Amakiri & Juliet 2018:2). The definition of Ataro (2019:20) states that ontology is the study of being, and answers the questions,“what is there that can be known?” and “what is the nature of reality?” Constructivism is a social theory that supports ideas and beliefs about the nature of social life and social change. As a social theory, SCT supports the notion that social reality is constructed by the research participants through intersubjective beliefs and ideas that are collectively shared and understood (Jung 2019:2). The inclusion of the beliefs and ideas of the participants in this research

indicates that reality, which is always under construction, is subject to change (Centre for International Relations 2023:1). Ideational elements (beliefs and ideas) of participants are lived experiences that nurture social interactions that, subsequently, culminate in collaborative and shared decision-making.

From the social interpretivist point of view, reality construction occurs during interpersonal and social interactions, which are guided by stakeholder collaboration (Racine 2017:264). The interpersonal and social interactions that make up communicative interactions assisted the co-researchers through the joint formation of concept meanings of their lived experiences that were pertinent to the research process.

Moon and Blackman (2017:1) suggests that an ontology or a "study of being" is concerned with what actually exists on the school premises about which this study's participants could acquire knowledge that could assist them to respond to the research questions. The research project considers the failure to implement WSE effectively at schools as a social challenge that discredits the school community. As an interpretivist researcher, I collaborated with the co-researchers to understand the challenges, which subsequently assisted in responding to the "what" research questions.

Tcytcarev, Bazhenov, Amineva and Pronin (2019:4) articulate the importance of using language in reality construction, as one of the important tools of collaboration by co-researchers. Since this research was conducted *with* the participants, their experiences, ideas and beliefs were considered to be the ingredients of the formulation of responses to the research questions. Collaborative theory advocates for the co-creation of reality in the presence of peers. Participants' experiences, ideas and beliefs were utilised through written and spoken language to extract texts and themes from the garnered data. According to Mohammed and Kinyo (2020:251), social communication and interactions of co-researchers ensured reliable reality construction that was based on a system of consensual sharing, testing and evaluation. The social dialogue and discourse among the participants were vital, and resulted in meaning-making, which assisted in the shaping of reality.

Since this study was an interpretivist research study, the researcher facilitated the research such that the participants were able to construct reality using their diverse lived experiences (Boyland 2019:32). From an ontological point of view, this research

landscape offered the participants a subjective lens through which reality could be interpreted. According to Hiller (2016:99), ontology is the study of the nature of existence, with the ontological assumptions that assisted the researcher and participants during their interaction to respond to the questions regarding reality construction. The reconstruction of lived experiences of the study participants from empirical reality results in the emergence of meanings (Hiller 2016:111). From the vantage point of this research project, the social construction of reality was entrenched and enacted in multiple practices by the co-researchers as social actors (Grand, Von Arx & Rüegg-Stürm 2015:80). Nzilano (2015:32) postulates that, ontologically, reality existence or construction is the end product of ideas or ideals. SCT holds the notion that reality thus created is not static but influences the study through the transformation of participants' thoughts or mind regarding the research questions.

From the preceding paragraphs, it is categorically clear that one of the tenets of SCT supports the stance that this research was conducted through the direct experience of the participants. The ontological assumption of constructivism is that social reality is constructed by multiple participants who have multiple interpretations of the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools. Seeking subjective multiple perspectives on reality construction assisted this study in understanding, explaining and demystifying social reality through the eyes of participants. An interpretivist paradigm was directed at understanding the exploration of guidelines on the implementation of WSE at schools, as a phenomenon emanating from multiple perspectives, and focusing on the social interaction among co-researchers on school premises (Norwich 2020:242). The next section will delineate the epistemological assumptions of SCT.

2.7 EPISTEMOLOGY OF SOCIO-CONSTRUCTIVIST THEORY

Epistemology is the study of beliefs about the origin and acquisition of knowledge (Schraw 2013:1). Žukauskas, Vveinhardt and Andriukaitiené (2018:124) define epistemology as a set of beliefs and assumptions associated with the study of the nature of knowledge. Epistemology is concerned with a kind of knowledge that is mutually constructed and shared in a collaborative social interaction (Taghipour 2014:101). The epistemological perspective presumes knowledge as an aspect that can be constructed by an individual from their lived experiences. (Ho 2015:46).

Cleaver and Ballantyne (2014:229) explain constructivist epistemology as knowledge construction that espouses a process of social exchange. According to Dennick (2016:200), interpretivist epistemology is based on the premise that knowledge construction seeks to connect new knowledge to pre-existing knowledge. SCT was relevant to this study because it fostered goal-oriented thinking that embraced social negotiation and co-production of knowledge (Mojtahed, Nunes, Martins & Peng 2014:94). SCT regards knowledge as a human product that is socially and culturally constructed.

The study upholds the stance that knowledge construction requires the meaningful participation of participants in group activities, as well as meaningful use of language in interpersonal, intersubjective and collaborative processes of creating shared meaning (Aljohani 2017:98). Boon and Van Baalen (2019:12) affirm that collaborative participation in knowing how a specific knowledge is constructed is often beneficial to co-researchers in understanding how to use this knowledge in problem-solving tasks. The scientific knowledge that was generated during the interaction of participants was used to address the challenges that hinder the effective implementation of WSE at schools (Ejnavarzala 2019:94). Ulum (2016:20) states that co-researchers collaboratively interact during a research project to ensure that scientific knowledge is constructed, gained and communicated to assist, in this case, in the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools.

Collaboration theory influenced this research through the study of the participants' experiences and their perceived interpretations. The interpretation of co-researchers' experiences, furthermore, assisted the study project to respond to the "how" and "which" research questions. Participants benefited from their collaboration on how to interpret their experiences of knowledge construction pertinent to the generation of rich data, and on which strategies and role players to incorporate in the achievement of goals set for the group work (Randrup, Druckenmiller & Briggs 2016:900). This collaborative research assisted in the transformation of the ideas and beliefs of the co-researchers into artefacts that were obtained from the rich data (Herberg & Vilsmaier 2020:309). Ashton and McKenna (2020:2) articulate that, in line with other strands of contemporary epistemology, SCT regards knowledge as situated knowledge, as opposed to a neutral and transparent reflection of an existing reality. This implies that, in this study, the researcher and the participants co-constructed knowledge based on

their beliefs, ideas and experiences regarding an exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools.

Based on the literature reviewed in the paragraphs above, it is evident that, in this research project, participants' knowledge construction was based on the notion of a nexus between prior knowledge and new knowledge. The literature reveals, furthermore, that knowledge is identified as a product of human interaction and not as something to be discovered (Taylor 2018:218). This is line with the stance of SCT that knowledge creation happens in the presence of other social beings within a social context or environment. As a product of participant interaction, knowledge construction is carried out in a social environment that fosters collaborative participation, interpersonal skills, teamwork, communication and problem-solving skills (Maniram & Maistry 2018:321). This corroborates the premise of collaboration theory that, for participants to excel and open up in a research process, they need other fellow participants in their research journey. Epistemologically, the participants are viewed as social actors who, through the lens of SCT, viewed the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools as a social phenomenon in need of scientific knowledge construction for an adequate response to the research questions (Al-Ababneh 2020:79).

2.8 ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER

To maintain the rigor and credibility of research that explored guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools, the researcher identified key stakeholders to participate in the research project. Sutton and Austin (2015:226) state that the researcher's identification of key stakeholders gives access to the thoughts and feelings of the research participants on the research topic. As Collins and Stockton (2018:3) explain, the researcher's role encapsulates the notion of collaboratively engaging, in this case, teachers, parents and district officials as co-researchers in a socially constructed reality. Once the participants have engaged their thoughts, beliefs and experiences in the knowledge content of the guidelines, the pinnacle of legitimacy is its existence as an accepted reality regarding the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools (Collins & Stockton 2018:4).

Busetto, Wick and Gumbinger (2020:2) emphasise that the researcher should create an atmosphere of cooperation, mutuality and collaboration. Doing so was expected to generate new insights, experiences and strategies of the participants on the exploration of the envisaged guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools, until saturation was achieved. This implies that the co-researchers were afforded an opportunity to fully air their views, beliefs and experiences on the research topic until no relevant new information could be found. Since this was qualitative research, the research project's scientific knowledge was co-constructed with the co-researchers. The researcher created a fertile environment to support true dialogues and uncover unique daily experiences pertinent to the research topic (Roger, Bone, Heinonen, Schwartz, Slater and Thakrar 2018:538).

In this study, the researcher, as a qualitative researcher, supported the participants in generating data in their natural settings. The utilisation of open-ended questions in focus group discussions and the reliance on collecting non-numerical primary data, such as words and texts, provided factual and descriptive knowledge (Eyisi 2016:93). This collaboration between the researcher and the co-researchers facilitated the emergence of theories from the data, which eventually assisted in understanding the expressions and experiences pertinent to the questions of the research study. Collins and Cooper (2014:89) articulate that it is expected of a researcher to ensure face-to-face social interaction by participants regarding the construction of a social reality and the advancement of strong interpersonal skills in data collection. Establishing strong interpersonal skills strengthens a researcher's ability to connect and communicate with participants, and eventually understand their life worlds.

In the context of this study, as highlighted by Farrel, Harrison and Coburn (2019:2), the researcher engaged the participants in collaborative cycles of inquiry. The collaborative cycles of inquiry embraced co-investigation, which resulted in the identification of problems that stood in the way of the implementation of WSE at schools. By encouraging teamwork among the co-researchers, the researcher capacitated them to generate credible research findings that would be communicated to key stakeholders in the education sector.

It is of utmost importance that researchers familiarise themselves with the research topic in order to minimise bias. Patias and Hohendorff (2019:4) postulate that a

socioconstructivist researcher, as a co-constructor of meanings with co-researchers, should take cognisance of the presence of subjectivity in the research, and minimise bias through the use of reflexivity (self-reflection). Sawatsky, Ratelle and Beckman (2019:17) assert that a reflexive researcher is explicit about their way of thinking, and the effect it could have on qualitative research. An assessment of reflexivity assists in defining the roles of the researcher and participants in a research project (Sawatsky *et al.* 2019:18). The exploratory nature of this research project guided the participants on the best way to explore the guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools through effective collaboration. Compliance to reflexivity ensures that the researcher does not impose their prior knowledge on the research topic, but explicitly and meaningfully engages all the relevant stakeholders. In facilitating this research project, and in order to minimise any bias and influence on the research, I considered the data collected and presented by the research participants from a neutral perspective (Bengtsson 2016:12). The consideration of data from a neutral point instilled confidence and a sense of belonging in participants regarding their participation in the research.

One of the crucial roles of a researcher in qualitative research is to encourage the practice of transparency, and management of power imbalances (Aguinis & Solarino 2019:1294). Transparency among the participants triggered honesty and openness regarding the challenges that affect the effective implementation of WSE at schools. Transparency also motivated the co-researchers to open up to each other during the co-construction of knowledge based on their experiences and beliefs that were pertinent to the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools. Aguinis and Solarino (2019:1296) explain the management of power imbalance as “the differential exercise of control, authority or influence during the research process”. According to Avenant, April and Peters (2016:222), managing power relations entails tilting the balance of power in favour of the research participants. The implication is that the researcher is obliged to ensure equal status of all the co-researchers regarding their participation in a research project. Power is the producer of subjectivities, differentiation and freedom (Brito, Castro, Bezerra, Silva & Silva 2020:5).

As an interpretivist researcher, I opened up communicative spaces to enable the research participants to have a greater control over their substantive involvement and

collaboration in the research project. Active participation and collaboration dismantle inequalities in researcher–participant relations, and afford them an opportunity to engage freely in the social context of the research process (Ross 2017:3). To enhance positive researcher and participant power relations, I considered the concept of cultural diversity, which assisted to address contextuality, cultural relevance, appropriateness and mutual respect during the course of the research (Wa-Mbaleka, Zubkov, Saban & Rosario 2019:2). Sound ethical research practice breeds trust and respect. Section 2.10 will discuss the relationship between the researcher and co-researchers.

2.9 RELATIONSHIP WITH CO-RESEARCHERS

In co-constructing knowledge regarding the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools, this research project demanded of me to be a research partner. As postulated by Raheim, Magnussen, Sekse, Lunde, Jacobsen and Blystad (2016:8), the closeness of the researcher to the co-researchers generates openness and permissiveness, which subsequently affords a platform for the narration of opinions, lived experiences and beliefs pertinent to the research questions. Raheim *et al.* (2016:9) articulate that, in soliciting lived experiences from the participants, the researcher needs to enhance their rapport with the participants, which is built on mutual trust. Rapport is “the ability to appreciate other’s opinion, to understand and accept other’s feelings” (Zakaria & Mustamaal 2014:2). Rapport assists in connecting with the participants to create a climate of trust that subsequently culminates in good communication. The importance of a healthy rapport between the researcher and co-researchers is corroborated by Sivell, Prout, Hopewell-Kelly, Baillie, Bayrne, Edwards *et al.* (2019:2), who explain that it minimises power imbalances in research. In this regard, the researcher is not only considered as someone with expert knowledge, but as a team member with whom participants collaborate to achieve the objectives of the research.

Mozersky, Parsons, Walsh, Baldwin, McIntosh and DuBois (2020:14) assert that participants should perceive their relationship with the researcher as more of an institutional arrangement than a personal or private one. A relationship of this nature will instil trust and openness from the co-researchers and enhance the validity and confidentiality of the qualitative data. Trust building between the researcher and co-

researchers plays a key role in building solid collaboration for engagement in research planning and discussions (Rowan-Kenyon, Cahalan & Yamashita 2018:45). The researcher–participant relationship, which embraces the involvement of diverse participants in a research project, presents a critical opportunity for the emergence of marginalised voices to be heard (Reicherzer, Shavel and Patton 2013:83). Parents, teachers and learners, who are sometimes excluded from the collaborative decision-making of schools, were granted an opportunity to be an integral part of the research process and to explore guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools.

In the context of this study, as an interpretivist and a qualitative researcher, I protected the integrity of the vulnerable co-researchers, who lacked confidence, by making them to feel at ease to participate freely. As Probst (2016:154) points out, participation in a research process may evoke a degree of vulnerability and nervousness. In collaborations with all stakeholders, I considered that some co-researchers were participating in a research project for the first time. As a facilitator, I calmed their nerves and alleviated their fears by consistently reminding them that their opinions, beliefs and experiences on the envisaged guidelines were valuable and appreciated and would contribute to achieving the objectives of the study. According to Von Benzon and Van Blerk (2017:897), the gold standard for sound qualitative research is inclusion of both the researcher and participants in a harmonious and beneficial relationship. The iterative nature of this study, which was underpinned by a PAR design, involved the researcher and co-researchers as decision-makers, from recruitment to selecting research methods to analysis and dissemination of the research findings.

The success of a research project depends on the ability of the constructivist researcher to build an empathetic relationship with co-researchers. Berry (2016:12) defines empathy as a researcher's ability to sense the co-researchers' emotions, thinking and feelings. An empathetic relationship reduces social distance between the researcher and participants, and improves closeness, which eventually enhances ethical relationships (Berry 2016:13). In exploring the guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools, I encouraged the co-researchers to respect the human dignity and personal integrity of each other and to desist from violating their human rights during the course of the research (Norwegian National Research Ethics Committee 2019:15). In disclosing the objectives and the intention of the research to the co-researchers, I engaged them in promoting sharing and trust, thus, exposing

them to a diversity of viewpoints (Heslop, Burns & Lobo 2018:3). The promotion and encouragement of a diversity of viewpoints leveraged the chance of knowledge construction taking place from participants' different perspectives.

This study offered the researcher an insider position in the research process, since the research was conducted *with* the participants and not *for* the participants. Drawing on a review of the literature on PAR, I was able to collaborate with stakeholders in active roles, which produced new knowledge or insights on the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools (Chevalier & Buckles 2019:10). The immersed position of the researcher in the research assisted the stakeholders in knowledge co-creation and expansion, because they were viewed as better placed with regard to the researched issue. Hearne (2013:5) posits that, central to the influence of PAR in the research project is the collaboration of the researcher and co-researchers to do critical thinking in response to the research questions. This type of collaborative participation by a group of research stakeholders is deemed empowering and contributed to the successful implementation of the envisaged guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools. Section 2.11 will outline the rhetoric or language of the research.

2.10 LANGUAGE OF THE RESEARCH

Language, as a constituent of sequences of decisions, lies at the heart of qualitative research (Brannen, Piekarri & Tietze 2017:139). This implies that research participants in qualitative research use language to articulate decisions and to conduct debates. This study considered language to be a constitutive force that embraces the role of discourses and narratives among co-researchers (Brannen *et al.* 2017:141). Tuffour (2017:1) explains that research participants use scientific language to ascribe meanings to their lived experiences. The ascription of meanings to lived experiences through language assisted in the exploration of "what", "why" and "how" questions of the research project. As this qualitative research involved co-researchers exploring the guidelines for improving the implementation of WSE in their natural settings, co-researchers interpreted the meanings they assigned to their experiences using everyday language (Tuffour 2017:2).

In collaborative interactions, participants use language to indicate connections between words and phrases from their experiences of the research questions (Peck & Mummery 2017:2). This is indicative of how important language is in research, to assist co-researchers to experience and understand the reality of the world. In line with CDA, when the participants were in dialogue with each other during data analysis, language was at the forefront of assigning words and texts to themes related to the research questions. According to Bergen (2018:1), language is used in dynamic research environments to convey information between the researchers and participants, and during participant recruitment, transcription, translation, data analysis and reporting. During CDA, language assumes a socially constructed understanding of social reality that seeks to uncover knowledge from meanings, rather than seeking to discover causal connections (Bansal, Smith & Vaara 2018:1192).

This study supported verbal interactions and hearing the voices of the research participants, as the human actors in this qualitative research. As opposed to a quantitative study that uses statistical or numerical analysis, this qualitative study embraced the voices of participants, to obtain text and human action interpretations pertinent to the research objectives (Aagaard & Matthiesen 2016:37). The implication is that co-researchers used language in meetings and focus group discussions for knowledge creation and to address the research questions. By using subjective tools, such as interviews in the form of focus group discussions in this research, I encouraged co-researchers to use language to extract their personal experiences and perceptions on the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools, as the study's topic of interest (Ward 2018:119). According to the collaboration theory of learning, language is the primary means of enhancing communicative and knowledge exchanges among research participants (Santos, Black & Sandelowski 2015:135). Communicative and knowledge exchanges played a pivotal role in the extraction of categories and concepts during data analysis, which subsequently lead to theme formation.

McCarthy (2016:38) asserts that, in a non-threatening, comfortable and supportive research group environment, co-researchers will be able to use language to create their own social space to express their shared experiences, feelings and beliefs about the research topic. Such a supportive research group environment boosts the co-researchers' confidence, reduces the pressure and maintains high levels of interest

and enthusiasm in the research project. By using language, co-researchers, as socio-constructivists in this research project, were afforded an opportunity to do an in-depth examination and gain understanding of each other's opinions, perspectives and attitudes (Nassaji 2015:129). The holistic and inductive nature of qualitative research allows linguistic exploration of rich data, to identify recurring themes and patterns, which subsequently culminates in the description and interpretation of the categories (Nassaji 2015:130).

Studies show that language plays a pivotal role in qualitative research. The literature reveals that written and spoken language is an essential element of communication and discussions of the meaning of the transcribed text among the co-researchers (Renz, Carrington & Badger 2018:824). A benefit of using language is that researchers can discover the underlying meanings of the data generated in the research project. Prasad (2018:164) posits that communication is embedded in language, which ensures that collaborative consensus is arrived at under conditions of rationality and equality. This implies that consensus among the participants is a product of authentic representation and freedom of voice, that are completely free of any manipulation (Prasad 2018:165). Language was perceived to be central to this qualitative research project, as it assisted the participants to articulate their observations, experiences and beliefs, as cornerstones of social reality regarding the achievement of the objectives of the study (Jonsen, Fendt & Point 2018:31). The overarching role of language in this praxis, as stated by Al-Issa (2017:565), is that it made possible meaningful participation of co-researchers in this collaborative, participatory and knowledge-oriented study, so that they could explore guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools.

2.12 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

In this chapter, the various contexts that support SCT and collaboration theory, as comprehensive hybrid theoretical frameworks, were discussed, namely, historical origins, objectives, justification, features, principles, ontology, epistemology and epistemology. The chapter also outlined the role of the researcher in the research, the researcher's relationship with co-researchers, and the language of the research. It concluded with the definitions and discussions of the operational concepts. The next chapter will present a review of the literature related to the research topic.

CHAPTER 3: REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The study explored guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE in Free State secondary schools. This chapter focuses on reviewing studies conducted by other researchers on encounters and approaches that have bearing on this project. The review of the related literature will focus on the challenges that impact negatively on the effective implementation of WSE at schools, with a view to establishing which conditions are conducive to circumvent such challenges.

The components and the best practices on the effective implementation of WSE in different countries will be presented. Furthermore, the rationale for the roles of different stakeholders in the development of strategies to assist in an effective implementation of WSE at schools will be investigated.

WSE focuses on the overall quality of a school, and encompasses structures, parental involvement, finances, teaching and learner outcomes (Owen 2018:3). The programme is designed to evaluate stakeholder accountability, and how well the school serves the community. An evaluation is earmarked to suggest teaching and other educational strategies that embrace stakeholder collaboration regarding improvement at all levels of achievement across the school spectrum. Van Der Voort and Wood (2016:2) corroborate the assertion by Owen (2018:3) that WSE is a holistic process that is inclusive of all school community members, and advocates for improvement of all aspects of the school. These aspects of the school include academic achievements, infrastructure, social environment and security.

In implementing WSE at schools, collaborative action of participants means teams working together on a shared, single focus to achieve the objectives of their mission (Aldridge, Rijken & Fraser 2021:3). As a collaborative and transparent process, WSE focuses on the holistic performance of the school through making the judgement measured against the agreed upon national criteria (Msezane 2020:721). The collaborative nature of WSE requires the full participation of external evaluators, SMT members, teachers, learners and parents.

In countries such as Spain and Norway, WSE, known as the whole-school resilience programme, ensures that the schools work in close collaboration with social ecologies, such as local school communities, social developments and district offices, in order to promote resilience in schools (Morote, Hays, Basurko, Anyan, Fullaondo, Donisi, Zwiefka, Gudmundsdottir & Ledertoug 2020:4). The programme focuses on ensuring that all stakeholders attached to each school are at all material times connected with sources of support.

The technical literature reviewed indicates that WSE is an intervention that combines multiple components of schools as centres of excellence in order to produce change. All relevant stakeholders, such as SMT members, teachers, learners, school governing bodies, district office officials and school communities need to work collaboratively to ensure the successful implementation of the WSE programme. In the context of this study, there was a need to explore the guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE in order to close the literature gap, as little research has been conducted on this reach topic.

3.2 POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION

This section will provide an overview of the policies that underpin the implementation of WSE in South Africa. These policies compliment the WSE policy in the provision of quality education in the South African context.

3.2.1 National Education Policy Act 27 of 1996

Section 3(4) of the National Education Policy Act (NEPA) stipulates that the minister of Education shall determine the national policy for planning, provision, financing, staffing, coordination, management, governance, programmes, monitoring, evaluation and wellbeing of the education system (South Africa 1996a:4). Emanating from NEPA, the National Policy on Whole-School Evaluation was developed to improve the overall quality of education in South African schools (South Africa 2001a:2).

Directive principle of Section 4(e) of NEPA supports teaching and learning and ensures the provision of opportunities for lifelong learning. The WSE policy was designed to embrace the core mission of schools regarding the improvement of the educational achievements of all learners (South Africa 2001a:3). Section 8(5) of this

Act, furthermore, recommends that the Department of Education prepares and publishes a report on the results of each investigation undertaken on monitoring and evaluation. The WSE policy was developed for the purpose of publishing the written reports on the performance of individual schools (South Africa 2001a:4).

3.2.2 South African Schools Act 84 of 1996

In terms of Section 16(b) of SASA, the principal must prepare an annual report in respect of the academic performance of the school, in relation to the minimum outcomes, standards and procedures for assessment as determined by the minister and submit it to the head of the education department (South Africa 2001b:3). WSE affords both external supervisors and the school an opportunity to account for the performance of the school in relation to national goals and the needs of the public and communities (South Africa 2001b:3).

In sampling schools that need support, external supervisors refer to performance reports that schools have submitted to the HOD (South Africa 2001b:8). One of the main principles of the WSE policy is to increase the level of accountability of the education sector, and this is achieved by providing assistance to schools in measuring the extent of the fulfilment of their responsibilities regarding performance improvement (South Africa 2001b:3).

Section 58B of SASA stipulates that the principal of an underperforming school as identified by the HOD must prepare and present an academic performance improvement plan at the beginning of the year (South Africa 2001b:14). The WSE policy (South Africa 2001a:8) mandates that underperforming schools produce school improvement plans in line with the recommendations of the evaluation report. The policy tasks district support services to assist schools to operationalise their school improvement plans to achieve their aims and objectives. Section 3.2.3 will delineate the South African Qualifications Authority Act.

3.2.3 South African Qualifications Authority Act of 1995

The South African Qualifications Authority Act stipulates that bodies overseeing the monitoring and auditing of achievements must be established in terms of national standards and qualifications (South Africa 1995a:3). One of main functions of the

South African Qualifications Authority is an assurance of registered standards and qualifications that are internationally comparable. As stipulated by the WSE policy, a school's core business is to capacitate learners to realise their achievements and be absorbed into the economic world. Learner achievement is used as a yardstick to determine how learners meet national standards (South Africa 2001a:3). Section 3.2.4 will unpack the importance of an assessment policy.

3.2.4 Assessment Policy of 1998

Assessment is an integral part of instruction, as it supports teachers in the achievement of education goals. Assessment has a bearing on decision-making about grades, placement, advancement, instructional needs, curriculum and funding (Macamo 2019:3). The Department of Basic Education (2011:3) defines assessment as a process of collecting, analysing and interpreting information in order to assist teachers, parents and other stakeholders in decision-making regarding learner progress. The assessment policy seeks to establish a national system of quality assurance of school-based assessment that comprises standards and quality of school-based assessment that are comparable across all schools, districts and provincial education departments (South Africa 2017:6).

The policy ensures alignment of systemic monitoring, evaluation, and quality assurance of assessment (Harrop- Allin & Kros 2014:75). Systematic monitoring and evaluation are the cornerstones of WSE policy. Both the qualitative and quantitative data are utilised as indications of the performance of each school that has been sampled (South Africa 2002:4). At a national level, the data assist policymakers to establish the overall effectiveness of schools (Philips 1999:154). In terms of curriculum and assessment, the policy mandates the minister the Department of Basic Education to determine a national process and procedures for the assessment of learner achievements, which will be used as feedback for school improvements (South Africa 1996a:6). Section 3.2.5 will unpack the Further Education and Training Act, as one of acts that complements the WSE policy.

3.2.5 Community Education and Training of 2013

Section 38 of the Community Education and Training Act stipulates that the director-general must promote quality assurance, assess and report further on the provision of

quality education on the premises of further education and training institutions (South Africa 1998:18). In accordance with WSE policy, the WSE process is regarded as essential for the quality assurance system at schools, as it reveals to all stakeholders with vested interests in education whether the schools' performance meets national goals (South Africa 2001a:3). In Community Education and Training Act of 2013, which states that quality assurance is to be conducted by Umalusi, a statutory body, in both the higher education institutions and schools with Grades R to 12, in terms of the General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance Act No. 58 of 2001. Section 3.2.6 will explain the promotion of quality education in schools by White Paper on Education and Training.

3.2.6 White Paper No. 1 of 1995

Since education and training are basic human rights, White Paper No. 1 (South Africa 1995b:21) advocates for the acknowledgement of values and principles as the driving force behind the National Education and Training policy. Chapter 4(9) clearly embraces an improvement of quality education and training services. Chapter 4(12), furthermore, supports the upholding of values and principles that could enhance the restoration of a culture of teaching and learning. WSE policy is based on the notion that standardised and consistent quality, and the development of staff and training, are key aspects that school community members must be proud of (South Africa 2001a:3).

3.2.7 Education White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education

This paper was drafted to ensure the establishment of education and training systems that are responsive to the unsatisfactory educational experiences of learners with special educational needs (South Africa 2002c). The paper endorses the maximisation of learner participation in the culture and curricula of education establishments. Learner participation in such curricula assists education institutions to uncover and minimise barriers to learning (South Africa 2001c:16). The White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education entails a support system for education institutions, to empower learners to participate critically in the learning process. In line with the Education White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education, the WSE policy advocates for regular district

support through programmes on professional development of teachers and schools to improve learner performance (South Africa 2021c:4).

From the policies reviewed above, it is apparent that all the policies intertwine on the provision of quality education in schools. The guidelines of the policies support each other and focus on the provision of quality education. The policies should be viewed as legally binding documents that were promulgated by the minister of Basic Education in Parliament.

3.2.8 Quality Management System

The Quality Management System (QMS) replaced the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) for school-based educators. QMS is a performance management system for school-based educators, designed to evaluate the performance levels of individuals in order to achieve high levels of school performance. Informed by *Collective Agreement Number 2 of 2020*, QMS measures the performance of educators in line with their respective roles and responsibilities. QMS recognises good performance and also addresses under performance, thereby enhancing educator efficiency and effectiveness (Department of Basic Education 2021:1).

The literature reveals that it is incumbent on all stakeholders of the education sector to be thoroughly trained on the implementation of the guidelines for the benefit of learners, as the beneficiaries. Policymakers of national government, provincial officials and district teams need to collaborate with schools in order to achieve the effective implementation of the policy guidelines.

Section 3.3 will discuss the need to explore the guidelines that intend to improve the implementation of WSE at schools, by concentrating on the challenges, conditions, strategies as solutions, roles of stakeholders and indicators of success.

3.3 NEED TO EXPLORE THE GUIDELINES TO IMPROVE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION

3.3.1 Need to explore the guidelines

Exploring the guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools ensures the introduction of school interventions that effect changes that are likely to work best

within supportive and effective settings (Anders, Brown, Ehren, Greany & Nelson 2017:3). WSE is an international programme that uses a mutual exchange of ideas to develop critical thinking in participants (Meir & McCann 2016:38). The expectation was that the programme would expose co-researchers to social spaces that would give them freedom of expression in knowledge creation, which would enhance the exploration of guidelines. The data assisted the decision-making body and gave guidance on how to obtain knowledge to review school policies on programme implementation, so as to transform school environments into quality assurance and accountability spaces (Warren, Bevilacgua, Opondo, Allen, Mathiot, West, Jamal, Viner & Bonell 2019:980).

3.3.2 Demands of a whole-school approach to change in Canada

In Canada, a commission was established to start a dialogue to transform education to produce successful schools and learners. Through the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, the WSCC model was developed (Rasberry, Slade, Lohrmann & Valois 2015:761). The aim of the model was to explore guidelines that would strengthen a unified collaborative approach to learning. The envisaged guidelines placed the learner at the centre of the model through the involvement of resources such as time, space and personnel, to ensure the success of learners on school premises. Hoare, Bott and Robinson (2017:56) postulate that schools provide social and adaptive settings that are unique for implementation of interventions developed from such explored guidelines.

Canadian authorities recruited representatives from all the provinces to serve on a steering committee that would explore guidelines for the improvement of the implementation of the whole-school approach (Bassett-Gunter, Yessis, Manske & Gleddie 2016:238). Currently, the whole-school approach embraces a collaborative cohesion among school principals, teachers, students, parents and the other members of school communities, who integrate holistic strategies to promote the successful implementation of the approach (Bassett-Gunter *et al.* 2016:242).

O'Brien, McNamara, O'Hara and Brown (2020:4) reveal that collective participation by teachers, learners and SGB parents of schools incorporates collaborative and collegial learning experiences, as shared responsibilities relating to the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools. According to SCT,

schools are social settings that afford stakeholders the abilities and possibilities to explore the determinants of guidelines that will, subsequently, influence policymaking on the effective implementation of WSE at schools (Teutsch & Gugglberger 2019:331).

Review of the literature reveals that, due to the concerted efforts of all stakeholders whose interests are vested in quality education, quality determinants of guidelines to influence WSE implementation policies at schools can be explored and recommended. The reviewed literature, furthermore, indicates that stakeholders need to put the interests of the learners first during the exploration of the envisaged guidelines. It is apparent that the beliefs, opinions and lived experiences of relevant stakeholders in the education sector, in line with the constructivism, are needed for the co-creation of knowledge on the exploration of the guidelines. In the narrative of the old adage that "it takes a village to raise a child", teamwork is required from the participant collaborators to explore credible guidelines to inform credible policy on the effective implementation of WSE.

3.3.3 Effects of a whole-school approach in the United States of America

The American version of WSE, known as whole-school sustainability, is a whole-school approach that has been classified under the Department of Education's Green Ribbon School programme. The programme focuses on the facilitation of interactions and collaborations between education stakeholders and policymakers on diverse and relevant ideas regarding education sustainability at schools (Warner & Elser 2015:2). Van Kuijk, Mullender-Wijnsma and Bosker (2021:129) posit that, in the American context, Success for All is a programme designed for schools, of which the guidelines emphasise the effective implementation of aspects such as cooperative learning, tutoring, on-site continuous professional development, leadership programmes and home involvement in the programme. The guidelines clearly outline the role of the stakeholders in the effective implementation of Success for All as embedded in whole-school reform, regarding accountability and quality assurance aspects. The process dimensions of this whole-school approach are benchmarks for the rating of schools' performance by external moderators.

In the education context of the USA, supporting the explored guidelines means supporting the entire school, because the guidelines will ensure the establishment of a school culture that emphasises shared beliefs, norms and experiences (Chiu, Price

& Ovrahim 2015:4). Such guidelines serve as mandatory prescripts that give the stakeholders direction on the effective implementation of the whole-school approach, and a sense of ownership of the entire programme. The guidelines in Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (Sharp 2016:11) are utilised by the USA Department of Education as indicators of school performance and learner academic success in their accountability systems (Acosta, Chinman, Ebener, Malone, Phillips & Wilks 2019:3). The guidelines in the act are expected to encourage the further formulation of new policies, which will enhance an effective implementation of the whole-school approach programme.

The literature clearly outlines the main tenets of the guidelines. The guidelines are used as norms and standards for the effective implementation of the WSE in American schools. Various programmes, including the Green Ribbon School and Success for All programmes are used to enhance the stature of the explored guidelines. Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015, as mandatory legislation, enforces compliance from the side of stakeholders. In line with the SCT, different views, beliefs and lived experiences of participants that arose during guideline exploration were considered before they were enacted as binding rules and laws. From the point of view of collaboration theory, the reviewed literature also reveals that stakeholders share knowledge and information before they make the final decision. Subsection 3.3.4 will discuss the need to explore the guidelines as experienced by the education sector in Ghana.

3.3.4 Need to explore guidelines in whole-school evaluation in Ghana

In Ghana, WSE entails both external and internal processes, by which the inspectorate evaluates and reports on the effectiveness of each school's self-evaluation processes (Bapono 2016:31). The evaluation seeks to improve school departments responsible for teaching and non-teaching staff, financial management, infrastructure and the school community. As Donkor and Asante (2016:74) explain, WSE supports instructional leadership to assist teachers to acquire the skills necessary to improve their teaching and learning during peer collaboration on school premises. In accordance with the ideals of constructivism, stakeholders use their sets of experiences to construct their own knowledge through collaborative engagement with peers and the environment (Nudzor, Dare, Oduro, Bosu & Addy 2016:439). The newly

constructed knowledge, which is a product of prior knowledge and experiences, is used in the exploration of guidelines to leverage the evaluation of quality and the standards of education in schools.

Brown, McNamara, O'Brien, Skerritt, O'Hara, Faddar, Cingir, Van Hoof, Figueiredo and Kurum (2020:91) state that, by involving teachers, learners and parents in WSE processes, greater responsibility and accountability emanated from their roles. These key stakeholders have voices to empower schools to ensure quality education and overall improvement. They are key stakeholders whose democratic rights are enshrined in the WSE policy guidelines, to make valuable contributions to shared decision-making in schools.

The introduction of Whole School Development in Ghana's schools was deemed a strategy to improve the overall performances of schools. The Whole School Development document contains guidelines that clearly outline the importance of mutual and collaborative partnerships between district offices, community leadership, teachers, learners and school-level leadership for effective school management and governance (Abreh 2017:62). Among its basic functions, as reflected in the guidelines, Whole School Development supports the drawing up of school action plans, and appraisal of school structures (Abreh 2017:63).

The literature reviewed in this section referred to skills development and the use of lived experiences for knowledge creation, as the ingredients of the guidelines in an exploration of the implementation of WSE at schools. It is also apparent that the literature reveals and embraces the power balance amongst the stakeholders, in order to ensure informed decision-making for effective implementation of WSE. The power balance, furthermore, promotes community involvement in the work of schools.

3.3.5 Demands of whole-school evaluation change in Zambia

In the Zambian context, whole school development is seen as a mechanism to improve the academic, infrastructural, social and safety environment of schools. The process is aimed at ensuring the establishment of an environment that is conducive to excellent teaching and learning by stakeholders, such as district offices, SMTs, teachers, learners and community leadership (Lotz-Sisitka, Shumba, Lupele & Wilmot 2017:180). Whole school development encourages stakeholders to form small groups

of eight to 10 members, and they use rich resources of knowledge and experience to explore the guidelines to improve its implementation in schools. Booklets containing the guidelines that were developed collaboratively by the participants are distributed to schools to enhance their problem-solving skills, critical thinking and reflection on existing school policies on the implementation processes (Lotz-Sisitka *et al.* 2017:181).

The Zambian Education School-Based Training (ZEST) programme is designed to embrace the guidelines that assist in improving quality education in schools. The explored guidelines are based on the notion that, in a sociocultural context, knowledge among the stakeholders is co-constructed through collaboration, participation and reflection (Stutchbury, Gallastegi & Woodward 2019:211). The programme encapsulates guidelines that support collaborative planning in school stakeholder group meetings. The socially constructed knowledge and understanding generated by such stakeholder collaborations are useful to empower and improve the implementation of overall school activities, in order to enhance quality assurance. Views, beliefs and lived experiences emanating from group discussions were considered as themes and categories to be included in the exploration of the guidelines.

Teachers, as one of the stakeholder components, play an important role in the planning and utilisation of the guidelines on school premises, as they effectively facilitate learners' acquisition of desirable knowledge, skills, values and attitudes (Mulenga & Lubasi 2019:64). In line with the propositions of the SCT that underpin this study, "knowledge is constructed by an individual through interaction with other people" (Musonda 2016:16). Habler, Hennessy and Cross (2015:809) contend that, according to collaborative learning theory principles, learners, as among the important stakeholders, benefit from active participation in cooperative learning with their peers. That exercise offers learners an opportunity to share their views, beliefs and lived experiences with their peers, and for the resultant decisions to be exposed to scrutiny before they were incorporated in the final guidelines.

3.3.6 Effects of changes in whole-school evaluation in South Africa

In the South African context, an overarching responsibility of the minister of Education is the assurance of quality of education in the country. An introduction to the National

Policy on Whole-school Evaluation of 2001 of the Ministry of Education (Kemper 2021:1) is accompanied by guidelines that prescribe interactive and transparent processes. The WSE model is based on the premise that it is less punitive than the old inspectorate but more supportive, and expects school support structures to agree on improvement targets and developmental plans (Department of Education 2002:3).

Before the WSE was enacted as national school policy, the Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC) tabled Collective Agreement 4 of 1998, which promotes the developmental appraisal system, which is focused on the personal and professional development of educators with a view to identifying and drawing up programmes to address their strong and weak points. Since the introduction of WSE in 2001, the focus has been on the school as a whole, rather than simply on individuals and their performance (Sayed, Kanjee & Nkomo 2013:21). The guidelines included in the WSE depict the process as a collaborative one, since it embraces the involvement of external evaluators, SMTs, teachers, learners and parents (Msezane 2020:721).

The National Education Policy Act, 1996 (Act No. 27 of 1996) on WSE is based, amongst others, on the following legislative prescripts:

i) It seeks to ensure that school evaluation is carried out according to an agreed national model, and all the stakeholders entrusted with such responsibilities do comply.
ii) It seeks to ensure that all children are given an equal opportunity to make the best use of their capabilities.
iii) The policy is supported by national guidelines and criteria for evaluation, to be collaboratively used by relevant stakeholders in order to ensure consistency in the evaluation of schools (South Africa 2001d:7).

The legislative prescripts outlined above indicate that WSE is a cornerstone of quality assurance at schools. WSE, furthermore, reveals the extent to which schools meet national goals and the needs of the communities they serve. The inclusion of the guidelines in the WSE document ensures an increase in the level of accountability in the education system. Govender, Grobler and Mestry (2015:1) postulate that WSE is a worldwide, contemporary approach to school improvement, in which guidelines and strategies to improve teaching and learning are adopted. In the South African context, WSE is a process designed at the level of the national Department of Education to

improve classroom practice and, ultimately, the whole-school performance. Chavalala (2015:25) contends that WSE affords schools an opportunity to do introspection, in accordance with the objectives set out by the national Department of Basic Education. The objectives of WSE appeal to stakeholders to work collaboratively through employment of critical thinking and cooperative learning, in order to arrive at group-informed decisions. Through interpretivist interactions, stakeholders are able to co-create useful knowledge, to be utilised in intervention strategies and incorporated in the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools. In Section 3.4, challenges to the implementation of WSE will be discussed.

3.4 CHALLENGES FACING THE EXPLORATION OF GUIDELINES TO IMPROVE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION

3.4.1 Inadequate training

Adequate training plays a pivotal role in the successful implementation of any programme in an organisation. Brunetti, Raitano and Ferri (2019:2) define training as an action taken to improve the skills, attitudes and behaviour of an individual, with the intention to promote the personal growth, lifelong learning of teachers and SMT and SGB members, as well excellence of an organisation. SCT emphasises the active role of the learner in the acquisition of skills, self-efficacy and autonomy through participation and social interactions. Inadequate training hinders teachers from effectively transferring their created knowledge on skills acquisition to learners and members of the school community (Talvio, Lonka, Komulainen, Kuusela & Lintunen 2013:696).

In the USA, inadequate training of teachers means they lack knowledge on how to implement change strategies (OECD 2013:394). If this happens, teachers are unable to effect the correct implementation of the explored guidelines and strategies. Chong and Lee (2020:3) report inadequate training and lack of expertise on WSE issues by district officials and SMTs in Singapore as among the main contributing factors to its poor implementation. The inadequately trained district officials lack competence and confidence to convey the rich knowledge on WSE implementation to teachers. These studies also reveal a lack of interdisciplinary collaboration between the teachers at school level, which is an impeding factor for effective implementation.

In the Ghanaian context, inadequate training of district education officials results in weak supervision of SMTs, teachers and school governing bodies and, subsequently, failure to comply with the implementation of WSE guidelines (Aryeh-Adjei 2021:90). Aryeh-Adjei (2021:91) posits, furthermore, that a delay in the provision of funds for stakeholder quality training by the Ghanaian education department poses another challenge. Bekoe, Quartey and Teye (2013:129) postulate that, in some instances, financial support from the Ghanaian government is inadequate to sustain the stakeholder training.

Ladden (2015:84) asserts that inadequate training compromises the capacity of teachers to collaborate at school level and to apply their acquired knowledge to achieve the expected school performance. Since our study was located in the constructivist perspective, inadequate training denied stakeholders, including teachers, the opportunity to collaborate and share their lived experiences, beliefs and opinions regarding the provision of quality education at school. One of the basic assumptions underpinning the interpretivist paradigm embraces the notion that knowledge is socially constructed by active participants.

In Zambia, a lack of funds results in a shortage of training guides earmarked for the training of stakeholders on the guidelines of the WSE process. The unavailability of training guides undermines the quality of teacher collaborations and critical thinking, which should be supported by guidelines included in such policies (Gallastegi *et al.* 2019:1). Konayuma (2015:13) corroborates this assertion of Gallastegi *et al.* that general financial constraints in Zambian education are considered one of the primary stumbling blocks to conducting adequate training. On numerous occasions, the education department has experienced a scarcity of training manuals on WSE. Lack of effective training and access to resources causes a lack of confidence in teachers – the trainees during the workshops (Namaiko 2020:7).

Lack of departmental support in terms of capacitation and training makes it difficult for teachers and schools to implement self-school evaluation and, hence, WSE (Madikida 2016:43). Proper and enough funding are required and necessary to conduct quality training of teachers and acquire material resources of the education sector (Ndou 2020:13).

In the South African context, like in Japan, inadequate training of teachers emanates from, amongst other causes, the absence of training courses on the school evaluation process at tertiary institutions (Hashimoto 2018:45). The absence of training courses on school evaluation at the tertiary institutions and public schools is exacerbated further by inadequate funding or poor budgeting. District offices and schools and are unable to employ evaluators, coordinators, mentors or assistants to lead school evaluation processes (Hashimoto 2018:46). Sigudla (2019:62) points out that strategic and financial planning for training is inadequate. This indicates that the funds that are allocated for workshops for training stakeholders is not distributed equitably. Lack of funding normally leads to a lack of consistency in training and support during WSE workshops, and this negatively affects the training quality (Van Kuijk *et al.* 2021:152). Geldenhuys and Oosthuizen (2015:204) claim that, in some instances, the time allocated for training for WSE vis-à-vis the voluminous package of training material was inadequate. This implies that, during the workshops, the trainers and trainees did not have enough time to peruse the training manuals in depth, which undermined the quality of the training.

The literature reviewed in this section illustrates that schools are important social institutions for assisting learners to obtain quality education. The reviewed literature reveals that learners' day-to-day interactions and experiences with their peers and teachers are integral to their knowledge creation, which benefits their futures and wellbeing. As claimed by SCT, knowledge that is co-created in collaboration with peers and other school and community members is a powerful tool that equipped SMT members, teachers and SGB members to explore guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools. It is this background that exposes the importance of the national and provincial education ministries and the district offices in eliminating the factors that undermine the quality of training the stakeholders are exposed to.

3.4.2 Lack of commitment by school management teams

In the USA, research reveals a lack of an exercise of authority by SMT members to be one of the contributory factors to the failure of school management to commit to effective improvement of WSE at schools (Taahayadin & Daud 2018:27). Research postulates that a failure to manage leadership power, which subsequently resulted in a lack of commitment by the SMT, compromised effective strategies for effective

implementation of WSE at schools. Further consequences of a lack of commitment by management to the WSE process are a lack of trust by teachers, and absence of a sense of belonging. Sun, Penner and Loeb (2017:622) claim that failure to use leadership and management skills as drivers for change compromise policy guidelines on the implementation of WSE. Lack of support and commitment by the SMT, compromises the collaboration of teachers regarding an efficient team teaching.

McLoughlin, Massey, Lane, Calvert, Turner and Hager (2020:8) posit that, in the USA, a lack of commitment by management means few strategies are identified by school administrators and staff to link the WSCC policy to its actual implementation practices in some schools. The WSCC model supports the policy implementation and collaboration between the school and the community in a manner that prioritises child wellbeing. According to McGrath and Noble (2010:87), failure by some SMTs to keep parents adequately informed about the policy, undermines the importance and implementation of WSCC in schools.

In some schools in Ghana, some teachers cited a lack of commitment by SMT members to monitor and supervise the WSE process effectively as a glaring challenge (Cobbinah & Eshun 2021:10). Inadequate monitoring and supervision yield teachers and parents who lack motivation to participate in the process. Teachers' lack of understanding of the WSE process undermines its effective implementation in schools, leading to the provision of poor-quality education. Zeng, Tong and Li (2022:32) corroborate Cobbinah and Eshun (2021:10), and state that some teachers lack understanding of and confidence in effectively following the guidelines to implement the WSE process, due to a lack of training, which is, in turn, the result of a lack of commitment by SMTs.

In Canada, a lack of leadership quality from SMTs and the paucity of teamwork among staff members undermine the effective implementation of WSE at schools (Rocha-Lona, Garza-Reyes & Kumar 2013:139). Mincu (2015:260) claims that, unless teachers believe they can make a difference and have a collaborative commitment to do so, the impact of the envisaged guidelines on improving the implementation of WSE will be seriously diminished. According to Andrews and Conway (2020:8), unless schools have clear guidelines for improving the implementation of WSE, schools will

be unable to build the staff capacity to sustain continuous improvement or to manage the change effectively.

Some teachers claim that a lack of clarity on the application of some guidelines for improving the implementation of WSE at their schools emanates from a lack of commitment by the SMTs to properly disseminate information (Wu, Chartier, Ly, Phanlouvong, Thomas, Weenusk, Murdock, Munro & Sareen 2019:7). A lack of buy-in from educators is a fundamental challenge to the effective implementation of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools (Runions, Pearce & Cross 2021:2).

For successful implementation of programmes such as WSE, schools need robust SMTs that embrace the collaboration of relevant stakeholders in strategic positions. It is expected of the SMTs to enhance teachers' and SGB members' interpersonal skills, and establish rapport with staff, learners and school communities (Runions *et al.* 20121:14). Blouin, Tekian and Harris (2019:665) state that, in schools with a lack of commitment by the SMT to properly oversee quality assurance programmes, a culture of an inability to sustain the interpersonal cohesion of staff members is created, which breeds uncertainty and low morale, and guidelines relating to policy stipulations are unlikely to be adhered to.

The knowledge in the literature cited in this section is an indication of the negative impact of inadequate leadership and management skills by SMTs. Such a lack of skills culminates in a paucity of teamwork and the will to provide learners with quality education, which is their right as enshrined in the constitution of the country.

A lack of commitment by some school managers in Ghana means staff members of various categories are untrained (Bush & Glover 2016:21), and teachers perceive the WSE programme officers as their supervisors. Baidoo (2020:27) states that, in Ghanaian schools where there is a lack of commitment by school management, school management is unable to differentiate its role and responsibilities regarding the execution of the implementation of WSE. Deficient teacher–management relationships that result from a lack of commitment by the SMTs obstruct the development of teachers' competence or skills and empowerment regarding the implementation of WSE at schools (Kamaruzaman, Musa & Hashim 2020:233). In any school, it is expected of the SMT to strengthen the capacities of the staff to acquire skills so that

they can effectively implement WSE at schools. The envisaged and explored guidelines will equip SMTs with appropriate skills and will detail practices that will show openness and accountability in their school management operations (Abreh 2017:72).

It is evident from the literature that schools need efficient leadership and management if WSE is to be implemented effectively. Efficient leadership and management are the necessary ingredients of managing staff in order to achieve the set targets and goals. Furthermore, the role of collaboration among critical stakeholders, such as district officials, teachers and parents, is of paramount importance, as they are the driving forces for the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools.

In Zambia, the Standard and Evaluation Guidelines of April 2015 (Jung, Kwauk, Nuran, Pelrman Robinson, Schouten & Tanjeb 2016:14) is a document that establishes the minimum standards for educational inputs, processes and outputs across all education sectors. A scoping review by Chipindi and Doyle (2017:13) identifies ineffective school management and supervision as challenges contributing to low learner attainment in schools. Our study explored guidelines that would provide an overall quality improvement of WSE to mitigate the negative impact of those daunting issues. Qablan (2018:133) posits that a failure by SMTs to align education policies with pedagogical practices of the school staff is a contributing factor to the poor implementation of WSE guidelines at schools. The explored guidelines must seek to motivate teachers to effect change in the surrounding school and community environments. As a constructivist, I align my thinking with the belief that the participants have pre-knowledge of the existing guidelines, and, as such, the envisaged guidelines were explored, built and understood from that knowledge.

Dlamini and Mafumbate (2019:11) argue that unclear and poor leadership styles lead to poor school management, which results in poor implementation of school policies such as WSE. The explored guidelines will embrace stakeholder participation and collaboration that support the responsibilities that must be shared throughout the school as an organisation. Tinsley and Agapitova (2018:35) state that, in developing countries such as Zambia, SMTs lack the skills to monitor and evaluate the WSE process systematically. This shortcoming results in schools being unable to develop and implement whole-school improvement plans. Mpolomoka, Mwanza, Mabenga,

Muvombo, Matimba, Ng'uni and Banda (2019:5) argue that a lack of commitment by some SMTs results in a lack of democratic control and transparency. An absence of commitment slows down work on the implementation of WSE processes. The situation, furthermore, hinders people's participation and contribution in the development of the school.

The literature suggests that teachers tend to believe that their ideas on the effective implementation of WSE are not considered, and that they are excluded from the school's decision-making. Teachers believed that expertise gained from WSE training would not be used to the full extent. Excluding teachers from the decision-making on school premises, caused them to lose trust and confidence that SMT members would guide them correctly to implement other school programmes or policies.

For South Africa, Gautam and Ramashia (2017:2) assert that a lack of commitment by some SMTs manifests as a lack of support, communication and understanding among the teachers. This is worsened by evaluation that is not explicit enough, as WSE guidelines are not followed during the implementation. Bbenkele and Madikiza (2016:95) contend that lack of knowledge; clarity and support for various school departments from SMTs are significant barriers to the implementation of WSE at schools. Schools that are poorly managed in terms of ensuring the sound implementation of WSE guidelines are unresponsive to the needs of the teachers, learners and the communities that they serve. This is indicative of a clear correlation between a lack of support by the SMT and the SMT's lack of understanding of the WSE process that they are responsible for managing (Van der Voort & Wood 2016:2).

Ehren, Paterson and Baxter (2019:21) argue that a lack of support and capacity breaks down trust, as it signals a lack of benevolence by the creation of uncertainty in teachers regarding the implementation of WSE guidelines. Unless SMTs support and monitor WSE processes, guidelines will be poorly implemented, and performance targets become meaningless. According to Mathaba and Dorasamy (2015:153), a lack of commitment by SMTs infringes on their mandate to ensure accountability, responsibility and transparency on school premises. The effective implementation of WSE policy guidelines will ensure that SMTs act responsibly in their daily operations towards achieving the core of their responsibilities, which is achieving learning outcomes, as depicted through learner achievement. In the context of SCT, if teachers

are denied the space and time to reflect on their contribution to WSE implementation, they are actually denied an opportunity to become creators of knowledge (Aldridge *et al.* 2021:185).

SMTs that are casual about and not committed to the effective implementation of the guidelines of WSE policy do not promote competence in the intensification of knowledge, skills and practical experience among the staff remembers (Mestry 2017:2). Schools that compromise the effective implementation of WSE guidelines stand in the way of the acquisition of problem-solving skills and well-informed decision-making, which also undermines the provision of quality education. Furthermore, the poor implementation of WSE processes gives rise to a school that lacks direction, which will be evident in poor learner outcomes. A lack of commitment by the SMT will compromise teachers' social interactions, which is one of the ingredients of teacher collaboration (Tsakeni, Munje & Jita 2020:355). In such school situations, teachers normally feel hard done by SMTs that do not engage them in team building as part of the distributed leadership of the implementation of school policies.

This study focused on exploring guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools. The reviewed literature reveals a general misalignment between policy implementation and practice on school premises, which is spearheaded by a lack of support by SMTs – one of the key stakeholders. Furthermore, policy inconsistencies from management, coupled with some SMTs not being conversant with the WSE policy guidelines, hamper the delivery of the policy content (Molete, Stewart, Bosire & Igumbor 2020:8). According to the tenets of SCT, an SMT is expected to play an interactive role with all stakeholders who invest their interest in education. As a constructivist researcher, I hold the notion that SMTs should lead schools in teamwork practice through inspiration and motivation, as part of their job descriptions. I also support the constructivist stance that teachers can collaborate and construct an understanding and knowledge of WSE guidelines through experiences and reflection on those experiences.

3.4.3 Inadequate funding

One of the explanations of the term funding (Webster's Dictionary 2021:Online) is that it is the provision of monetary resources to a person, a business or any other private or public institution for the successful completion of a project. Funding is a sum of

money budgeted for or made available for a particular purpose (Oxford English Dictionary 2021).

In the USA, both the Great Recession and the Covid-19 pandemic led to school funding cuts. Persistent school funding cuts are causal factors of poor learner outcomes and inadequate teacher training programmes (American University 2020:2). Since school funding is key to equitable education, the American federal government deems it fit to increase the financial budgets to improve the implementation of education policies for provision of quality education (American University 2020:4). Knoff (2021:6) argues that lack of funding is a stumbling block to equipping stakeholders through sound WSE training. A lack of funds impacts negatively on the fostering of stakeholder accountability via shared leadership that truly empowers school programmes such as WSE.

Chen (2020:5) asserts that a decrease in funding contributes to less resources for the capacitation of stakeholders. If the financial budget that is used to compile the training material for teacher development programmes such as WSE, is decreased, such a budget falls short of the purpose it was planned for.

The USA uses local property taxes as the main source of funding for public education. In the absence of a local property tax as a funding model for education, effective implementation of WSE programme, as a reform target that matters, is compromised (Martin, Boser, Benner & Baffour 2018:8). Policymakers in the USA, furthermore, use funds from local property taxes to explore the guidelines for implementing the WSE programme effectively to ensure the provision of quality education.

In Finland, policymakers have noticed a decline in teacher participation in teacher training programmes that support their professional development. The effects of poorly organised teacher training programmes, like that for WSE, are exacerbated by a lack of funds (Lavonen 2018:8). Training that is badly organised because of a lack of funds also compromises collaboration among the teachers, which could have led to networking for the of sharing ideas, experiences and beliefs (Lavonen 2018:8). In Nigeria, poor accountability and delays in funds being allocated to education are counted among the contributing factors that hamper progress in the implementation of WSE at schools (Ige 2016:239). Education plans, programmes and budgets earmarked for teacher development are not worth the paper they are written on. This

frustrates district officials and schools, as they are unable to execute their plans due to financial constraints.

In Botswana, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF 2017:12) suggests that poor planning in the fiscal year results in bottlenecks in the spending capacity of funds allocated to drive educational programmes. This underfunding poses a considerable challenge to achieving policy targets and the envisaged guidelines incorporated in the WSE regarding the provision of quality education (UNICEF 2017:13). Underfunding of the budget compromises the quality and knowledge creation of the training materials on WSE. This frustrates district officials who are expected to conduct sound and quality training for stakeholders. In Zambia, inadequate funding hampers the ability of the Ministry of General Education to conduct fully fledged training for skills development (UNICEF 2019:6). This failure compromises stakeholder collaboration on the creation of new knowledge to support existing WSE guidelines. Empowerment through skills development acts as refresher courses that could provide the education sector and schools with better ideas on how to improve implementation of WSE at schools.

In South Africa, there is no budget to service WSE programmes, due to the cessation of the conditional grant that was specifically allocated to support district officials and schools (Madikida 2016:129). This implies that there is no budget for training in districts and schools because of a shortage of funds. Education research shows that there is a strong link between the financial resources and learner achievement (Mestry 2020:3). To address equity and social justice at district and school levels, it is the National Ministry of Education's prerogative to avail funds to support school programmes such as WSE.

A shortage of government funds for financing WSE hinders in-service training at district levels, and exposes a lack of accountability regarding education expenditure (Chikoko & Mthembu 2020:3). The financial resources available at school levels cover only operational costs, and this subsequently makes it difficult for schools to effectively implement programmes such as WSE (Baghdady & Zaki 2019:11). The scarcity of funds poses a challenge to preparation and arrangement of training for stakeholders on the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools. One of the main reasons for shortages in financing for WSE programmes at schools

is that about 80% of the total education budget is spent on teacher salaries. This financial constraint leaves no additional budget to fund programmes such as WSE at district and school levels (Saba 2018:32). This indicates that programmes such as WSE often tend to get a minimal share of the education budget expenditure in South Africa, compared to other budget-driven education-related programmes (Hondonga & Ramaligela 2020:57).

The literature reviewed in this section reveals that funding mechanisms in education play a pivotal role in the success of WSE. Without well and pre-planned budgets, education institutions are unlikely to be able to carry out their mandated responsibilities, such as in-service training and work. Lack of funding compromises the co-creation of knowledge, which would constructively capacitate teachers, parents and district officials to explore guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools. Policymakers and other government stakeholders need to collaborate to decide on effective and efficient budgets that could assist districts and schools to achieve their envisaged goals.

3.4.4 Lack of parental involvement

According to the Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary and Thesaurus (2020), involvement means the “act or process of taking part in something”. The Oxford English Dictionary (2021) defines involvement as the “condition of participating in something”. Schools appear to accept that, if teachers, parents and district office officials are actively involved in ongoing WSE policy implementation, learners can, in the long run, benefit from stakeholder engagement. This inevitably means that stakeholders need to collaborate to seek mutual understanding and ways forward (Hornby & Blackwell 2018:118). Parental involvement is defined as the activities occurring between a parent and a child or between a parent and teachers at school that may contribute to the child’s educational outcomes and development (Cheng & Chen 2018:3).

In the United Kingdom, parents’ educational background is considered to be one of the factors affecting parental involvement in school matters. Studies reveal that parents with low levels of education do not feel confident about participating in academic matters involving programmes such as WSE (Javarov 2015:38). Since parents are one of the most important stakeholders in school governance, it is

incumbent on districts and schools to empower parents to participate in school programmes such as WSE. Their level of education should not be an excuse to avoid working together with schools to empower them on the effective implementation of WSE guidelines. According to PAR, the parents should be involved in the research, which should be done *with* them as participants, and not *for* them. Parents' views, beliefs and experiences were invaluable in exploring the guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools.

In England, lack of parental engagement and involvement compromises decision-making of stakeholders and forging forward in some school programmes (Higgins & Katsipataki 2015:282). Failure by the SMT, teachers and SGB members to collaborate to leverage the performances of schools through school programmes such WSE, is considered an abdication of responsibility. Durisic and Bunijevac (2017:145) assert that some parents do not participate in school programmes, such as WSE, because they are intimidated by the language medium used during the stakeholder collaboration. The intimidating nature of language for parents compromises the partnership and social interactions that could otherwise encourage teachers and parents to share expertise on knowledge creation that would be beneficial to the exploration of WSE guidelines.

In Nigeria, some schools leave education matters in the hands of school administrators and teachers alone (Fajoju, Aluede & Ojugo 2016:34). The practice of leaving the educational process in the hands of schools only is viewed as a failure to empower parents to participate in programme settings, such as WSE. Akindipe (2015:41) states that teachers who doubt parents' self-efficacy (an individual's belief in their capacity to execute the behaviour necessary to produce specific performance attainment) are considered as barriers to parental involvement, because they demoralise parents, who then do not participate in school research projects for the provision of quality education. Excluding parents from participating in school programmes denies them an opportunity to co-construct new knowledge and develop skills pertinent to the exploration of guidelines for an improved WSE implementation.

Hill, Whitherspoon and Bartz (2018:23) state that lack of parental involvement in school programmes denies parents the opportunity to collaborate and communicate their ideas, beliefs and experiences with teachers on how the guidelines can assist

schools to improve the implementation of WSE. Liu, Sulaimani and Henning (2020:162) posit that time constraints faced by working parents act as barriers to parental involvement in schools. Such parents have little time for participation in school programmes due to their work schedules.

In Zambia, attitudes of teachers that are unwelcoming towards parents, and a lack of communication by schools generally are some of the prominent factors that negatively impact on parental involvement in school programmes (Mwase, Simuyaba, Mwewa, Muleya & Simui 2020:358). Some parents believe that teachers look down on them due to parents' low levels of education. The belief and thinking behind this, as explained by parents, are that parents lack the capacity to engage in educational policy discussions on programmes such as WSE.

According to Simweleba and Serpell (2020:8), the language of everyday discourse in some schools in Zambia poses a serious challenge to some parents to engage in discussions regarding school programmes. The implication is that any language foreign to the parents works against fulfilling the intended goal. For these parents the language aspect is an intimidating factor that diminishes their confidence in their contribution of useful knowledge in the WSE implementation. Such an interaction results in a parental withdrawal instead of a parental participation. Some parents work long hours, and that prevents them from participating in empowering school programmes.

Ngulube, Njelesani and Njelesani (2020:21) argue that a lack of parental involvement in school programmes emanates from a failure by SMTs to promote the principles of networking and partnership in their community. In such instances, parents feel they are neglected and ignored, and this has a negative effect on their confidence to participate in educational programmes.

In South Africa, some parents cite the size and bureaucracy of schools as barriers to parental involvement in school programmes. Poor and unresponsive relationships with teachers are cited by parents as some of the factors contributing to low levels of parental involvement in academic programmes such as WSE at schools (Allen & White-Smith 2018:413). Maringe, Masirine and Nkambule (2015:375) assert that parents' lack of education is one of the barriers that constrains parental participation in school programmes. Parents use their work schedules as excuses in attempts to

avoid exposing their lack of education, frustrations and lack of availability (Maringe *et al.* 2015:376).

Jeynes (2018:160) postulates that, over several years, teacher resistance has been the most persistent barrier to parental involvement in some school programmes. Teachers justify their resistance as a matter of professionalism. Some teachers view parental involvement as interference rather than involvement in their profession.

Like in England, one of the greatest challenges to parental involvement in school programmes such as WSE, is that some parents cannot read or write, and can only communicate in their mother tongue (Ntekane 2018:3). Xaba (2015:202) reports that a lack of time and communication are barriers that impede parental involvement in school programmes. Failure to interpret the meaning of WSE guidelines was considered a barrier to parental involvement in the programme.

A lack of communication between the parents and the school brings disharmony between these two important stakeholders. This failure denies the parents an opportunity and the quest to suggest strategies that might be incorporated in the envisaged guidelines regarding the improved WSE implementation (Makgopa & Mokhele 2013:223). A lack of constructive parental involvement results in a lack of empowerment of parents regarding informed decision-making on sound school policies such as WSE. If schools experience a decline in parental involvement, parents are robbed of their right to collaborate in shared responsibilities that enhance their roles as custodians of their children's education (Lachman, Sherr, Cluver, Ward, Hutchings & Gardner 2016:19). Marginalised parents are deprived of their mandatory powers as entrenched in the SASA and the constitution of the country to add value to school policies that improve schools holistically.

The reviewed literature depicts some of the most prominent factors that impact negatively on sound parental involvement in school programmes. To ensure the successful implementation of WSE at schools, teachers need to accommodate and acknowledge the pivotal role played by parents in school matters, irrespective of their education levels. In order to enhance parents' roles in WSE programmes, there is a need from the side of schools to allow parents to use the language they feel comfortable with during stakeholder interactions and collaborations. Since the research project was done in collaboration with parents, and not for them, in line with

PAR principles, using a language familiar to parents as a means of communication effectively allowed them to narrate their beliefs, opinions and experiences without fear, favour and prejudice. This fairness and unbiased approach assisted in responding to the objectives of study. Section 3.5 will discuss conditions that promote the successful implementation of the envisaged guidelines.

3.5 CONDITIONS CONDUCIVE TO THE EXPLORATION OF GUIDELINES TO IMPROVE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION

The study is aimed to explore the guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools. The success of the exploration of guidelines is based on the cultivation of a favourable environment for stakeholders to collaborate to create sound working conditions. In the previous section, the activities that pose challenges to the exploration of guidelines were discussed. This section of the literature review will discuss the conditions conducive to the successful implementation of WSE at schools.

3.5.1 Conditions conducive to sound training

In Ireland, the education department decentralised policy training, such that there was no need for top-down inspections to classify WSE guidelines under reformed initiatives (Brown, McNamara, O'Brien, Cinkir, Fadar, Figueiredo, Vanhoof, O'Hara, Skerritt, Kuruman & Ramalho 2021:2). Creating such an environment was a key condition for allowing and supporting stakeholders' voices in the exploration of guidelines for an improved WSE implementation at schools. The condition also gave stakeholders exposure to social interaction and a collaborative environment under which a shared vision and decision-making can be embraced (Brown *et al.* 2021:4).

In the South African context, training on WSE should take place in a non-threatening environment, which allows the stakeholders to share feedback, strategies, experiences and insights among themselves. Such collaborations assist in building trust among members of the school community and encourages buy-in by teachers in the training strategies (Aldridge *et al.* 2021:192). The environment should embrace conditions that allow the stakeholder training to empower them to take decisions that benefit the school and the community. Teacher training should concentrate on their abilities to involve parents in WSE policy implementation, in order to enhance their

roles in the support and holistic development of schools (De Villiers, Steyn, Draper, Hill, Dalais, Fourie, Lombard, Barkhuizen & Lambert 2015:11). Scherman, Bosker and Howie (2017:48) claim that the conditions under which teachers are trained on WSE, should assist them to overcome resistance to collaboration, which is based on fear of their performance being harshly judged by their peers and the SMT. The expectation of teachers was for the training to empower them on the exploration of the envisaged guidelines, and that it should address the lack of capacity in the implementation process, to the benefit of their learners (Scherman *et al.* 2017:49).

At school level, the creation of conditions conducive to teacher training sought to embrace the restoration of professional accountability, by which teachers would be held accountable by their peers for adhering to professional norms Ehren, Paterson & Baxter 2020:3). Training on guidelines embedded in the WSE policy ensured that the school and teachers provided multiple stakeholders with insight into their educational processes, decision-making, implementation and results (Ehren *et al.* 2019:4). Silbert (2019:158) articulates there is a need for conditions that ensure coherence between WSE policy and teacher capacitation. According to constructivism theory, people build knowledge from experience. Through interaction and integration with peers during the training sessions, teachers learned to interpret their perceptions, prior knowledge and beliefs regarding the attainment of skills (Sehlapelo 2021:23). This implies that, by holding teacher collaborations under favourable conditions allowed them to have discourses on improving WSE guidelines, in a school environment as their natural setting.

In Kenya, teachers utilise school environments that are favourable for dialogue and negotiation to thrive and improve the implementation of WSE guidelines (Pia, Kennedy & Vundi 2015:95). In a South African context, by viewing this study through a lens of constructivism, teachers needed to have dialogue among themselves regarding the construction of knowledge from their ideas, beliefs and experiences during the training process. Teachers were able to compare and contrast themes emerging from their discussions before making informed decisions. The creation of such social and conducive conditions allowed teachers to negotiate facts and ideas, that would subsequently result in the formation of themes to be used for the formulation of strategies, to be included in the explored guidelines to improve WSE implementation. In Zimbabwe, training of teachers is based on constructivism; it is a social process in

which teachers learn from and with others in collaborative engagement (Mukeredzi 2016:88). Viewed in South African context, sound training that takes place in a relaxed and conducive atmosphere subjects teachers to a meaning-making process while they are in interaction. Interaction with knowledgeable mentors, colleagues and parents for knowledge construction was critical for the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools (Mukeredzi 2016:89).

As an interpretivist researcher, I embrace the notion that stakeholders participated in this research as co-researchers with prior knowledge, and not as tabula rasa. The stakeholders also acquired new knowledge and experiences based on prior knowledge. Thus, training that supports critical thinking and reflection on WSE policy assisted them to develop expertise and acquire rich feedback from knowledgeable others.

3.5.2 Conditions conducive for school management teams

This study employed a socio-constructivist paradigm. Socio-constructivists believe that stakeholders create knowledge and reality within their natural settings. I, therefore, sought to understand how an SMT could create conditions conducive to the exploration of guidelines in order to improve the implementation of WSE in the particular context of their school. Drawing from a broader context, the Swedish education system emphasises the school conditions that embrace excellence and equity. Participants in education are encouraged to achieve excellence from an equity point of view. The policy operations of SMTs and other stakeholders, such as teachers and parents, for WSE are geared for the provision of high-quality education (Pettersson, Prøitz & Forsberg 2017:731).

In South Africa, a school environment that builds a sustainable and collaborative climate of trust among the SMT, teachers and parents is vital for the effective implementation of WSE in institutions (Bhengu, Mchunu & Bayeni 2020:1). The SMT should ensure that the prevailing conditions on school premises are free of obstacles and allow teachers to learn from each other (Sehlapelo 2021:25). Members of the SMT, with the principal at the forefront, are the critical figures in the leadership equation, and have to create conditions conducive for the implementation of WSE at schools. This is achievable if all the SMT members adopt shared leadership and

influence and guide fellow team members to maximise the potential of the team to achieve the objectives of the school (Du Plessis & Heystek 2020:844).

Ubogu (2016:14) opines that, in Nigeria, SMTs create conditions conducive to a free flow of knowledge and ideas regarding the techniques of negotiation and peer mediation on the envisaged guidelines. Such conditions are favourable for assisting stakeholders in the process of acquiring the core values and knowledge and developing skills in collaboration with others within their natural setting (Ubogu 2016:89). The Malawian educational context places more emphasis on the school and policy conditions that support empowerment and growth of stakeholders (Kaluwa 2015:24). In the context of this study, such conditions allow SMT members to engage teachers in dialogue and communication to generate rich data on how best the school can explore guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE. In South Africa, collaborated leadership involves sharing tasks among group members (Mapaire 2019:14). The school climate should assist the SMT to navigate a school vision that embraces the successful implementation of WSE policy. The social interaction of stakeholders should enhance their capacities to execute their strategies and roles in the implementation of guidelines of WSE at schools.

From the review of the literature, it can be deduced that the conducive conditions for effective implementation of WSE guidelines are characterised by professional leadership under a purposeful and participative SMT (Ntseto 2015:103). Conditions that support a shared vision and goals reflecting unity of purpose and collaborative practices are of vital importance for stakeholders, because such conditions enhance their decision-making and also support the execution of their roles on programmes such as WSE.

3.5.3 Conditions conducive to funding

Financial management is one of the key factors in the implementation of school policies to achieve the vision, mission and the goals of each school in South Africa. As required by the legal framework, the principal and the SGB need to work collaboratively with each other to manage the schools' finances (Bush 2016:17). Schools should create conducive conditions for all SBG members to be thoroughly trained on how funds are allocated by schools for training on policies such as WSE. Well organised and packaged training will go a long way in capacitating the

stakeholders to explore and implement the WSE guidelines effectively and holistically regarding the provision of quality education. Baker, Farrie and Sciarra (2016:3) posit that conditions in the districts, as well as in schools, that are characterised by a combination of a responsible funding and sound accountability systems, breed successful implementation of policies such as WSE. Since the time of the inception of the new dispensation, the reviewed and newly explored WSE guidelines invigorated and empowered the schools with new strategies to improve the implementation of WSE.

In Thailand, principals are expected to be managerial leaders who promote a good school environment. The school environment thus created should enhance policy implementation that reflects school autonomy and accountability (Patrinos, Arcia & MacDonald 2015:430). In this instance, school autonomy refers to a school's authority to make decisions on budget planning, and accountability refers to school authorities' acceptance of responsibility for the school's compliance with the rules and regulations of school governance (Patrinos *et al.* 2016:431). Schools in South Africa are expected to create social environments that encompass social justice. Social justice is a key component of a government policy that embraces equity, redress, restoration, renewal and redistribution of resources. The mission of social justice is, amongst other goals, to ensure an equitable distribution of funds in order to fulfil the potential, to empower, and to transform the nature of schools (Mestry 2014:4).

The SCT was central to this research project; because it supports an endogenous paradigm. An endogenous paradigm is premised on stakeholders being participants who work in groups to construct scientific knowledge that is valuable for the attainment of the research objectives. The endogenous paradigm, furthermore, asserts that stakeholders as participants have past beliefs and experiences that allow them to have a voice in the exploration of the envisaged WSE guidelines (Sehlapelo 2021:24). The Kenyan education sector uses participatory management as a form of transformational leadership to ensure the equitable distribution of funds. The rationale behind this decision is to allow the use of state funds for school policy determination by stakeholders to take place within a participatory framework (Gichohi 2015:14). This implies that stakeholders are able to exercise their right to participate in decisions that affect their lives regarding achievement of productivity, efficiency and other valued organisational goals. Viewing this action with the lens of SCT means that an

exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE occurs under conditions that embrace stakeholder collaboration that engages in knowledge creation based on past experiences, beliefs and opinions.

Naidoo and Mestry (2017:93) accentuate that, in South Africa, schools perform best under conditions where resources such as knowledge, power, information and money are decentralised to the stakeholders. This implies that, within the confinements of the SASA, the decentralisation of financial management is a strategy that affords stakeholders powers to participate in a financial decision-making that contributes holistically to school improvement and school effectiveness. Considering the legal framework above, it is apparent that schools should create conducive conditions within the school environment that accommodate every stakeholder to freely participate in the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE.

Emerging from the literature that was reviewed, schools should work collaboratively with various stakeholders to create favourable and suitable conditions to discharge their fiscal roles in the management of school funds relating to WSE policy guidelines. Strengthening the effective implementation of WSE guidelines under conditions for equitable sharing of funds indicates the importance of funds in skills development by schools that embrace the provision of quality education in a holistic manner. The onus is on schools to capacitate teachers and parents to exercise fiscal discipline in a unthreatening school environment, to support the effective implementation of WSE at schools. Section 3.5.4 will discuss conditions that are conducive to parental involvement.

3.5.4 Conditions conducive to parental involvement

Parental involvement refers to a situation where parents participate directly in school activities and programmes designed for the provision of quality education for their children (Ntekane 2018:1). Malone (2015:14) posits that a school culture that encourages parents to share knowledge that responds to social realities around them, fosters parental involvement, which is an important phenomenon in education.

In Canada, the school vision on parental engagement underscores the role of parents as “partners and active participants” in the holistic and effective running of schools (Jabar 2021:202). Active parent engagement in the crafting of school policies is

enhanced by allowing the parents to voice their experiences, beliefs and opinions in the envisaged guidelines. In Australia, the education system supports policy reforms through policy-related communication, which is enhanced by parents as active stakeholders (Jabar 2021:490). In Ghana, school environments that incorporate the meaningful aspirations, experiences and beliefs of parents in scrutinising the total positive performance of schools are highly encouraged (Amponsah, Melledzi, Ampofo & Gyambrah 2018:3). Schools have realised that parental involvement is a multidimensional construct that assists school to communicate policy guidelines to the broader community sector.

In Uganda, the social environment created in schools assists policymakers to illuminate the significant roles played by parents when they participate maximally in policy implementation. The parental participatory roles in school programmes such as WSE are enhanced through clear communication among the stakeholders who have vested interests in education (Mahuro & Hungi 2016:3). There is a two-way information sharing between the school and the parents regarding the school programmes.

In the South African context, Mogale (2014:31) elucidates that clear communication on the improvement of the implementation of WSE guidelines at schools should address ambiguity. The implication is that, to ensure active participation of parents in relation to holistic school effectiveness based on WSE policy, ideas and information must be clearly communicated. This assisted in strengthening parental involvement in policy advocacy activities and decision-making on school campuses (Mogale 2014:32). Parental involvement refers to the provision of support and encouragement in soliciting the opinions, experiences and beliefs on behalf of the majority of parents on the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE policy (Boonk, Gijselaers, Ritzen, & Brand-Gruwel 2018:18). According to the literature by Newchurch (2017:48), the warm collaboration between the school and community parents created favourable conditions that fostered a passion in the parents to know more about WSE guidelines and implementation.

Central to interpretivism and its social interaction stage is the tenet of social negotiation. During social interaction, schools create learning environments that maximise parents' ability to interact with each other and other stakeholders through discussion, collaboration, and feedback. The learning environment influences social

interactions to allow parents, teachers and district official to create new knowledge to be incorporated in the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools (Bilen & Tavil 2015:151). As a constructivist principle, social interaction can also be complemented by cooperation. In a cooperative learning strategy, parents worked in small groups to help other members of the group to learn and created an atmosphere of achievement regarding the objectives of research project. This implies that parents participated effectively when they worked cooperatively (Yusuf, Jusoh & Yusuf 2019:1401).

From the review of the related literature, it was apparent that positive interdependence was important in the sharing of information under the created conducive conditions. During interdependence, each member of the group discussions contributed ideas and views to achieve the objectives of the research. As Yusuf *et al.* (2019:1402) explain, group members involved in the research provided one another with feedback, challenged reasoning and conclusions, and supported and encouraged one another to achieve the group's goals. The literature, furthermore, revealed the importance of teamwork. The creation of conducive conditions by the research team allowed parents to engage in dialogue that assisted the development of interpersonal and small group skills, such as staying on task, asking questions and creating trust in a team.

3.6 STRATEGIES FOR EXPLORING GUIDELINES TO IMPROVE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION

This section will discuss strategies that are applied to improve the implementation of WSE at schools. Building an effective and conducive school environment is often done through a whole-school approach, in which all school stakeholders are actively and collectively involved. Strategies that are incorporated in the envisaged guidelines focus on a whole-school approach that brings about organisational and policy changes (Dassanayake, Springett & Shewring 2017:2).

3.6.1 Strategies on training

In Canada, the most frequently used whole-school approach was a planned, integrated and holistic approach that promoted the provision of quality education in a community setting. The whole-school approach has four components: policy, social

and physical environments, teaching and learning and partnerships and services. In a school setting, the underpinning idea was that the actions of all four components were integrated to provide skills, supports, and improvements (Dassanayake *et al.* 2017:2). Training conducted in the presence of teacher colleagues assisted in the creation of social interactions that enhanced the sharing of past experiences and ideas on the improved implementation of the WSE guidelines at schools. For the strategies to be successful, the Canadian education sector upheld the following elements: administrative support, inclusive training, hands-on workshops and cultural adaptation (Wu *et al.* 2019:7).

Administrative support implies that the principal was expected to carry-out their responsibility to ensure that the staff was complying with strategies to implement WSE guidelines effectively. Inclusive training is of communal value in the sense that it addresses issues relating to the special needs of learners.

Hands-on workshops accommodated the specific needs of staff members from different schools and ensure the sharing of skills and ideas arising from collaboration of peers. Cultural adaptation allows for cultural diversity when implementing the incorporated strategies on campuses of different schools in communities (Wu *et al.* 2019:8).

In a South African context, WSE emphasises an improvement of the whole school, including its ethos, relationships, organisational and management structures, the physical environment, the taught curriculum and pedagogic practice. Motivation and goal setting have been identified as some of the most powerful strategies for stakeholders, such as school managers, teachers and parents, to improve the implementation of WSE on and off the school premises (Rawatlal 2021:1-2). The collaboration and the co-responsibility of school managers, teachers, parents and policymakers assisted to create a knowledge base to guide decisions on the most effective strategies for the exploration of the envisaged guidelines. Hanna and Minton (2021:543) contend that the core of WSE engages the district, principal, teachers and parents in a dialogue that assists them to make responsible decisions on meaning-making strategies to be incorporated in the explored guidelines. Training strategies that offer the stakeholders a chance to explore possibilities, experiences and

opportunities in line with the explored guidelines empower them to do informed decision-making.

The building of a strong organisational foundation and cultural cohesion in schools in the USA ensured that strong WSE programme implementation was adhered to. A robust school culture is vital for the exploration of guidelines that support an innovative WSE programme, which often involves extensive teacher collaboration. Such strategies assist teachers to have a clear sense of planning of the programme, and, furthermore, how to incorporate inputs in the implementation part to achieve the goals of the organisation (Gislason 2018:189).

Lev Vygotsky's social cognitivism is premised on the idea that learning occurs in a cultural context and involves social interactions (Oermann, De Gagne, NPD-BC, & Phillips 2017:21). This implies that, in the ZPD, stakeholders use culture and language to learn optimally from their existing experience and with the assistance of their peers. This also signifies that teamwork and collaboration are among the strategies that embrace the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools. Teamwork ensures that peers share ideas and skills on the research topic amongst themselves during collaboration.

One of principles of interpretivism states that learning is an active process of constructing knowledge through experience and reflecting on the experience (Oerman *et al.* 2017:22). This implies that SMTs, teachers and the SES were not empty vessels during their participation in this research project, instead, they possessed past experiences and cultural knowledge they could share with others. Reflection on past experiences and cultural factors offered them an opportunity to test the relevance of new concepts developed from the construction of knowledge in relation to the research objectives. Furthermore, taking the principles of SCT into consideration, effective communication among the stakeholders was enhanced. Effective communication embraced organisational and critical thinking strategies. Organisational strategies provided the SMTs, teachers, parents and SES, as key stakeholders, with a choice of suitable new knowledge for responding to the objectives of the research. Critical thinking strategies helped the stakeholders to apply their pre-knowledge to new situations pertinent to the exploration of the envisaged guidelines, to reach informed

decisions and to make critical evaluations (Tran, Nguyen, Van De, Soryaly & Doan 2019:80).

The review of the related literature reveals the importance of adopting a socio-constructivist view to embed relevant strategies when conducting stakeholder training on the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE. The collective perspective of socio-constructivism, as enhanced by social interaction and collaboration among the stakeholders, presented opportunities for stakeholders to suggest solutions, and explained and justified their solutions in order to achieve the objectives of the research (Gravemeijer 2020:220). By working in small groups during the training on strategies to improve the implementation of WSE, stakeholders understood the explanations and solutions of their peers, asked for clarification when needed, and eventually, challenged the ways of thinking when they disagreed. Teamwork that ensued from such engagements fostered stakeholder thinking that led to more advanced insights into the research objectives. Section 3.6.2 will discuss strategies for supporting SMTs to explore guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools.

3.6.2 Strategies to support school management teams

Schools in Australia use peer learning as one of the strategies to improve the implementation of WSE. Peer learning in a school review involves an accredited peer reviewer and the involvement of two principals from other schools. Peer learning is adopted in schools because it is considered as a strategy to construct knowledge to enhance SMTs' capacities to run WSE programmes, and schools generally. Peer learning assists the education department to hold schools accountable for their performance as measured against a wide variety of indicators and standards (Hashimoto 2018:39).

In a South African context, social cohesion is used as one of the strategies to support SMTs to improve the implementation of WSE guidelines. SMTs are involved in the capacity building of teachers and parents as agents of social cohesion regarding WSE implementation at schools. The empowerment of these crucial stakeholders is induced when they acquire new experiences that inform their thinking, knowledge and skills regarding the explored guidelines on the reform of a proposed policy document (Mogliacci, Raanhuis & Howell 2016:163). Zisanhi (2018:59) argues that

communication, as a quality assured strategy, assists SMTs to gain an in-depth understanding of the feelings, experiences and views of the teachers and parents as WSE implementers, and the SES as the programme overseer. The stakeholder dialogue that emanates from the communication process allows SMT members to narrate their beliefs, ideas and expectations on the best way the guidelines can be explored to improve the implementation of WSE at schools. Sources of communication as one of the strategies applied by the stakeholders in such social interactions included invitations, attendance registers, note taking and handouts at meetings (Zisanhi 2018:59).

The Swedish education system upholds holism and transparency as among the strategies to improve the provision of education by schools. Holism encompasses a well-articulated and holistic school vision that is inclusive of aims for learner outcomes, pedagogic methods and perspectives in line with the realisation of the vision (Mogren, Gericke & Scherp 2019:510). By viewing holism through the lens of collaboration theory, SMTs could tap into the expertise of other stakeholders, such as teachers, parents and the SES, to construct new knowledge for the exploration of the envisaged guidelines. Tapping from the beliefs, ideas and life experiences of these stakeholders enhanced collaborations that embraced transparency on school programmes and policies.

Some South African SMTs use meditation and social competence as strategies to enhance the education outcomes of their learners. Meditation supported personal growth through the strengthening of cognitive thinking, and social transformation enhanced the social competence through stakeholder motivation (Waters, Basky, Ridd & Allen 2015:104). Participation in social competence is vital to leaders, such as SMT members, to possess skills to handle and guide community members regarding school programmes and policies such as WSE. It assists SMT members to understand the culture of the community of their school, and how the community views the school generally. This implies that participation in meditation and social competence serves as motivation to SMTs, teachers and SGB members to participate in school programmes such as WSE. Effective collaboration of SMT members, who have mutual goals, and share responsibility and accountability, gave them more opportunities and chances to share their lived experiences with teachers and SGB members on the objectives of the research project (Da Fonte & Barton-Arwood 2017:99). Categories

and, subsequently, themes derived from such discussions were useful for the exploration of the envisaged guidelines, which were the essence of this research project.

This qualitative study was located in the interpretive paradigm, which supports SMTs in guiding the teachers and parents to share their experiences, beliefs and ideas on the research topic in their natural setting. Teachers and parents collaborated in the construction of new knowledge pertinent to the exploration of the envisaged guidelines. It is in these kinds of social interactions that SMTs used problem-solving strategies to capacitate teachers and parents to attain school goals and visions, and subsequently implement school policies (Oosthuizen 2016:30). Section 3.6.3 will deliberate on strategies to improve financial management regarding WSE implementation.

3.6.3 Strategies to support funding

Canada is known for its multicultural and diversity valuing attributes, and its education sector policy on WSE supports excellent and equitable education outcomes. The strategy for funding in the policy guidelines stipulates that money resources are allotted for capacity building and the development of district leadership and school leadership regarding the training of teachers and parents on WSE policy. The strategy for fund allocation on capacity building ensures that teachers equip learners with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values necessaryfor their future jobs(Campbell 2021:414).

Literature by Darling-Hammond (2017:306) suggests that Finland and Singapore provide their education sectors with financial subsidies for training stakeholders for high quality programmes such as WSE. The practice also ensures that highly capable candidates are recruited for the sound training of teachers and district officials with the allocated funds, to provide quality training regarding the effective implementation of WSE guidelines on and off the school premises.

The South African version of supporting the provision of funding to schools, is based on, amongst others, tapping into public and private sector resources locally and abroad. The funds thus acquired are used in WSE programmes countrywide for human resource development and institutional capacity building (Qobo & Soko

2015:6). Teachers, parents and SESs are capacitated for effective implementation of the WSE guidelines, with the sole purpose of providing quality education. The design and implementation of the South African fiscal policy caters for, amongst others, education, health and social services. The government uses the revenue collected from taxpayers to finance certain educational programmes (Gupta, Keen, Verdier & Shah 2017:1). Arun and Kamath (2015:267) posit that financial inclusion assists stakeholders in the management of resources and the building of financial capabilities. The development of financial capabilities empowers policymakers to develop WSE policies, and the education sector to train stakeholders for effective implementation of the policies.

Schools, like any other social institutions, are subjected to economic forces. In considering the importance of money from a Vygotskian approach, money embraces the collaboration of stakeholders for the co-creation of knowledge pertinent to the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools (Esteban-Guitart 2016:4). The importance of money was evident in the innovation of WSE material used during in-service training of stakeholders. According to one of the principles of PAR, the discourse on improving policy funding in schools assists in addressing inequalities and social injustice. Since schools are not equally funded by the national treasury, an increase in funding could improve stakeholder training on WSE guidelines. Social injustice is abolished when parents are involved in policy understanding and support and assist to make implementation more effective (Hayes, Mills, Christe & Lingard 2020:7). The importance of parental involvement in school programmes will be outlined in section 3.6.4.

3.6.4 Strategies to improve parental involvement

Parental involvement in school activities is crucial. In South Africa, and in other countries, learner success in schools is partly based on the active participation of parents in their education. A school policy such as WSE encourages stakeholders, such as teachers and parents, to interact on a regular basis. Strategies such as parent–teacher conferences and formal networks are beneficial for school policy discussions. Parent–teacher conferences foster communication and social ties among teachers and parents. Communication resulting from social ties between the parents and teachers lead to collaboration that enhances policy debates on understanding and

implementation. Formal networks ensure the creation of new knowledge and the sharing of ideas, beliefs and lived experiences on WSE policy guidelines (Coleman 2018:2).

A strategy of *overlapping spheres of influence* makes every stakeholder important and special in the exploration of the guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools. Each stakeholder's individuality and contributions in the research project were valuable, respected and appreciated. The strategy ensured that opinions and beliefs of team members were subjected to scrutiny by peers (Epstein, Sanders, Sheldon, Simon, Salinas, Jansorn, Van Voorhis, Martin, Thomas, Greenfeld & Hutchins 2018:13). A strategy of *collaborating with the community* assisted schools to identify and integrate some SGB members from the community, who could be of great value to the exploration of the envisaged guidelines (Epstein *et al.* 2018:16).

In the USA, parental involvement incorporates warmth as one of the strategies of WSE policy implementation. The support and responsive nature of warmth make parents feel comfortable and accepted (Elsaesser, Russel, Ohannessian & Patton 2017:63). This implies that, if district offices, SMTs and teachers are accommodating and responsive to the beliefs and opinions of parents regarding school policies, parental involvement is enhanced. Within the parameters of SCT, parental involvement incorporates cultural socialisation as one of the strategies to enhance the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools (Benner, Boyle & Sadler 2016:1061). Through cultural reproduction, cultural socialisation provides parents with critical social capital, which entails interpersonal skills, social connections and educational practices (Benner *et al.* 2016:1061). Viewing critical social capital through the lens of SCT, parental involvement ensured that, during social interactions, parents could share skills among themselves and with teachers during educational practices such as the implementation of WSE. Brainstorming sessions in the research process afforded stakeholders the opportunity to apply their skills in the creation of knowledge in support of the envisaged guidelines.

The Zambian education sector uses the strategy of synergistic collaboration to support the development of cognitive competencies of stakeholders in school policy matters. A synergistic collaborative strategy entails the collective effort or interaction of stakeholders to navigate the problem at hand. Coordinated collaborative interaction

among the parents themselves and between the teachers and the parents encourages these important stakeholders to answer the call to explore guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools (Simweleba & Serpell 2020:7). Synergistic collaboration ensures that parents and teachers work together as a team to attain better outcomes in relation to the objectives of the research. This implies that nothing beats teamwork for achieving a successful final product.

Naidu and Prose (2015:23) postulated that, in South African schools, accountability strategies must be congruent with the professional standards of teachers, as well as the needs and expectations of parents of the community in which the school is situated. In line with PAR principles, and the researcher's immersion in the research process, the research was done *with* the parents, and not *for* them. The practice encouraged parents to interact more, and this parental collaboration increased their trust and participation in school programmes. According to Grant and Ray (2018:20), strategies on partnership programmes between parents, teachers, district offices and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) can make valuable contributions to the exploration of the envisaged guidelines as far as accountability requirements are concerned. The qualitative nature of this research offered an opportunity for collaborative involvement of these important stakeholders to assist in the sharing of expertise, knowledge, beliefs and lived experiences relevant to the objectives of the research. Section 3.7 will elaborate on the role played by the SES, SMTs, teachers and parents in the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools.

3.7 ROLES OF STAKEHOLDERS IN IMPROVING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION

Kickstarting any programme in an institution requires well-trained personnel. Stakeholders need to familiarise themselves with guidelines for the effective and correct operation of the programme. It was against this background that this study explored guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools and involved SES, SMTs, teachers and parents as important stakeholders.

3.7.1 Roles of senior education specialists

In the USA, each district office appoints an SES to organise workshops. The purpose of the workshops and in-service training is to facilitate awareness and training of SMTs, teachers and parents on WSE. The WSE training conducted by the SES emphasises mentoring and accountability. Mentoring ensures that the explored guidelines guide SMTs, teachers and parents in thinking about and ensuring the same effective implementation of WSE guidelines. Accountability encompasses documentation of evidence of the improvement of WSE implementation with regard to the policy as reflected by goals and outcomes of the Ministry of Education (Sykes 2016:1).

The South African model of WSE policy is based on the district support team, of which the SES is part, and provides ongoing support and monitoring to schools. Based on the information contained in the findings of monitoring of schools as requested by supervisory units, the district support teams are able to identify the weaknesses and strengths of the schools (Madikida 2016:40). District offices, through SESs, conduct WSE training to share insights, knowledge, experiences and skills with stakeholders. The collaboration of district support teams with SMTs, teachers and the SGB parents accorded these important stakeholders with opportunities to gain an in-depth understanding and knowledge of the guidelines to improve WSE at schools. The guidelines thus explored fortified the WSE policy, and assisted schools to realise educational and social goals. Each district office, furthermore, sought to ensure that schooling and the administration of education were effective (Van der Voort & Wood 2016:9).

Since the WSE policy is development-oriented, the induction process to enhance human capacity was the focus point. District support teams are expected to conduct capacity programmes in a fair and consistent manner (South Africa 2001a:11). Alonzo, Leverett and Obsioma (2021:6) posit that the co-exploration of the envisaged guidelines by the SES and the relevant stakeholders, such as SMTs, teachers and parents, co-created knowledge that maintained consistency in the implementation of the WSE. This implies that the assurance of a common understanding and sharing of knowledge among the stakeholders established a culture of trust and value. The expert knowledge of SESs and their capacity to unpack the guidelines on key areas

for improvement in schools were useful during the training process. This role of the SESs ensured that schools comply with the implementation of recommendations from the provincial WSE (Ehren *et al.* 2019:12).

The analysis of the literature indicated the importance of social interaction of stakeholders in tackling a common challenge in the school setting. The collaboration of SESs, the SMT, teachers and parents embraced the supremacy of a joint venture, rather than an individual recognition, in meaning making regarding the exploration of the guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools. Viewing this intellectual work through the lens of SCT, it could be established that the quality of social interactions was related to the quality of outcomes. Teamwork, as espoused by the quality of interactions, supported the constructivism tenet that knowledge and reality were co-created by stakeholders as research participants.

3.7.2 Roles of the SMT

The study explored guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE in Free State secondary schools. In Australian schools, SMTs are tasked with the responsibility of enacting plans and policies in school settings. An enactment of the WSE policy assists in its daily implementation by stakeholders, as a whole-school priority (Merga & Gardiner 2018:38). Despite limited research on the exploration of the guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools, Australian SMTs are placed at the heart of the implementation process, in order to foster positive attitudes in teachers and parents. Social interactions between SMT members, teachers and parents benefit these stakeholders and develop communication or dialogue, which was crucial for sharing ideas, beliefs and experiences on the research topic and arriving at common and informed decisions.

In South African schools, the purpose of the WSE policy is to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the school. The SMT has a role in exploring the envisaged guidelines of WSE policy, in order to communicate them to the other stakeholders, to obtain their support and to incorporate it in the school's daily operations (Marishane & Motona 2016:285). Khanyi and Naidoo (2020:171) argue that, for any school to reform and develop, exploring the guidelines of WSE policy enhance the skills, knowledge, values and attitudes of the stakeholders, as agents of the implementation process. This implies that the skills acquired during the interaction with other stakeholders benefit

each member, and they become team players. Through stakeholder collaboration, team players were able to co-create valuable knowledge on the best way to explore the guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools. The agreement and decision-making among the stakeholders influenced them to buy in to the research process, and subsequently cultivate positive attitudes on the best way to improve the implementation of WSE at schools.

In Kenyan schools, the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE assisted SMTs to expose teachers and parents to alternative perspectives and experiences of implementation. The enriched perspectives and experiences of WSE implementation led the school community to the realisation that the existing ways of implementation of the guidelines were inadequate (Gakenia, Katuse & Kiriri 2017:28). This type of communication among the stakeholders implied that the explored guidelines were implemented, and not the guidelines in the minds of the SMT.

SMTs at South African schools arrange activities on the implementation of WSE for teachers in clusters, according to the stipulations of the guidelines in the WSE policy, and according to teams' skills (Hove 2018:27). Bush (2016:871) contends that, through collegiality, SMTs at schools are able to enhance companionship and cooperation among teachers regarding the exploration of the guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools. Through the lens of collaboration theory, the SMT guided teachers to cooperate with each other to facilitate collaborations, leading to consensual decision-making on the objectives the research. Teachers embraced the sharing of responsibilities on the co-creation of valuable knowledge and meaning-making, which was incorporated in the exploration of the envisaged guidelines. Knowledge and meaning making resulting from the beliefs and experiences of teachers provided the expertise needed for sharing of a common goal (Karam *et al.* 2018:71).

From the review of the literature above, it is apparent that the SMT is the driving force behind the implementation of policies at schools. Even though the principal of each school is tasked with running the day-to-day activities of the institution, cooperation from other stakeholders is of paramount importance. It is the duty of the school principal to ensure the effectiveness of the organisation, and working in collaboration with teachers, parents, learners and with support from the district office. the idea of

teamwork is embraced. From a SCT point of view, the social interactions of stakeholders form the cornerstones of building a team spirit that motivates togetherness among the stakeholders regarding the achievement of a common goal.

3.7.3 Roles of teachers

For teachers to explore and implement the guidelines of WSE programme successfully, there is a need to understand the climate of the school, and the nature, extent and sources of issues the school needs to contend with prior to the implementation phase (Hurley, Guckenburg, Persson, Fronius & Petrosino 2015:2). Teachers need to be trained and be familiar with the guidelines before they can cascade the information to parents, learners and the school community. The cascading of knowledge and the implementation of WSE guidelines effectively take place if all stakeholders embrace the efforts of the teachers.

In South African schools, one of the roles of teachers in the effective implementation of WSE is to ensure the sharing of knowledge with other stakeholders who have a vested interest in education. Through the WSE policy guidelines, teachers are regarded as agents of change, because they collaborate with other stakeholders as a unit of transformation, in order to change social norms for the benefit of the school community (Moolman, Essop, Makoae, Swartz & Solomon 2020:2). The collaborative interactions between teachers, parents and learners result in collaborative decision-making and the improvement of school–community relations. According to PAR principles, an exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE conducted under such conditions assists in ensuring equity and fairness among the stakeholders, as co-researchers (Moolman *et al.* 2020:3). Equity is vital, because all stakeholders must be viewed as having equal status in all aspects of the research. Their views, beliefs and experiences on the research topic were not considered inferior to others, and this type of a decision-making upheld the process of fairness during the progress of the project.

According to Tlale and Romm (2018:118), teachers regarded the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE as an integrated whole-school improvement that was entrenched in the school's beliefs, experiences, vision, and mission. Teachers embraced a good work ethos that maintained consistent commitment by themselves, the district office, parents and learners, which was

essential for the programme to be implemented effectively. The good work ethos enhanced the democratisation of knowledge creation and capacitated the community and the stakeholders, by affording them a platform to narrate their views, beliefs and lived experiences in a non-threatening school environment. McLaughlin (2020:6) posited that teacher participation in the exploration of WSE guidelines to improve its implementation has the potential to improve the rapport among the SES, SMT, parents and learners. A symbiotic relationship among these stakeholders contributed to building a flourishing research environment that developed the values, skills and knowledge to be incorporated in the WSE guidelines.

The literature reviewed supported the tenet of interpretivism that learning is attained by linking new knowledge and knowledge structures already existing in the minds of subjects (Namaiko 2020:7). According to Vygotsky's dialectic psychology, the school environment affords stakeholders a space to explore the guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE through communication based on beliefs, views and lived experiences. The school environment is a social space for social interaction between teachers, the SES and parents, as their peers in the research, to authenticate the feasibility and inclusion of the new knowledge in the envisaged guidelines.

3.7.4 Roles of parents

Parents are the custodians of their children and play a pivotal role in programme implementation in an education sector. Parental involvement is effective in WSE implementation when parents were involved and encouraged to expose the learners to programme support systems. WSE as a programme integrates the district office, SMT, teachers, parents, and learners with the broader school community.

Bauer, Okan and Faulbaum (2020:166) contend that, in Germany, policy support for parental involvement in the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools is a critical means to sustain effective whole-school improvement. The German education sector and schools hold parental involvement in high esteem, such that parents are fully capacitated to contribute significantly to school programmes. In Canada, SGB members collaborate with the SES, SMTs and parents to communicate the importance of understanding and implementing the guidelines of WSE. This exercise helps SGB members to value the project, and to assist other parents to take

ownership and build trusting relationships for the project as a school priority (Roberts, McLeod, Montemurro, Veugelers, Gleddie & Storey 2016:918).

In South African schools, and in line with the transformative initiative of PAR, parents are involved in school programmes to defuse power relations. By participating in the research process, parents attain equal status with other co-researchers. This implies that parents, as indicated in the Constitution of the country, share power equally with other stakeholders in the understanding, encouragement, and implementation of WSE guidelines (Tshabalala 2020:47). SGB members, through parental engagement and teacher collaboration, could clarify the meaning of the WSE guidelines to the broader school community. WSE is a multidisciplinary, systematic, and collaborative programme that seeks to incorporate parental involvement in influencing a school community to effectively participate in the implementation of the envisaged guidelines (Dzerefos 2020:1622).

Mwase *et al.* (2020:363) report that Zambian schools encourage cordial relationships between teachers, parents and the broader community. In addressing the exploration of the guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools as a social challenge, parental involvement fosters harmonious relationships that assist in the building of trust and the promotion of respect among stakeholders. Parental involvement encourages stakeholder collaboration that embraces cooperation among team members who are working towards a common goal. Mwape (2015:10) states that parental involvement stimulates the interest of the majority of parents to create a suitable school environment that embraces participation in the unpacking and exploration of guidelines for the WSE policy. This exercise was seen as co-learning through the sharing of ideas, opinions and beliefs in response to the objectives of the research project.

In the contexts of SCT and collaboration theory, I fully support the constructs put forward in the previous paragraph. Both these hybrid theories embrace the spirit of togetherness regarding the implementation of WSE as a social challenge. The exploration of the envisaged guidelines taps into the abilities of the stakeholders, who learn from one another during the research discourse. Stakeholders collaborate in a research project and work together to achieve a common goal, and that justifies the

use of both theories to support participants to attain equal research status, and to discuss and share ideas freely.

To corroborate reports of the situation in Zambian schools, Haine-Schlagel and Walsh (2015:2) argue that parental involvement includes the sharing of opinions, beliefs and experiences on the formation of categories, which makes responses to the research questions possible. The stakeholders achieve responses by asking “what” questions, which explains the role of parental involvement in the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools. The responses include each stakeholder’s point of view on the solution pertaining to the effective implementation of WSE as a school and community problem.

To address power relations in South African schools as part of the school reform strategy, parents are elected and serve to increase their participation in school programmes in myriad ways. Electing parents to participate in the WSE programme means more voices can express the parents’ point view, which benefits the school by improving the implementation of the programme (Ng & Ko 2019:142). Ackermann (2015:8) suggests that, by collaborating with the community, parents identify and integrate community service, which increases parental engagement in the exploration of the envisaged guidelines.

In my view, and corroborating the literature reviewed, the democratisation of the school space for parental involvement enhances collaboration, communication and decision-making pertaining to the exploration of the guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools. Goldberg *et al.* (2019:757) contends that involving parents in the WSE programme reinforces the complementary roles of parents and teachers as co-researchers. Parents, as participants in the research process, acquire implementation skills, which they extend as learning to the broader school community. Parents, as community partners, provide links with external support to the school community on how the guidelines could be implemented effectively to improve the implementation of WSE. Section 3.8 will discuss the lessons learned from good practices applied in countries other than South Africa.

3.8 DETERMINING INDICATORS OF SUCCESS OF THE GUIDELINES

In the United Kingdom, WSE is regarded as a structured process through which judgements are achieved about the quality of education provided to learners (Department of Education 2002:10). WSE entails benefits for learners, which could be personal, academic or social development-oriented. In a South African context, the WSE is a policy that seeks to improve the overall quality of education by supporting accountability by the education system. The policy emphasises that all learners should be provided with equal opportunities in order to realise their full potential (Department of Basic Education 2015:1). One of the main purposes of WSE is to provide district offices and schools with evaluative information, as advice and support to the schools (Metu 2017:1). The best practices discussed in this section will focus on the USA, United Kingdom, Ghana, Zambia and South Africa.

3.8.1 Best practices in the United States of America

Stakeholder knowledge and skills are critical for improving the implementation of WSE at schools. Using the lens of SCT, schools in the USA identify structural, organisational and social aspects that indicate the success of the guidelines in improving the implementation of WSE at schools. SCT embraces the premise that learning is facilitated by social interactions of individuals in the community (Alonzo *et al.* 2021:4). The theory supports the experiences and knowledge of the SES, SMTs, teachers and parents at different organisational levels, while using the WSE policy guidelines as a tool to ensure their effective implementation in schools, as professional structures. The social interaction between these important stakeholders encourages empowerment among themselves and the school community to ensure the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE as a social challenge.

In the USA, schools align their policy programmes to goals. Goals are educational standards that are contained in education policies, including the WSE policy. School settings expose various stakeholders, such as SMTs, teachers and parents, to deliberations, negotiations and debates for discussing ways of effectively implementing WSE guidelines (Helliwell, Layard, Adler, Bin Bishr, de Neve, Durand, Layard & Seligman 2019:15). Debates and negotiations afforded stakeholders a research platform to suggest innovative ideas and created useful knowledge.

The American education sector introduced the Positive Education (PosEd) programme, which is similar to the WSE programme in South Africa. The programme adopted improvements based on a whole-school approach. The programme focuses on training SMTs, teachers, parents and learners on the implementation of school policies that address improving school academic performance. The success of the PosEd programme is realised through the generation of curiosity, optimism and engagement in school programmes. The rekindling of curiosity and optimism in stakeholders assists in the development of shared ownership of the research process, and their resilience and willingness to implement it successfully (Seligman & Adler 2018:55. Fronius, Darling-Hammond, Persson, Guckenburg, Hurley and Petrosino (2019:13) posit that, when trained teachers interact with parents and leaners, they foster group cooperation and learn how to solve school and community challenges, including the implementation of WSE guidelines. Teachers and SGB members benefit from in-depth knowledge that is generated from the teamwork during the research process. Training through workshops by the SES assists in skills development and the building of confidence and trust in teachers, to help SGB members to participate effectively in WSE implementation.

3.8.2 Best practices in the United Kingdom

Schools in the United Kingdom use a pragmatic formative process evaluation as a WSE policy document. The pragmatic formative process evaluation entails the establishment of stakeholder groups to co-produce intervention strategies regarding the guidelines to encourage stakeholders in education to take responsibility for their actions (Gobat, Littlecott, Williams, McEwan, Stanton, Robling, Rollnick, Simon Murphy & Evans 2021:2). In my view, the pragmatic formative process evaluation supported the collaboration of stakeholders in small groups, as espoused by SCT and collaboration theory, which posits that real knowledge is co-created by members of a team. It implies that, in qualitative research, it takes members of a team to cooperate with one another to reach informed decisions. Stakeholder collaboration in socio-cultural interactions benefit the school and communities through sharing of lived experiences, beliefs and ideas. Categories and themes emerging from such discourses were included in constructs supporting the exploration of the guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools.

It is apparent from the review of the literature that the mutual benefits enjoyed by stakeholders is one of the successes of the WSE programme. The active participation of the SES, SMTs, teachers and SGB members in research ensures the acquisition of skills, the gaining of new insights and the enhancement of their competencies in the implementation of the programme. (Pereira, Flores & Nicklasson 2016:1110). The SES ensures that stakeholders acquire skills and new insights by administering refresher courses during training. The SMT strengthens the competencies of both the teachers and the SGB members in the programme through regular school workshops. The SGB members, in collaboration with the SMT, capacitate the majority of parents in the effective implementation of WSE guidelines during parents meetings. The success of the programme is evident in the improved confidence of these stakeholders about the achievement of effective implementation of WSE guidelines, as an overarching aim of the research project.

3.8.3 Best practices in Ghana

In Ghana, the self-school evaluation, as incorporated in a WSE policy, is regarded as the promotion of discussions among stakeholders to create a culture of school improvement, as seen through the eyes of the district offices, teachers, parents and learners. The success of the programme is reflected in the in-service training and workshops organised by Ghana Education Service, which assists teachers to acquire new skills and to share ideas during teacher collaborations (Cobbinah & Eshun 2021:3). The national policy on WSE categorically clarifies the importance of the district support structures in assisting the school to formulate and implement a school improvement plan. For the WSE policy guidelines to be implemented fully and effectively, district support teams must ensure the implementation of recommendations contained in WSE reports (DBE 2002:11).

Wolf, Aber, Behrman and Tsinigo (2019:12) report that, in Ghana, the success of the programme is supported by teacher in-service training, communication and parental involvement. The importance of teacher in-service training was highlighted in the previous paragraph. Transparent communication promotes a willingness to participate in a WSE programme. Epistemologically, communication among the stakeholders accords them an opportunity to co-create knowledge from lived experiences, beliefs and opinions, which are included in the envisaged guidelines. Parental involvement is

sought in the research process, to motivate parents from the broader school community to participate in the WSE programme. Active participation by parents empowers them, as important stakeholders in the provision of quality education. In the context of this study, teachers, through the collaborative and reflective research process, were able to empower the SGB, parents and learners on how the WSE guidelines can be implemented effectively. Transparent and motivating discussions and communication during social interactions were used as research platforms to explain the meanings of texts and constructs embedded in the guidelines. The exercise of unpacking the meanings of texts and constructs included in the guidelines to other stakeholders with a vested interest in education demystified the process of implementing the guidelines.

In the spirit of transformation, as one of the principles of PAR, the participation of SMTs, teachers and parents in the research project gave every participant the opportunity to develop their natural potential to the fullest, in the absence of discrimination. Such social interactions of the participants were upheld as the means to develop and transform co-researchers, the society and the economy (Boakye, Enninful, Anin & Vanderpuye 2015:17). I agree with the authors that the participation of SMTs, teachers and parents in the research process transformed them, from being passive participants, to active stakeholders. Their activism in the research process motivated and propelled some of the members of the community to take part in the implementation school policies, such as WSE.

3.8.4 Best practices in Zambia

In Zambia, the effective implementation of the WSE programme was preceded by an effective curriculum evaluation which was intended to bring about desirable skills, values, attitudes and knowledge in learners. The mandate from the Zambian education ministry was to have an education system that would equip learners with competencies, such as problem-solving, collaboration, critical thinking, and communication for the 21st century (Yambwana 2020:2). I support the notion that, in this study, problem-solving skills would equip the SES, SMT, teachers and parents with in-depth knowledge to respond to the research question and the objectives. One of the tenets of SCT embraces stakeholder collaboration by SMT members, teachers and SGB members. Regular collaboration by stakeholders supported their teamwork;

they worked in solidarity with each other to ensure the effective implementation of WSE policy at school. Their critical thinking created independent and innovative critical thinkers with knowledge claims that responded to the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools. Communication was used as a vehicle to dissect and expand the rich data generated on the lived experiences, beliefs and opinions of the participants, until a saturation point was reached.

Further evidence of the success of the implementation of the programme in Zambia is that the standards office responsible for monitoring, supervision and guidance in education provision was able to provide reliable information and advice to policy makers. Education standards officers conduct in-service training and workshops on the effective implementation of the programme guidelines (Muzata, Banja, Mulenga & Njobvu 2020:99). Furthermore, the Zambian education sector adopted the ZEST programme, which is similar to the WSE programme in South Africa. ZEST is based on the notion that knowledge about the WSE programme is socially co-constructed and reevaluated through participation (Stutchbury *et al.* 2019:212). This implies that, in a research context, participants are capacitated to elicit ideas and responses that were relevant to the research objectives. Co-researchers benefitted from their collaborative research discourses and dialogues by sharing ideas emanating from such social interactions.

Luchembe (2020:46) reports that the Zambian Ministry of Education published a reform policy document called the *Educational Reform Proposals and Recommendations* (ERPR), which is regarded as “a tool for personal development”. The ERPR supports skills development for teachers. The success of this programme, which is similar to WSE policy in South Africa, is to capacitate teachers with knowledge and skills, which are subsequently implemented to produce self-reliant learners, who could participate and improve the economy of their country. Voinea (2018:10) contend that the goal of the programme was to guide the participants to develop skills from co-learning, known as metacognitive strategies, that equip the participants with their own language and tools as problem-solving skills in daily life.

The literature reveals that, in Zambian secondary schools, the ZEST programme was successful in eliminating fears and tensions associated with the old method of inspection. Through hosting of cluster monitoring and evaluation of teachers, teachers

were motivated and empowered to ensure the effective implementation of the programme, on and off of school premises (Silwamba & Daka 2021:39). One of the successes of the WSE programme was that it was not possible to authenticate the practicality of the programme based on teachers' input alone, because it required the collective input of families, communities and other stakeholders (Haamoonga 2017:61). In view of this statement, it suffices to say that the inclusion of parents as participants in key school decisions is of vital importance. By collaborating with parents, schools intensify the commitment of community members to support the effective implementation of programmes such as WSE.

As an interpretivist researcher, I draw on SCT's dictate that true knowledge is socially co-constructed, evaluated and reflected upon, and PAR's view that research is undertaken *with* the parents and not *for* them. It, therefore, stands to reason that this research project held parents in high esteem by embracing their active participation in exploring and implementing the policy guidelines for the provision of quality education.

3.8.5 Best practices in South Africa

The WSE policy guidelines in South Africa assist with effective teacher supervision and monitoring, and thereby endorse teachers as agents of change. The benefit of teachers being agents of change in the effective implementation of WSE at schools is reflected by attainment of a stable school policy environment that promotes mutual trust among the teachers. Furthermore, teachers can institute community mobilisation that enhances the active participation of parents in the implementation process of WSE guidelines (de Clercq & Shalem 2021:91). A study by Maddock and Maroun (2018:195) points out that the WSE policy identifies areas for improvement that are intended to develop learners' critical learning. This implies that the guidelines in the WSE policy document are structured in such a way that they support the creation of critical thinkers, who are oriented to promote equity and efficacy. As the literature by Maddock and Maroun (2018:195) indicates, the identification of areas for improvement using WSE policy, by SES, SMT members, teachers and SGB members, makes me believe that their active participation in this research project empowered them as critical thinkers as well. We regarded them as critical thinkers because they worked hands-on to extract relevant knowledge, categories and themes from the rich data while they explored the envisaged guidelines. Their participation promoted equity in

this study, because they assumed roles of equal status as co-researchers. Since the stakeholders promoted collaboration and teamwork by working in groups, their efficacy propelled them to achieve the intended aim and objectives of the research.

A study by the Centre for Development and Enterprise (2015:12) found that collaboration and teamwork were used as tools for effective implementation of the guidelines of the WSE policy. During staff collaboration, schools used peer evaluation as a tool to support the implementation of WSE policy guidelines. The success of the peer evaluation as embedded in the WSE policy was evident when team members were able to share ideas and gave critical feedback among themselves on the best way the guidelines could be implemented. The Department of Basic Education (2015:21) asserts that the WSE policy guidelines drew on the richness of the researched data to support the school culture and the diversity of community members. This implies that, through mutual trust, the implementation of WSE policy guidelines embraces the interrelatedness and diversity among the school community members. Cefai, Downes and Cavioni (2021:70) argue that WSE policy motivates learners to become reflexive, collaborative and self-regulated individuals. The implication is that learners take a more central and active role, both as individuals and the critical peers, in the learning process. The success of the WSE policy is seen in the holistic development of learners, so that they are active participants in the economy of the country.

The evidence of the success of the programme in South Africa is observed in the granting of opportunities to support innovation in schools. The programme supports openness to new ideas and channels of communication among stakeholders (European Commission 2017:20). I also support the view that communication and dialogue among the co-researchers were effective tools that enabled them to voice their lived experiences, beliefs and values during research discourses. An iterative approach of openness to new ideas offered transparency and mutual trust among the stakeholders on the sharing of co-created knowledge. The stakeholders were able to share words and concepts that were responsive to the research objectives. The view of Kemper (2021:10) resonates with that of the European Commission that, through social interaction and dialogue, the success of a WSE programme can be observed when the stakeholders gain new insights from their lived personal experiences. Ideas that could be incorporated in the envisaged guidelines to improve the implementation

of WSE at schools emerge as the SES, SMT members, teachers and SGB members explore the diversity of opinions and perspectives.

Another indication of the success of a WSE programme in schools is its social stance, which targets the social environment of the school by building a more inclusive and supportive school ethos. School ethos entails the set of values, practices and attitudes that differentiates one school from another. The implementation of the WSE programme in that way assists in the development of programme knowledge and skills (Hawe, Bond, Ghali, Perry, Davison, Casey, Butler, Webster & Scholz 2015:2). I view values and attitudes as vital to the school and community, because they assist the stakeholders to transfer what is important and right by using programme implementation. Knowledge of the programme implementation allows the stakeholders to practice what they preach from the guidelines of the programme, and that exercise culminates in skills development. The WSE programme gives the SMT members, teachers and SGB members the opportunity to interact with the evaluation team to discuss their work, their role, and their vision for the school. Such social interactions allowed the evaluative team to gain insight into the structure and the dynamics of the school (The Inspectorate 2016:30). The collaborative and active participation of these key stakeholders in the implementation of the programme guidelines was key, as it supported overall school improvement.

The literature in relation to the various countries discussed in section 3.8 revealed that everyone has a role to play to ensure the sustainability and the continuous effective implementation of WSE programme guidelines at schools. This implies that all key stakeholders must have a say and a sense of belonging in the school, because the effective implementation of WSE guidelines is the responsibility of the collaborative effort of SMT members, teachers and SGB members.

We can, thus, conclude that, in most countries, the effective implementation of the guidelines to improve the implementation of the WSE programme centres on the stakeholders learning through action. Since cooperative learning is an enabler of critical and creative thinking skills, stakeholders can discuss and agree on the evidence supporting a particular position and subsequently suggest solutions for the problem. Using cooperative learning, stakeholders are empowered to use their

learning from the groupwork to effect positive change in their lives, schools, and the broader community (Gibb 2016:14).

3.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The review of the related literature commenced with a discussion of the policy framework applicable to the WSE policy. The reasons behind the need to explore the guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE were outlined. The related literature presented scientific evidence on achieving the objectives of the research, namely, addressing challenges regarding the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE; the necessary conditions for exploring the guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE; implementable strategies for the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of the WSE; the role played by each relevant stakeholder in the exploration of the guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE, and the indicators of success of the implementation of WSE programmes in the USA, United Kingdom, Ghana, Zambia and South Africa. The next chapter will discuss the research design and methodology applied by this study to explore the guidelines and to improve the implementation of WSE at schools.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The study explored guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at a secondary school. This chapter will discuss the methods and processes that were utilised to generate data in collaboration with co-researchers to explore guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at a Free State secondary school in the Motheo district. Using PAR as a methodological approach, the study aimed to implement interventions suggested by the research team through the operationalisation of SCT. The study adopted CDA for data analysis.

Furthermore, the chapter will provide definitions and explain the historical origins of PAR. The chapter will also correlate the theoretical stance and constructs developed in Chapter 2 with the generated empirical data. The chapter will clarify the historical origins, objectives, formats, steps, ontological and epistemological assumptions of PAR, the role of the researcher in PAR, the associations with co-researchers and the rhetoric of PAR. The chapter will conclude with a summary of the chapter.

4.2 PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH AS A RESEARCH APPROACH

PAR is a social and co-learning process that embodies cycles of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. As a vehicle for dismantling power structures, PAR embodies a social justice agenda that supports social transformation (Benjamin-Thomas, Corrado, McGrath, Rudman & Hand 2018:1). PAR is known for its ability to deal with power imbalances that generate social and personal distress, and for empowering the researcher and co-researchers to co-create knowledge that contributes to solving problems by suggesting solutions and achieving the objectives of the research in a non-hierarchical, democratic environment (Parrello, Lorio, Carillo & Moreno 2019:3). In promoting the knowledge democratisation of PAR, Dedding, Goedhart, Broerse and Abma (2021:21) assert that reality pertinent to the envisaged guidelines is not an objective truth to be discovered but is co-produced with the stakeholders who have a say in the policy and research affecting them. The benefit of using PAR in this research was that it supported the theoretical underpinnings that

grounded the researcher and co-researchers' lived experiences, values and beliefs in critical dialogue and communicative actions. These types of stakeholder collaborations were important for arriving at intersubjective agreement, mutual understanding and consensus regarding a social challenge (Benjamin-Thomas *et al.* 2018:2). Because PAR was able to defuse power imbalances in qualitative research, I argue that all stakeholders who were co-creating the research knowledge were on an equal footing. The implication was that no participant felt inferior to the other, as they had equal research status.

PAR was a collaborative approach that sought to transform and improve social reality by involving the SES, SMT members, teachers and parents in reaching a thorough understanding of the best way to explore the guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at the school. PAR processes of action and reflection involved crucial stakeholders, who guided the change during the exploration of the guidelines from within the research project (Sales, Moliner & Traver 2021:705). I supported the notion of action and reflection because, as a constructivist researcher, I played the active role of inculcating research skills in stakeholders and motivating them to critically analyse their reality and reflect on it (Sales *et al.* 2021:706). According to Sendall, McCosker, Brodie, Hill and Crane (2018:5), the PAR approach allows the research team to discuss scientific knowledge on the exploration of the guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at the school, collectively reflect on it, and learn from each other on the broadening of programme perspectives.

PAR assumes that the research participants were social beings, and as such create knowledge socially through a constructivist approach. In relation to this statement, Jacobs (2016:49) argues that knowledge is embedded in the lived experiences and beliefs of participants, and it is, therefore, created through collaboration that involves the researcher and co-researchers in a research project. Stich (2018:2) postulates that PAR espouses the notion that change is an ongoing process; therefore, the PAR research approach used in this study was inclusive of marginalised community members who were involved in the generation of new knowledge to bring about change in WSE guidelines. That implies that the benefit of using PAR in this regard was to eliminate inequality in the school and community regarding the improved implementation of the WSE programme. Section 4.3 will discuss the historical origins of PAR.

4.3 HISTORICAL ORIGINS OF PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

PAR can be traced back to the work of Paulo Freire, who believed that research was not objective, but was an "engaged practice between the researcher and the participants in the co-construction of new knowledge" (Orlowski 2019:33). That implied that research was a dialectical conversation (logical discussion of ideas and opinions) between the researcher and co-researchers, and that it embraced their emancipation and the attainment of social justice. I agree with Freire, which led me to have reservations about using a positivist approach for this study, which would require the research knowledge to be endorsed by neutrality and objectivity. In contrast, I strongly supported the notion that the researcher and the stakeholders in this research possessed knowledge that had arisen from their lived experiences (Orlowski 2019:34). I believed that the SES, SMT members, teachers and SGB members were well placed to collaboratively engage in research discourses, which led to the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at the school, as a social challenge.

While Freire and Fals Borda led the Southern strand of PAR in the USA, Kurt Lewin was considered a pioneer of the Northern strand of PAR in the USA. The Lewinian version of PAR advocates for "a practical approach to problem solving through a cycle of planning, action, and reflection" (Breda 2014:6). The Lewinian version of PAR was suitable for this study, because it supports the planning of a research project in collaboration with the participants, as the bearers of local knowledge. In this study, PAR encouraged the researcher and co-researchers to use actionable knowledge to explore guidelines to improve the implementation of the WSE programme. By going through the cyclical steps of PAR practically, PAR guided the stakeholders to collaboratively reflect on the data garnered regarding the relevance of emerging categories and themes in relation to improving the implementation of WSE guidelines.

Macaulay (2017:256) posits that Lewin's Northern variant of PAR promotes empowerment and social equity. From the political point of view and the inclusivity principle regarding social equity, that implies that every community member has equal rights to participate in the research project. As the research was done *with* the participants, and not *for* them, active and collaborative participation of the relevant stakeholders ensured their empowerment in the implementation of WSE programme at schools. Messikh (2020:2) explains that Kurt Lewin, who was interested in the

promotion of communication and cooperation in order to raise the confidence of the minority in communities, is considered to be a founder of action research. Similar to action research, PAR was appropriate for this research, because it enhanced the intergroup relations of co-researchers through problem-solving skills. The dialectic conversations among the research participants, as problem-solvers in such social interactions, assisted them to dissect their lived experiences, ideas and beliefs into meaning-making.

The American philosopher and educator John Dewey was regarded as one of the precursors of action research and was a contemporary of Kurt Lewin. Dewey's concept of reflexive thinking or inquiry triggers an individual to acquire information or knowledge in order to solve a significant problem in a community (Fernandes de Andrade & Vinicius da Cunha 2017:3). In light of the preceding explanations, reflexive thinking, as a component of PAR, justified the use of PAR in this research, because the stakeholders, through experiential knowledge, sought to explore solutions to the guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at the school.

Keahey (2021:291) states that, due to its origins in Global South scholarship, PAR embraces dialogue and co-learning in pursuit of social change. Dialogue and co-learning are considered precursors of the collaborative production of actionable knowledge. The benefit of using PAR in this research was that it afforded marginalised stakeholders an emancipatory social space in the school setting to discuss and make informed decisions on actionable knowledge relating to the guidelines that were envisaged to improve WSE implementation. Rowell, Bruce, Shosh and Riel (2017:128) corroborate this view and indicate that Ledwith's emancipatory inquiry also justifies the use of PAR as a methodology that addresses the political stance on inequalities and injustices in a research and school community. By placing social justice at its heart, PAR eliminates the notion of an inferiority complex among the co-researchers with regard to the co-creation of knowledge. Every opinion and belief of every research member were held in high regard in the exploration of the guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at the school. Section 4.4 will discuss the objectives of PAR as a research approach.

4.4 OBJECTIVES OF PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

This section will outline the objectives of PAR. Gunbayi (2020:18) describes PAR as a research approach that regards a researcher as a facilitator and the ownership of the research as a collective, and, as such, PAR embraces the doctrines of democracy and is in line with the tenets of constructivism. An interpretivist approach supports the notion that reality is created as a result of interpersonal interactions among the participants in research. PAR was relevant for this study as it brought together discourse and practice among the stakeholders through constructive and reconstructive processes, so that improvements in practice and understanding were a collective effort (Kramer-Roy 2015:1211).

4.4.1 Participatory action research is democratic

By adopting local participation and encouraging societal transformation, PAR embraces democracy that challenges structural forms of dominance in society (Gleerup, Hulgard & Teasdale 2019:12). By defusing stakeholder dominance in research and avoiding marginalising co-researchers, their empowerment is enhanced through the co-creation of knowledge. Auriacombe and Sithomola (2020:59) affirm the view of Gleerup *et al.* by stating that, with PAR, stakeholders in the research gain knowledge and information relevant to the research questions through cooperation, empowerment and collaboration. PAR was seen as a research approach that recognises the rights of co-researchers in a research process, and, furthermore, treats them as equal partners. In my view, in this study, knowledge production emanating from such social interactions assisted the SES, SMT, teachers and the SGB members to understand and own the decisions they arrived at in the exploration of the envisaged guidelines.

Knowledge democracy supports an intercultural dialogue among the stakeholders in research and enhances diverse perspectives and a mutual understanding of knowledge claims, which were incorporated in the solutions for the research questions. It is acknowledged that the quest for better research knowledge and the advancement of social justice are embedded in PAR, as a research methodology that, in this study, empowered co-researchers to ensure that improving the implementation of the WSE programme was needed in all schools and societies (Stern 2019:446).

The explanation of its democratic nature justified the choice of PAR as a research methodology for this research, because knowledge democracy respects diversity, and is unrelenting in its search for common ground regarding the values and the principles of reason in the active participation of the co-researchers in the research setup. Stakeholders who were affected by the implementation of the WSE programme and who were associated with schools were the ones who held the most knowledge and who were best suited to assist in the navigation of the complexities of the issue at hand (Wright 2021:1). Therefore, PAR integrated marginalised stakeholders, such as SGB members and also on behalf of the majority of community members in an analysis of their lived experiences and views, in order to bring new initiatives into policies, such as WSE, at the school.

4.4.2 Participatory action research empowers stakeholders

PAR embraced empowerment and community participation by increasing self-esteem, social cohesion, and interaction at school and community levels. One of the prominent tenets of PAR was that it involves research participants in the process of knowledge acquisition, translation, and dissemination (Dudgeon, Scrine, Cox & Walker 2017:2). For this reason, PAR was considered to be an empowering alternative to the positivist research approach that accords a researcher the status of absolute power and gives them sole guidance of a research project. PAR maximised the equitable sharing of power among the co-researchers. Equitable sharing of power empowered the participants to “utilise their confidence, desires, and abilities to bring about real change” in the exploration of the guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at the school. PAR was relevant to this research because, by granting participants a voice as local experts on the research topic, they were empowered to explore diverse perspectives through a collaborative dialogue (Juurjärvi & Lund 2016:4).

PAR empowered stakeholders in the research by promoting critical dialogue and knowledge production through small-group discussions (Budig, Diez, Conde, Sastre, Hernan & Franco 2018:1). The use of PAR was relevant for this study because it made possible the creation of space in which the participants were able to articulate their valued experiences, views and opinions during their exploration of the envisaged guidelines. Furthermore, through empowerment, PAR forged self-perception and

confidence in co-researchers, so that they actively participated in school programmes such as WSE.

The cyclical steps of the PAR process empowered the stakeholders and increased their competence, skills and independence (Vizeshfar, Momennasab, Yektatalab & Iman 2021:5). Collaborative engagements in research groups encouraged the development of independent critical thinking in participants. Active and collaborative interactions between the stakeholders of the WSE programme enhanced their competence and skills with regard to the implementation process. According to Zhu (2019:72), PAR regarded researchers and co-researchers as agents of change in research processes, who defused the presence of unequal social and power relations and afforded the stakeholders equal research status in a social space. This implies that no view, idea or belief was inferior to another during the participant discourses. In section 4.4.3, the transformative power of PAR will be discussed.

4.4.3 Participatory action research is transformative

PAR supports conversations that lead to change. Conversations for change are crucial when a school and community embark on a review of school policy. The transformative nature of PAR assisted in blending the personal, interpersonal, and impersonal knowledge of the co-researchers into action-oriented knowledge (Bradbury, Waddell, O'Brien, Apgar, Teehankee & Fazey 2019:5). PAR was suitable for this research, because the participants used action-oriented knowledge as experiential knowledge that was incorporated into the guidelines in order to improve the implementation of the WSE programme. PAR promoted research practice that contributed to the exploration of the WSE guidelines, thereby enhancing social justice. Participant stakeholders co-produced written texts from their conversations, which were translated into semiotic-material artefacts that promoted social transformation (Johnson & Martinez-Guzman 2013:415).

Trajber, Walker, Marchezzeni, Kraftl, Olivato, Hadfield-Hill, Zara and Fernandes Monteiro (2019:94) argue that the innovations and outcomes generated by the critical knowledge that they co-produced capacitates research participants to take more informed actions, which, in this study, lead to an exploration of the improved WSE programme guidelines. In my view, the data-inclined, co-developed and explored WSE guidelines brought a marked and relevant change to the way the stakeholders

implemented the WSE policy at the school. Subsequently, learners and the school community benefitted from such a joint project.

A primary objective of PAR was to actively involve participants in effecting tangible change in WSE guidelines, in order to improve the effectiveness of the programme and, hence, education practices as a whole. PAR achieved transformation and exploration of the envisaged WSE guidelines by taking into consideration the beliefs, perceptions, and worldviews of the co-researchers, as the people closest to the challenge (Organizing Engagement 2021:6). Section 4.4.4 will describe how PAR created awareness about the presence of and solutions to a social problem.

4.4.4 Participatory action research is problem-oriented

The focus of PAR was to contribute to positive social change by involving and making participants aware of their social problem, so that they could act to resolve it. Through the involvement of stakeholders close to the situation, action-oriented interventions were constructed (Costa & Andreaus 2020:296). Embury, Parenti and Childers-McKee (202:128) indicate that the focus of PAR is the co-creation and sharing of knowledge with the stakeholders, in this case, those most likely affected by the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools. The study employed PAR because it brought about social change in the exploration of solutions for guidelines to address the identified problem.

Using social interactions such as stakeholder collaboration and language as a means for communication, PAR allowed participants to utilise the locally constructed knowledge to influence their perspectives on the implementation of WSE; this is in line with the principles of SCT (Flory 2020:11). Practice-generated knowledge enhanced the participants and policymakers' knowledge base, because useful knowledge for augmenting and exploring the envisaged guidelines was derived from their knowledge base (Lawson. Caringi, Pyles, Jurkowski & Boslak 2015:10). Derivation of new knowledge from the participants and policymakers' base made PAR relevant to the study, because the new, practice-generated knowledge was used for the development of the stakeholders' problem-solving skills. The context-specific nature of PAR supported the inclusion of marginalised participants in the research process. The aim of social collaborations was to explore solutions for the ineffective implementation of WSE as a social problem at the affected school, so as to emancipate SMTs, teachers,

SGB members and the rest of community members who were confronted with such a challenge (Morales 2016:159). In section 4.4.5, support for social justice as espoused by PAR methodology will be put into perspective.

4.4.5 Participatory action research supports social justice

PAR methodology supported social justice and opposed marginalisation and exclusion of stakeholders from a research project that affected their social lives. Entrenched in social justice were participants' rights, fairness, and equity, which supported the notion that the study's practical knowledge was socially constructed (Kaukko & Fertig 2016:31). In my view, the implication is that knowledge thus created benefits the school and the community, because it is used to improve the implementation of WSE programme, following its identification as one of social challenges on the school premises. PAR was appropriate for this research, because it focused on the collaborative social interactions of co-researchers regarding the exploration of the envisaged guidelines towards community development and the enhancement of social justice (Zerquera, Pender & Berumen 2017:14).

Lawson *et al.* (2015:34) posit that PAR joined social analysis and social action in supporting the researcher and co-researchers in knowledge production that assist in the effective implementation of WSE guidelines. In light of that statement, I wanted to believe that, in that regard, PAR is a research approach that seeks to support the creation of reality in servicing the practical problem-solving skills of stakeholders. The problem-solving skills enhanced the practical and effective implementation of WSE guidelines, thereby assisting in responding to the overarching research question. The Acuho-I Foundation (2017:5) explains that, by leveraging social justice in the research, stakeholders come to understand the value of diversity and the integrity of equity. It helps them to realise the value of the knowledge and perspectives that stakeholders from diverse backgrounds offer as rich data in response to the research questions. The valuable knowledge, beliefs and perspectives of diverse stakeholders were incorporated in the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of the WSE programme at schools. Section 4.5 will discuss the characteristics of the PAR approach.

4.5 CHARACTERISTICS OF PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

The sections that follow will take a closer look at the characteristics of PAR as a research methodology.

4.5.1 Participatory action research is participatory

According to Manley (2015:4), the participatory nature of PAR was seen during collaborations between the researcher, participants and the school community members regarding solutions to improve the implementation of WSE programme. The essence of embarking on a supportive journey to address an improved implementation of WSE guidelines as a social challenge required collaborative social interactions of all the stakeholders who had a vested interest in education. Engelen, Silva, Martin, Cloete, Schiller, Kagwiza, Hengelaar and Celik (2021:279) describe PAR as a "research approach where the researcher and participants collaborated to understand and ameliorated [improved] a problem". These types of collaborative social interactions allowed the participants to engage with social and cultural spheres of society by experiencing the effective implementation of WSE guidelines. In light of that statement, I consider PAR to be a research approach that enabled co-researchers to reach consensus while deciding, because it put their perspectives and beliefs at the centre of the discourse (Engelen *et al.* 2021:282).

In line with collaboration theory tenets, PAR was viewed as a shared, democratic process of research that was concerned with the co-creation of practical knowledge by the participants in support of the solutions to the improved implementation of the explored WSE guidelines (Lotan, Stahlhut, Romano, Downs & Elefant 2022). The discourses among the co-researchers allowed them to share valuable information and knowledge pertinent to the envisaged guidelines.

PAR was relevant to this research because the active participation of stakeholders assisted in the development of cognitive and social skills. The cognitive skills assisted the stakeholders to interpret the WSE constructs and guidelines to achieve the effective implementation of the programme on and off school premises. Social skills improved the good working relations between the school and the community and enhanced the quality of the lives of the learners.

4.5.2 Participatory action research supports diffusion of power relations

Positioning the study in critical and social approaches provided equal opportunities for stakeholders to participate as equals in the research project. The benefit of such decision-making mitigated inequities that may concern power relations between the researcher and co-researchers in a research project (Boistrup & Samuelsson 2015:1667). In the context of this study, the diffusion of power relations helped in forging participant collaboration, and everyone cooperated to explore the guidelines to improve the implementation of the WSE programme. The collaboration of participants in the project ensured that each participant strived to develop competence in the implementation of the WSE policy by supporting each other.

Rose (2018:765) posits that one of the founding principles of PAR is that it levels the power relations between researcher and co-researchers in the research. The voices of the voiceless were heard in the research project, because the researcher and participants were equal partners in exploring the guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools. I viewed stakeholder collaboration as the co-creation of experiential, empirical and theoretical knowledge that was utilised in the exploration of the envisaged WSE guidelines in this research process. Hemy and Meshulam (2021:753) state that “sharing power meant that the researcher, who usually occupies a higher status, was positioned as an equal collaborator working with the participants to respond to the research questions”.

PAR was suitable for this research because it assisted in reducing and overcoming inequalities produced by differential researcher–participant status. The benefit of such collaboration was the transformation of stakeholders into agents of change, who were actively involved in generating new knowledge to assist policymakers in exploring the intended WSE guidelines further.

4.5.3 Participatory action research encourages equality, equity and teamwork

The PAR methodology positions participants as experts of their social contexts, and the researcher as a facilitator. Active democratisation of voice and participation were important for creating a research team of trust and support (Jones 2019:140). Katoppo and Sudradjat (2015:121) reiterate that the position of the researcher equals that of

the co-researchers when the activities and actions shared in a research project happen within the PAR context. In the current study context, the SES, SMT members, teachers and parents were considered equal in status and they collaboratively engaged in the construction of knowledge to explore the intended guidelines. I viewed the co-creation and sharing of knowledge between the participants and facilitator as indicative of a foundational tenet of collaboration between stakeholders in the production of knowledge. Furthermore, I regarded the involvement of teachers, as the frontline implementers of a socially transformative policy such as the WSE policy, as an initiative to encourage teamwork in which experiences, values and ideas are collaboratively shared.

Flowing from the literature, as espoused by Dedding *et al.* (2020:4), I found PAR to be applicable to this study, because it ensured equity and fairness through the involvement of participants with multiple perspectives and experiential, practical or scientific knowledge. Within the confines of collaboration theory, the focus was on shared learning and action for social change, to achieve knowledge production to explore guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at the school. Ozer (2016:190) articulates that PAR maintains the principles of equity and fairness, therefore, the study afforded participants the opportunity to identify ineffectiveness in the implementation of WSE policy as a social challenge relevant to their lives. The social challenge prompted the researcher and co-researchers to explore the guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE, based on the research evidence. In that way, the PAR methodology was a relevant choice in this research, because it was oriented to increasing the power of marginalised groups to improve the implementation of the WSE programme, as a real-life problem, via iterative cycles of inquiry and action (Ozer 2016:191). The reflexive nature of PAR will be outlined in section 4.6.4.

4.5.4 Participatory action research is reflexive in nature

Reflexivity refers to an awareness of the researcher's role in the research project. It refers to the researcher's examination of own beliefs, judgments and motives during the research process. A potential benefit of using PAR was that it assisted the researcher in managing belief systems and political opinions, or even eliminating biases that could have an impact on the study's outcome (Jacobson & Mustafa

2019:8). Within the parameters of PAR, the research project sought to adhere to balanced power relations by upholding the notion that the researcher and participants had situated and experiential knowledge that could benefit each other (Ozano & Khatri 2018:190).

In the context of this study, PAR allowed the researcher and the SES, SMT members, teachers and the SGB members to co-produce knowledge and explored the guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE through collective discussions (Ozano & Khatri 2018:191). I viewed reflexivity as important for this research, because it assisted me to negotiate power differentials and be self-aware, which contributed to a more trustworthy, transparent and honest account of the research process. Through reflexivity, I was able to understand the sociocultural context of the participants, and to build a good rapport with them in the early stages of the project (Raza 2020:74). The engagement of co-learning among the participants ensured that new ideas in relation to the exploration of the envisaged guidelines were developed. Openness to new ideas supported the identification of a shared concern among the participants, and an intention to work collaboratively to address misconceptions about the implementation of the WSE programme at the school (McGrath 2019:517). Section 4.6.5 will discuss how the adoption of PAR awakened participants' critical consciousness.

4.5.5 Participatory action research awakens critical consciousness

As a facet of PAR, critical consciousness enabled the participants to assess the social problem or challenge critically and feel empowered to act and effected a change on it. Critical consciousness brought awareness of capabilities and skills in the co-researchers that ineffective implementation of the WSE programme is challengeable and, thus, changeable (Shahnazarian 2017:1). In light of the afore-mentioned statement, the implication was that critical consciousness provided the stakeholders, as active agents of change, with an opportunity to apply their learned knowledge from the PAR research process. During consciousness raising, participants were visibly more confident and effective as they engaged in dialogues and discussions, and realised that their lived experiences and research skills were shared (Coughlin, Smith & Fernandez 2017:7).

Critical consciousness promoted action to effect social change. From point of view of critical consciousness, PAR encouraged research participants to collectively investigated the root causes of the failure to implement the WSE guidelines effectively at the school (Kim 2016:40). Failure to implement the guidelines effectively at the school stimulated stakeholder consciousness and awareness and encouraged them to engage in research dialogues that initiated the exploration of the envisaged guidelines. Bennet (2019:114) argues that PAR awakens awareness in stakeholders of the availability of resources and capabilities at their disposal and enhances development of self-reliance. Perusal of the policies discussed in section 3.2 provided additional knowledge that complemented the existing knowledge on the current WSE guidelines. The lived experiences, values and beliefs of the research team, co-created as emerging categories and themes from the rich data, were used to support the exploration of WSE guidelines. Enlightenment as a characteristic of PAR will be discussed In section 4.6.6.

4.5.6 Participatory action research supports enlightenment

Using PAR conscientised researchers about their roles and responsibilities in a research project. Conscious positioning of the researcher and reflexive awareness are important when involving marginalised participants. The active participation of participants in the research built knowledge and insights from their lived experiences in all stages of the research process (Brown 2022:21). I viewed the researcher as a facilitator and co-learner with participants in the co-production of knowledge to explore the guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE. In this instance, the positionality of the researcher did not completely detach me from the research process. The reflexive aspect eliminated bias, and advocated for knowledge creation that enlightened co-researchers and the school community on the effective implementation of the WSE policy. Research facilitation by the researcher supported a process of critical discussion of participants' knowledge, and through collaboration, new knowledge or ideas were reinvented (Mather-Pike 2018:43). The benefit of using PAR is that the co-creation of new knowledge and reinvention of new ideas were incorporated in the exploration of the envisaged guidelines.

In this study, the active collaboration of the co-researchers in the research process made them aware of the national policies that impact education and schooling.

Tapping from the literature of Kwidai, Iyengar, Witenstein, Byker and Setty (2017:83), I discovered that PAR was applicable for this study because it supported the empowerment and enlightenment of the SES, SMT members , teachers and the SGB members when they were researching their communities to find out how policies were being enacted. Utilising PAR in this research strengthened the capacity of the co-researchers and enlightened them about the importance of co-creating knowledge to avoid the ineffective implementation of the WSE programme (Susskind, Cunningham & Cruxen 2018:143). According to Hall, Gaved and Sargent (2021:2), PAR enlightened the participants on the sharing of their research expertise, doing knowledge exchange and engaging in critical dialogue. That implied that collaborative decision-making among the participants nurtured their working relations and built trust towards the effective implementation of the WSE programme in the school. Section 4.7 will discuss the ontology of PAR.

4.6 ONTOLOGY OF PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

Gruber (2018:7) defines ontology as the study of “claims and assumptions that are made about the nature of social reality”. Ontology is the study of existence or the nature of reality, and the honour bestowed on the research participants to engage one another in the plausible communication about how knowledge construction was carried out to support reality pertinent to the research questions. (Nasution 2018:1). The ontological stance of this research was premised on the notion that subjective reality was constructed in collaboration with co-researchers. In line with the constructivist paradigm, credible reality was constructed from the lived experiences, values and beliefs of the participants, who possessed local knowledge and were best placed in the locality of the social problem (Redman-MacLaren & Mills 2015:3). In my view, this implies that, in order to explore credible guidelines that were responsive to the effective improvement of the implementation of WSE at the school, the research had to be inclusive of participants representing the school community. Social interactions of co-researchers were expected to benefit the school, as well as the research, because these co-researchers possessed first-hand information regarding the implementation of the WSE programme as a social challenge in their community. In section 4.8, the study’s research design will be outlined.

4.7 RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design is the overall strategy that integrates the different components of a study in a coherent and logical way (Moissenko, Braicu, Tomuleasa & Berindan-Neagoe 2016:2). Stefan (2016:31) defines research design as the plan of action to be followed to respond to the research question. Flowing from these expositions, this study's research design centred on exploring the envisaged guidelines and the actions of the participants to improve the WSE programme as policy and practice, and hence the working conditions at schools (Moissenko *et al.* 2016:38). The research design planning stage entailed the formulation of a research team. The planning stage required the researcher and co-researchers to take on an active role and engage in a dialogue as knowledge producers. Interpretivism views knowledge construction as a result of the lived experiences, beliefs and values of the research participants (Tomazweski, Zarestky & Gonzalez 2020:2).

The second stage of the research design addressed the information session, responsibilities of the team members and conducting a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis. The third stage focused on the selection of co-researchers, the conceptualisation of PAR into a research design as a research methodology, data generation and the use of CDA for data analysis. Section 4.9 will delineate the importance of ethical considerations in this study.

4.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Permissions requesting ethical clearance and to conduct this research were sought from the ethics committee and title registration committee respectively (see Appendix C1). Furthermore, letters requesting permission to conduct research at a selected secondary school as a research site were also forwarded to the Faculty of Education of the University of the Free State and the research office of the Department of Basic Education in the Free State province (see Appendix B1). In addition, permission to access teachers and parents of the selected school was sought from the principal (see Appendices B4 and B5). Permission to utilise the schools as the study research site was requested from the principal and the SGB. Royer, Lane, Cantwell and Messenger (2017:2) posit that any "research conducted in cooperation with any school as a research setting, requires approval from the school prior to the initiation of the study".

A school setting provided a warm, caring and supportive researcher–co-researcher relationship, which was likely to enhance social competence and willingness to explore the guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE programme (Darling-Hammond, Flook, Cook-Harvey, Barron & Osher 2020:101).

As a constructivist researcher, I informed the co-researchers about the nature and the intention of the research, in order to enhance their ability to understand the problem and to ensure the same understanding of the goal of the study in the co-researchers' minds (Rumman & Alheet 2016:31). This approach corresponds with the prescripts of constructivism, and helped to stimulate deeper conversations with the co-researchers on the co-creation of valuable knowledge that was sought to respond to the objectives of the study.

The study protected the rights of participants and the school that took part in this research. Co-researchers were informed that their participation in the research would be purely voluntary and consensual, that they had the right to withdraw from the research at any time. According to Macleod and Mnyaka (2018:6), as the principal researcher, I was clearly mandated to communicate and explain to the research participants their right to make an informed choice about whether they would like to participate in the research project or not.

Co-researchers were assured that I would conceal their credentials to maintain anonymity. Names of participants and the participating secondary school were disguised as pseudonyms to assure anonymity. Concealing co-researchers' credentials and using pseudonyms motivated them to participate in the research and to share their experiences, because they were protected from harm and possible embarrassment (Coffelt 2017:3). Co-researchers were allowed to express their lived experiences and beliefs in their own language as a token of freedom of expression, and to prevent missing, misjudging or misinterpreting meaning if they used another language (Reinke de Buitrago 2019:1). Section 4.10 will discuss the relationship between the researcher and the co-researchers.

4.9 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE RESEARCHER AND CO-RESEARCHERS

PAR supports both action and participation. PAR was beneficial to the researcher and participants because it granted them the right and ability to have a say in the exploration of the guidelines to improve the implementation of the guidelines in schools, to effect the change they desired and needed to improve the performance of learners (Klocker 2015:3). In my view, the collaborative involvement of the participants in the research led to diverse expert knowledge being shared from their lived experiences, beliefs and values. PAR strengthened and embraced the ideas and opinions of the affected communities and individuals by involving them in all possible stages of the research. Keane, Khupe and Muza (2016:165) postulate that PAR could be beneficial for a study as it empowers participants, builds trusting relationships, honours relational and holistic knowledge and centres the indigenous voice. I strongly believe that, by involving the co-researchers in this study, they were capacitated, and they improved their research skills. Working together as a team during the social interactions and collaborations forged cooperation and good working relations that resulted in the building of trusting relationships. Good social collaborative engagements assisted the research team to co-produce holistic knowledge that was valuable for incorporation in the exploration of the envisaged guidelines.

Working as a team during research was advantageous, in that it assisted in building good rapport between the researcher and the participants (Xu, Baysari, Stocker, Leow, Day & Carland 2020:7). Building good rapport resulted in harmonious communication of ideas, beliefs and opinions pertinent to the objectives of the research. Raheim *et al.* (2016:1) argued that a sound researcher–participant relationship gave primacy to the good understanding and openness to each other, and the co-construction and situating of knowledge. My view is that, as a researcher, I needed to, first, help the participants understand the intention of the research. Then, I had to encourage a culture of openness among the co-researchers, wherein every team member was able to communicate their ideas freely. Such creation of spaces assisted in the co-construction of knowledge that ultimately influenced the exploration of the guidelines for the improved WSE implementation. Section 4.11 will explain how participants were selected.

4.10 SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

As the research site of the study, a case study of one secondary school in the Motheo district in the Free State province was undertaken. A particularistic, single case study design was used to illuminate the general aspects of implementing WSE at the school. The particularistic nature of the case study benefitted the research participants by focusing on the implementation of WSE, as the overarching research question of the study (Sinha 2017:99). Harrison, Birks, Franklin and Mills (2017:10) posit that a case study approach provides a study with a comprehensive, holistic and in-depth exploration of the research problem. The sharing of ideas, beliefs and lived experiences by the co-researchers was found to be mutually informative in this research and provided a more synergistic and comprehensive view of the exploration of the envisaged guidelines as the issue being studied.

A purposive sampling technique was used to select research participants. As stated by Alchemer.com (2021), purposive sampling assists in selecting participants who fit the profile of the research. Purposive sampling was relevant for this research because it allowed for the generation of new knowledge through the processes of comparison and contrast (Denieffe 2020:662). This was the case in this study, because the participants had diverse profiles and contributed diverse lived experiences and ideas that were responsive to the objectives of the research.

The participants nominated for participation in this study included the school principal, as an overseer of WSE process on behalf of the Department of Education at school level, and all other SMT members. The deputy principal was included as a controller of all HODs, and HODs as responsible for overseeing the work of teachers in different departments of the school. The research sample also included three teachers in the FET band (Grades 10–12) and two from the General Education and Training band (Grades 8 and 9). The teachers represented each grade at the school. Including these teachers, furthermore, ensured their empowerment and was an acknowledgement of the diffusion of power in the research proceedings.

Three parents on the SGB were included as participants and signified the importance of active community involvement in the implementation of school policies. The rationale behind the inclusion of diverse participants in the study was for the assurance

of diverse discussions among the participants that assisted in the cultivation of the critical thinking, and collective decision-making (Kekana & Makura 2020:441).

I considered the involvement of the SGB in the implementation of the WSE programme in this study as a capacity-building process. Furthermore, it was an effort to grant parents power and a voice in matters relating to social justice in the school community. In line with the recommendations of the National Policy on WSE, the SES assisted the participants with skills for handling communication, and interpersonal skills, which are precursors of data analysis. Acquisition of skills emanated from the SES's initial and ongoing training at the provincial level (South Africa 2001c:16). Section 4.10.1 will discuss the co-researchers' credentials and the roles they played in the study as coordinating team members.

4.10.1 Process of recruiting co-researchers

I waited until I had been issued an ethical clearance certificate by the ethics committee of the University of the Free State before I started recruiting study participants. I sent an email to the SES requesting his participation, and asked for his contact numbers and that of the participating school. I visited the school as the research site to request the participation of the principal, deputy principal, three HODs, five teachers and three SGB members, and asked for their cell numbers.

4.10.2 Credentials of the co-researchers

The study used pseudonyms to conceal the real names of participants, and to adhere to the ethical requirements. The coordinating team consisted of fourteen co-researchers. Since the study used a purposive sampling technique, the identification and selection of individuals who were knowledgeable or experienced with WSE programme, as a phenomenon of interest, were employed (Palinkas *et al.* 2015:534). The selected participants were expected to communicate their experiences and opinions in an articulate, expressive, and reflective manner (Palinkas *et al.* 2015:535). The selection of participants in that way presented the study with an opportunity to utilise individuals who could provide rich data for the study project.

The coordinating team consisted of the school principal, a deputy principal, three HODs, three teachers, three parents on the SGB, one SES from the district office and

a study coordinator. Each co-researcher's credentials and the role they played in the research will be described.

4.10.2.1 The study coordinator

The study's principal researcher was the coordinator of the research project. The coordinator was a school principal who possessed a Master's degree and was at the time in pursuit of a Doctor of Philosophy in Education qualification. As an interpretivist researcher and a co-researcher in this study, the researcher approached the principal of the school that had been identified as the research site. The selection of the school was based on the academic benefit it would attain from the research project.

4.10.2.2 SMT

The SMT comprised staff members with different roles to play in ensuring the day-to-day running of the school. Apart from overseeing curriculum implementation, one of their greatest responsibilities was to ensure the effective implementation of WSE on school premises. According to Shaturaev and Bekimbetova (2021:88), an SMT, through collaboration with staff members, manages, monitores and evaluates the implementation of school policies in relation to school activities. Within the boundaries of their credentials and the context of this study, the roles and responsibilities of the SMT members will be outlined below.

4.10.2.3 The principal

Mr Mokatsane, the principal, availed his school as a research site. He played a vital role in collaborating with the researcher to introduce the research topic and PAR as the research methodology that would be employed. The intrinsic motivation of the staff and the SGB members was crucial for their active participation in the research project. In inviting the teachers and SGB parents to participate in the research, Mr Mokatsane, as a co-researcher and leader of a school, exhibited a high level of responsibility towards learners, teachers, parents, and the community (Brolund 2016:42). He exerted a great deal of energy to constantly remind teachers and SGB members who were co-researchers about meeting times.

4.10.2.4 DEPUTY PRINCIPAL

Ms Mohlominyane, the deputy principal and co-researcher, played a significant role in assisting the principal to motivate the HODs, teachers and parents to participate in the study. She explained to them the benefits of their participation in the research, as they would be given the opportunity to share their lived experiences, ideas and beliefs for new knowledge construction regarding the exploration of the guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at their school.

The deputy principal emphasised that their collaborative involvement in the research would enhance their socialisation or social skills. Socialisation or social skills refer to skills that enabled participants to interact with each other, the SMT, the staff, the learners, the SGB and the entire school community on policy issues (Khumalo & Van der Vyver 2020:2). She advised the HODs and teachers that their expertise would drastically improve the implementation of WSE policy and, hence, the school holistically. Ms Mohlominyane informed the SGB members that their participation in the research would enhance their understanding of the implementation of school policies, and further benefit the school community they represented.

4.10.2.5 Heads of departments

Mr Podumo, a co-researcher and HOD, held a Bachelor of Science Degree in education. His specialisation in chemistry and computer science qualified him to be appointed as the HOD of the Science Department. He volunteered to participate in the study because he saw it as an opportunity to empower himself, the teachers he lead in the department, and the school community in general. As confirmed by Agus Scileanna (2016:3), the HOD was aware of his role in advancing and promoting the ethos of the school as far as WSE policy implementation was concerned.

Ms Morobe was the holder of a Master's degree in Education in curriculum studies. She had vast experience of school management, and she seized the opportunity to participate in the research, to provide input to policy development and review (Agus Scileanna 2016:4). I viewed her decision to participate in the study as positive, as she provided expertise during the ventilation of facts among the participants.

Mr Morailane held a B.Ed. Hons. degree. Among the subjects he taught was life orientation, and he was the convenor of the school-based support team. **Mr**

Morailane's participation in the research project enhanced collegiality and team decision-making among the SMT members (Leaf & Odhiambo 2017:38). This implies that they cooperated in social interactions as colleagues sharing the responsibilities to explore the guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at their school.

4.10.2.6 Teachers

Three teachers teaching in the FET band volunteered to take part in the research study.

Ms Mothupi decided to participate in the study in order to enhance the collaborative team teaching needed to strengthen the implementation of WSE guidelines for curriculum delivery. Gcelu (2019:3) states that stakeholder collaboration could assist in bringing appropriate people who possess critical skills together in constructive ways. **Ms Mothupi** cherished that idea as a chance to improve the implementation of WSE guidelines on school premises, in order to improve the quality of the education on offer.

Mr Radinotsi taught mathematics to Grades 10–12. He realised that, by working together as a team to explore the envisaged WSE policy guidelines, they could learn from one other by revealing what they knew, and sharing ideas (Gcelu 2019:2). In light of that, I viewed participant collaboration as a positive process for improving the implementation of WSE guidelines on and off the school premises.

Mr Mabote was in high spirits about his active involvement in the research project. He seized the opportunity to participate in the research process in order to produce new knowledge, and to link it with existing knowledge in the exploration of the guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools (Lawrence & Nkoane 2020:547). That motivation justified the PAR stance that this study adopted, namely supporting the exploration of the envisaged WSE policy guidelines to strengthen social justice in the school setting and the broader community.

Two teachers from the GET (Grades 8–9) band agreed to avail themselves for the study.

Mr Mokhele said his decision to participate in the study rested on the premise that the research offered a platform for mutual understanding of one another's viewpoints, and created a communicative space for communicative action (Tshelane 2022:97). Since this study was rooted in the constructivist paradigm, co-researchers were able

to co-create knowledge that sparked communicative action while they explored the guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE.

Among her subjects in the GET band, **Ms Mhlambi** taught economic and management sciences. She possessed a Bachelor of Commerce in Education (B.Com.Ed.) degree. The fact that the research prioritised the review or exploration of guidelines of the WSE policy to empower the stakeholders involved to improve the situation at the school and in the community, encouraged her participation in the research project (Agus Scileanna 2016:4). She believed that the research would strengthen the abilities of teachers, and capacitate parents on the way the WSE policy was implemented on school premises.

4.10.2.7 Parents on the SGB

Mr Modabi, **Ms Khothatso** and **Ms Magubane** were parents serving on the SGB. Mr Modabi was the SGB chairperson, Ms Khothatso was the SGB treasurer and Ms Magubane was a co-opted SGB member. The participation of the SGB parents in the research illustrated participatory democracy, which upheld the legal stance that parents, as co-researchers, deserved the right to be involved in decisions that affected them (Ansell & Torfing 2022:89). In light of the above inferences, the involvement of the SGB parents in the research as co-researchers served as evidence of their intention to improve the implementation of WSE through the exploration of the envisaged guidelines.

Phakade and Chilenga-Butao (2021:18) point out that shared decision-making by participants is an end product of stakeholder collaboration. This implies that open communication and trust were attributes of the SGB, one of the vital stakeholders in the provision of quality education. As corroborated by the Department of Basic Education (2020:6), the SGB is in a position of trust, and should support the creation and maintenance of school polices, and it was, therefore, necessary to involve SGB members in the review and exploration of the guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at the school. I viewed the decision to involve the SGB in the research project as a wise option, as doing so meant their lived experiences and beliefs in the exploration of the envisaged guidelines, as a social challenge that affected their lives, were incorporated.

4.10.2.8 Official of the Department of Education

Ms Mafoko, a SES and a co-researcher, held a Bachelor of Arts in education (BA Ed.) degree. **Ms Mafoko** brought a wealth of experience to the research. She attended the provincial training and conferences on implementing the WSE programme. District officials, in collaboration with school principals, were entrusted with the responsibility of providing support and instilling a sense of accountability in all stakeholders attached to schools. The policymakers expected the implementation of WSE to align with evolving policy and practice (Le Floch & Tanenbaum 2016:1). Involving a SES from the district office ensured the decentralisation of educational decision-making.

The devolution of authority from the district level to the school level ensured that the SES was able to tap from the insights and experiences of the SMT, teachers and parents to co-create new knowledge for the exploration of the anticipated guidelines (Ladden 2015:40). The SES, officials of the national ministry and policymakers codified [arranged] new knowledge that was generated during the research process into guidelines that facilitated consistent implementation of WSE at schools (Koriakin, McKee, Schwartz & Chafouleas 2020:923). In my view, a WSE document that captured the relevant constructs from inputs and experiences of diverse participants was very powerful in addressing the implementation of WSE as a social challenge facing schools (Koriakin *et al.* 2020:931).

In line with the tenets of collaboration theory, the guidelines thus explored motivated the co-researchers and encouraged them to participate and partner with each other to achieve change (Youngs 2017:145). According to Colbry, Hurwitz and Adair (2014:71), the use of collaboration theory was justified for this research , because in order to avoid deviating from the primary aim of the research of exploring the guidelines to improve the implementation WSE at the school, participants needed to collaborate, and they guided each other in a group. Section 4.12 will discuss the SWOT analysis that was conducted to analyse and direct the focus of the research team.

4.11 SWOT ANALYSIS

The research team undertook a SWOT analysis to explore the opportunities on offer to mitigate threats and understand the weaknesses that might be posed by inferiority

complexes in some of the research team members, due to lack of exposure to policy issues such WSE, and a lack of experience in participating in a research project. A SWOT analysis was used as a tool to document strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats during the research project. Malubay and Manuel (2022:250) argue that a SWOT analysis is vital for research that planned to incorporate collective knowledge of a team, in this case, to explore guidelines to improve the implementation of the WSE programme. That implies that the school and the community took action that led to the effective implementation of the WSE programme, as a challenge that concerned them.

4.11.1 Strengths

The team consisted of participants who were dedicated to achieving the effective implementation of the WSE programme at their school, in response to the overarching research question of the study. The dedication and trust among the participants resulted in their active cooperation (Bratko, Oleshko, Datskov, Vychavka, Olytskyi & Balytskyi 2021:330). The inclusion of the SMT and teachers in the research process as co-researchers strengthened the research project because these co-researchers had been professionally trained on the WSE programme. Together with other co-researchers, they formed a group of participants who were able to formulate strategies to achieve the objectives of the research (Namugenyi, Nimmagadda & Reiners 2019:1146). The new strategies were considered as complementary and alternative solutions to existing WSE guidelines.

The involvement of an SES from the district office, with her vast experience in the training of teachers and attendance of provincial and national conferences on WSE, was seen as the strength. Her experience was vital in assisting with the application of PAR, and she served as a guide in the sharing of existing and new knowledge on how WSE guidelines could be explored (Zima, Plebankiewicz & Wieczorek 2020:2). Involving parents serving on the SGB in the research was indicative of strength, because they contributed core competencies of the school community to the exploration of the envisaged guidelines (Benzaghta, Elwalda & Mousa 2021:67). In terms of PAR, they represented the voices of the voiceless in the community. The collective knowledge of the team members assisted in achieving informed decisions about the emerging themes.

4.11.2 Weaknesses

A lack of functionality, efficiency and effectiveness of the WSE guidelines and their implementation caused the school as an organisation to suffer, and this was, therefore, seen as weaknesses (Verboncu & Condurache 2016:122). Some team members felt inferior and had stage fright, which were brought on by a lack of knowledge about school policies, as not all possessed that knowledge from their professional capacity. To mitigate the impact of feelings of inferiority, the affected members were constantly reminded of the ethical stance that every co-researcher's views and beliefs were important and valuable for achieving the objectives of the study. Despite a thorough introduction of PAR methodology prior to the research process, its inadequate application emerged at some stages of the research, thereby compromising the logical and critical thinking of some co-researchers (Puyt, Lie, De Graaf & Wilderom 2020:6).

The lack of experience of parents in the research field posed a weakness at some stages of the research. However, the involvement of parents in the research as co-researchers was seen as a diffusion of power and they were empowered for decision-making regarding WSE policy implementation (Bezzina 2020:1). As the research was conducted with the aid of the Zoom platform in order to mitigate the impact of COVID-19, power outages on some days caused disruptions. As Kyronlampi, Book and Karikoski (2020:444) explain, power outages deny co-researchers the freedom to express their thoughts, experiences and perceptions pertinent to the objectives of a study.

4.11.3 Opportunities

Team spirit, development of trust, improved communication and cooperation among the co-researchers were viewed as opportunities for capacitation. According to Abid and Jie (2021:402), team spirit, trust, communication or dialogue and cooperation are the ingredients of empowerment that lead to informed decision-making among participants of a research process. Team spirit was beneficial because it enhanced the harmonious working relationship among the co-researchers. Due to the existence of trust, team members were able to express their opinions, thoughts and lived experiences without fear or favour. Improved communication allowed the co-researchers to share ideas, beliefs and lived experiences, leading to the categorisation

of facts, which ultimately resulted in the emergence of themes. Furthermore, improved dialogue and cooperation allowed parents to invite inputs from community members as stakeholders who were also affected by the implementation of WSE programme.

HODs viewed the research process as a platform that granted them an opportunity to raise their voices with regard to the institution of policy reforms and practice (Richards 2020:2). Since it was obligatory for HODs to see to it that WSE guidelines were effectively implemented at schools, their involvement in the research was of vital importance. Furthermore, HODs are members of the SMT, who were expected to see to it that WSE policy and other school policies were effectively implemented on school premises.

Teachers were very excited to take part in the research project because they viewed the invitation to provide inputs, insights and experiences as an opportunity to enhance their skills and knowledge on curriculum delivery. As Cahapay (2020:1) explains, involving teachers in the research project was an opportunity for them to be better informed of the key problems, decisions, and solutions that must be cogently considered, in this case, as far as the exploration of the guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE programme in their school was concerned.

The SES viewed participation in the research as an opportunity to motivate the SMT and teachers and instil a sense of accountability for the implementation of WSE guidelines (Tachie & Mancotywa 2021:9). Using her vast experience gained from training, the SES was able support other co-researchers to co-create new knowledge emanating from the provincial level. Such social interactions ensured that co-researchers achieved the required level of competence in the implementation of WSE programme at school.

4.11.4 Threats

Threats refer to anticipated external factors that could impact negatively on the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of the WSE programme at the school. The unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic posed a considerable threat to the research project. Conducting research under such conditions meant limited social interaction and socialisation of co-researchers (Hayashi, Nishiya & Kaneko 2022:6). In some instances, the SMT displayed a lack of organisational capacity and

managerial skills on the implementation of the WSE programme on school premises. This was evident when they clashed about sharing similar roles and responsibilities pertinent to the implementation process (Lawinska, Korombel & Zajemska 2022:8). It was noteworthy that PAR was a time-consuming research approach, especially because some co-researchers did not report for scheduled meetings, and these meetings needed to be rescheduled.

Insufficient training in the implementation of the WSE programme at schools posed a threat to the research process. The lack of training of some teachers was evident in their lack of confidence in narrating their experiences and beliefs during the research process (Limbong 2019:2). Poor communication among the teachers, SMT members and parents on and off of the school premises regarding the implementation of WSE posed a threat to the study. This was evident in the creation of conditions that harmed the school culture and slowed down the implementation of the WSE programme further (Polat, Celik & Okcu 2018:8). In my view, the lack of innovation from teachers with respect to the implementation process of WSE resulted in disruption of the institutional harmony, which demotivated other staff members to pull their weight on the implementation of the programme.

Parents' lack of knowledge of education-related terms included in the WSE guidelines inhibited their communication and participation in the research project. Parents' limited knowledge of the programme terminology inculcated uneasiness and manifested as a threat to free-flowing dialogue during the stakeholder collaborations (Unsal & Agcam 2019:425). In light of these threats, and because some parents lacked professional acumen because they were not teachers, SMT members and teachers needed to patiently induct and empower them in order to enhance their participation in the implementation of the WSE programme at the school. Section 4.13 will discuss the implementation of the iterative cyclical steps of PAR.

4.12 CONCEPTUALISING THE RESEARCH DESIGN

The underlying philosophies of PAR were embedded in its potential to include voiceless participants in a research project, where all participants shared power equally and participated in active and collaborative production of useful knowledge (Northway, 2017:443). By involving all the relevant stakeholders in the research

process, PAR sought to understand the school and community problem, and solved it collaboratively (Junker 2018:165). Figure 4.1 is an illustration of the PAR processes that ensured the collaboration of stakeholders in resolving the implementation of WSE, as a challenge for the school and community, through the investigation. The implementation stages of the research entailed the iterative and cyclical steps that the research team agreed upon to follow in making the research a reality. The dates of the meetings and feedback sessions were outlined for the periodical process of the research project.

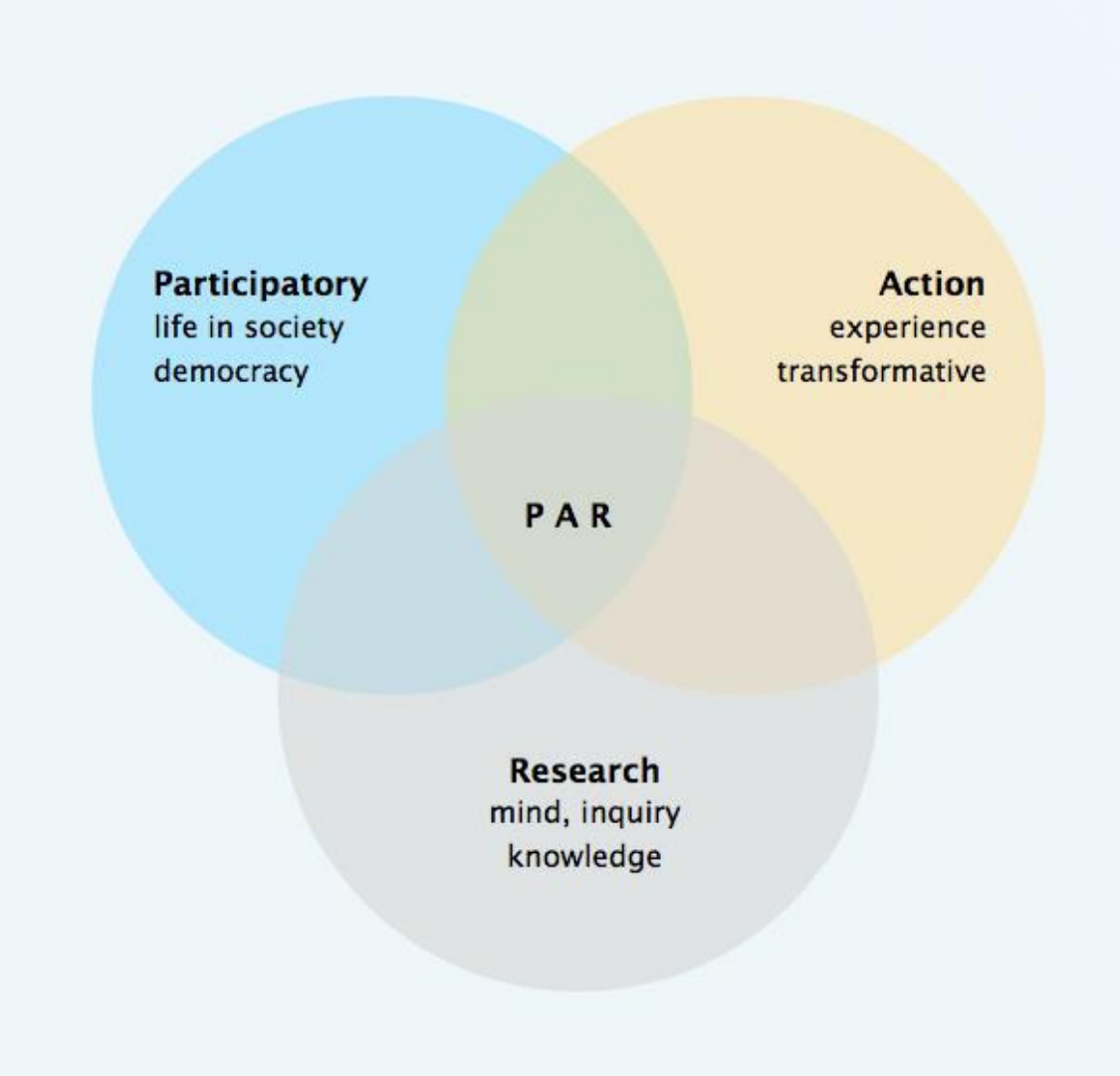

Figure 4.1: The elements of PAR

Source: Junker (2018:166)

4.12.1 Prioritising research team activities

Prioritisation is an arrangement of items in the order of their relative importance (Collins English Dictionary 2017). Since PAR improved relations between the researcher and the local community, the researcher guided the team to develop appropriate research project management strategies through a collaborative and adaptive way of thinking and working (Grilli, Andrade, Xavier, Santos, Stori, Carrilho, Nunes, Peres, Vivacqua, Serafini & Sinisgalli 2021:3). Such social stakeholder interactions and participation in the research project promoted better informed and context-adapted solutions for the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE programme at the school. Through social learning, participants interacted and collaboratively constructed new meanings and strategies to work together to find solutions for the effective implementation of the programme (Grilli *et al.* 2021:3). Further engagements with the participants revealed the presence of internal conflicts among the group members with regard to the implementation of WSE programme guidelines. Some teachers and parents believed that some guidelines in the WSE policy had not been unpacked to them satisfactorily. The SMT, with the assistance of the district official, the SES, volunteered to draw up an action plan to address the issue during their stakeholder training sessions.

Athuraliya (2022:1) explains that an action plan entails a description of the goal to be achieved; steps to reach the goal; co-researchers to execute each task; deadlines and milestones; resources needed to complete the tasks and measures to evaluate research progress. The identified priorities guided the team to draw up a strategic plan that would assist in the generation of rich data, as outlined in section 4.13.2.

4.12.2 The strategic plan

The research team agreed to formulate an inclusive strategic plan that would help the co-researchers to work collaboratively among themselves through interaction and sharing of ideas (Ayaya, Makoelle & Van der Merwe 2020:3). As part of participant empowerment, the plan entailed steps that were followed to enhance critical and reflection capacities on the strategies incorporated in the envisaged guidelines, in accordance with PAR. Central to the utilisation of the strategic plan was the application

of PAR, which followed a spiral of characteristic self-reflection cycles (Ayaya *et al.* 2020:4), as set out below:

- Planning for change;
- Acting and observing the process and consequence of the change;
- Reflecting on the process and consequences;
- Re-planning;
- Acting and observing again; and
- Reflecting again.

The team's supporting actions were endorsed by the following priorities.

4.12.2.1 The first priority. Planning phase

The planning phase of the study entailed a visit to a school, as a research site, and to engage in discussions. Before the visit to the school, I telephonically confirmed an appointment with the principal to brief him about our intended research project. I also intended to obtain permission to conduct the research on the school premises as the research site. Alibali, Nathan, Boncoddo, and Pier (2019:348) suggest that a school visit enables the researcher to request the participation of the participants, in order to achieve shared understanding or common ground on the research question and the educational relevance of the proposed research. Such social interactions ensured the mutual sharing of knowledge, beliefs and assumptions among the participants.

The first cycle of the research was aimed at affording the researcher the opportunity to explain the research topic and the aim of conducting such research to the school principal. The school visit also benefitted the research project, because the introduction and explanation of PAR as a methodology to conduct research in collaboration of participants were given. At our second meeting, the principal introduced the teachers and SGB members as participants in the research project. The researcher introduced the PAR approach to the SMT members, teachers, and the parents as an approach to inquiry that sought to involve those affected by the issue under investigation in each phase of research, and to use co-produced knowledge for action that improved the community's social conditions (Daepp, Binet, Gavin, Arcaya & The Healthy Neighbourhoods Research Consortium 2022:180).

After indicating that PAR was aligned with aspects of the advocacy, communicative, and radical planning traditions (Daepp *et al.* 2022:181), SMT members volunteered to draw up an action plan that facilitated the planning phase of the research. An action plan was necessary to support the community participation that was characteristic of PAR across all phases of a research project. The SMT assured all the participants that the action plan would be presented to them in next meeting.

Table 4.1: The first priority: The action plan

Action step	Responsibility	Timeframe	Resources required	Desired outcome
Situation analysis	Research team	2 hours	Administering questionnaires	Questionnaires were completed
Advocacy to SMT and teachers – induction on WSE guidelines	District SES	1 hour	Handouts of copies of WSE documents	An in-depth knowledge of WSE guidelines
Advocacy to parents	Deputy principal	1 hour	Handouts of copies of WSE documents	Clarity on WSE guidelines
Reflection	Research team	2 hours	Pens and notebooks	Keeping of minutes

The research team agreed to meet in the second week of July 2022. During the meeting, the deputy principal availed the copies of the action plan to the participants, and explained how it would be implemented. The researcher explained PAR as a collaborative approach that engaged participants in all aspects of the design, implementation, and analysis of the research project through reflective dialogue (Johnson & Flynn 2020:443). That implied that participants were involved in the planning stages, actions that led to changes in the exploration of the envisaged guidelines, reflection meetings and replanning phases, as iterative, cyclical steps of PAR.

4.12.2.2 The second priority: Information session phase

The purpose of this session was to inform all the participants who had consented to participate in the study about the details and procedure of subsequent meetings. The

principal agreed to chair the meeting. The emphasis was on the dates and times of the upcoming meetings with different research participants. The meeting resolved that meetings would take place on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays; these days were chosen according to the availability of the participants. Of crucial importance was the agreement that all the sessions would take place outside school hours, to prevent disruption of teaching and learning activities at the research site. The research team decided that the researcher, in collaboration with the co-researchers, would draw up a plan to guide the activities of the research proceedings.

Table 4.2: Coordination of activities for participants

Activity	Responsibility	Timeframe	Resources required	Desired outcome
Meeting with the principal	The researcher	2 hours	In-depth interview schedules	Solicitation of rich responses
Meeting with the SES	Researcher	2 hours	Responses to in-depth interview questions	Extraction of lived experiences from open-ended questions
Meeting with deputy principal and HODs	The researcher	2 hours	Administering of in-depth interview protocols, notebooks and Zoom recordings	Capturing of rich responses as data
Meeting with teachers	Researcher	2 hours	Responses on in-depth interview schedules	Empirical responses to research questions
Meeting with parents	Researcher	2 hours	In-depth interview protocols	Responses to the research questions

The meeting, furthermore, resolved that, as part of the rules, an attendance register would be kept for all the subsequent meetings. Any team member who expected to be absent on the day of the meeting was expected to report their absence to the principal,

who, in turn, would inform other participants. Following rules agreed upon, it was stipulated that all cell phones would be switched off for the duration of the discussions, to avoid disruptions and to enable the team members to focus on the research project. In line with PAR tenets, Cammock, Conn and Nayar (2021:123) posited that PAR advocated that “those being researched should be involved in the process actively”. In view of this PAR stance, the research process was conducted *with* the participants and not *for* them. In the context of the study, the researcher assumed the role of facilitator during the discussions. The scribe noted important facts that contributed to the main themes of the discussions.

Team members were also encouraged to take notes during the discussions for consolidation later. Participants were allowed to use their mother tongue and English for the discussions on lived experiences, beliefs and views during the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools. The themes emanating from the discussions were later transcribed into English.

4.12.2.3 The third priority: Active involvement of participants

Participants met to focus and deliberate on the resolutions and priorities that had been agreed upon in the previous meetings. The research team, furthermore, resolved that participants would be grouped into five groups. The groups were structured as follows: the principal; the SES from the district office; four SMT members; five teachers and three SGB parents. The deputy principal and one HOD were tasked with briefly orienting the SGB parents before the groupwork started. In line with collaboration theory tenets, the collaborative coalitions of participants as agents of change in the research process fostered cooperative learning among peers (Saavedra-Nieves & Fiestras-Janeiro 2022:1). That implied that parents were capacitated on the contents of the professional implications of the guidelines of the WSE policy. In operationalising the activities of the co-researchers, each group of participants was furnished with a copy of in-depth interview protocols containing open-ended questions.

Open-ended questions were beneficial to the research process because they served as indicators of quality responses from the participants (Neuert, Meitinger, Behr & Schonlau 2021:3). Schonlau, Gweon and Wenemark (2021:564) explain that open-ended questions provide co-researchers with deeper understanding of and insights into the generated data. Open-ended questions helped to explore themes and

respondents' thoughts without restricting the respondents by expecting them to select from a list of predetermined answer categories (Meitinger, Behr & Braun 2021:435). Open-ended questions were used in order to set the tone for the discussions among the group members in their meetings as set out in Table 4.2. Participants were reminded that the focus group discussions and the free attitude interviews would be recorded for further analysis.

In separating group meetings, co-researchers discussed and responded to the questions according to their lived experiences, beliefs and views on the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at the school. Focus group discussions with free attitude interviews afforded the research process to assess knowledge, attitudes and practices among the research members pertaining to the exploration of the envisaged guidelines (Kazaura 2020:1606).

In my view, the collaboration of participants in this research project strengthened the practice among the co-researchers of acquiring knowledge and developing positive attitudes on the effective implementation of the WSE programme. All the groups of participants were given four days before they could give a feedback in another meeting. The next meeting of the participants led to the reflection phase of the study.

4.12.2.4 Reflection phase

This phase of the research process presented an opportunity for the research team to create communication spaces. The communication spaces were useful to the participants for reflecting collaboratively on the co-created data pertaining to the exploration of guidelines to improve the WSE implementation. Every team member was able to make their voice heard during the discussions. Bendien, Groot and Abma (2022:1021) articulate that reflection as a PAR cycle component ensures team cohesiveness and empowers members to conduct inclusive dialogues. Participants were involved in mutual and transformational learning during the project group meetings. Transformational learning was considered a cornerstone of the reflection phase of the research process, because it was based on the willingness of the participants to share and learn from each other (Bendien *et al.* 2022:1016).

Using PAR as a dialogue-centred and collaborative approach to research in these reflection meetings led to increased dialogue and negotiation among the participants

(Ballard & Belsky 2010:623). Revez, Dunphy, Harris, Mullally, Lennon and Gaffney (2020:4) argue that PAR enables and promotes a process of iterative dialogue, which leads to knowledge creation through consensus.

In my view, the role of PAR in fostering learning during reflection meetings was to provide the co-researchers with a platform to incorporate new knowledge into their understanding of the WSE programme, of which effective implementation subsequently led to positive institutional change. Through the application of PAR with a goal-oriented approach, participants were able to monitor the progress and revised shortcomings using iterative processes and negotiations (Norstrom, Cvitanovic, Lof, West, Wyborn, Balvenera, Bednarek, Bennett, Biggs, de Bremond & Campbell 2020:186).

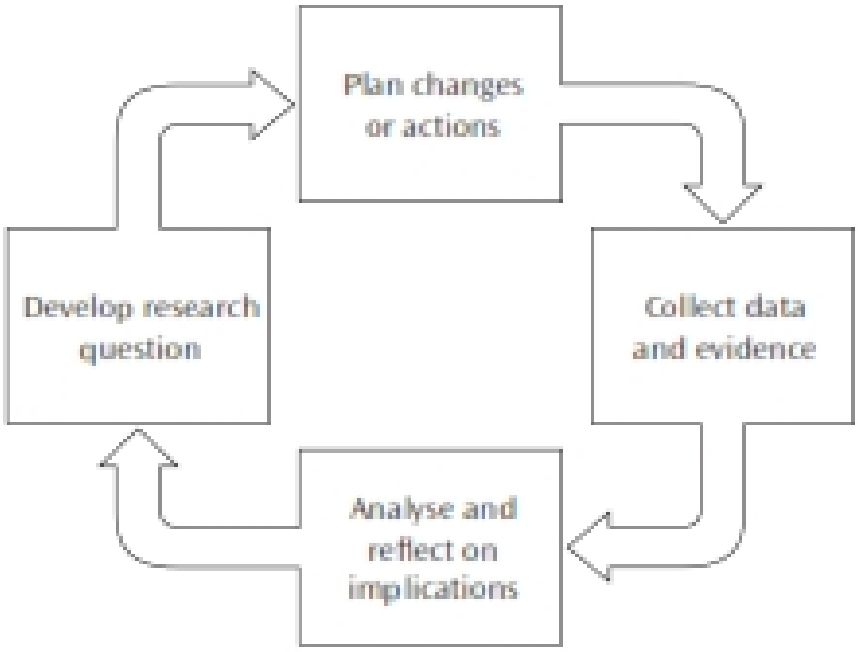

Figure 4.2: The PAR cycle

Source: Gaffney (2008:9)

The PAR process is characterised by the multiple cycles of research, reflection, and action, which engaged the co-researchers in authentic research with the goal of enhancing learning through the effective implementation of WSE at the school (Trott, Weinberg & McMeeking 2018:2). The implication was that, since PAR is grounded in critical and constructivist paradigms, participants were allowed to criticise irrelevant

knowledge production and constructed the knowledge that assisted in responding to the research questions.

The action-oriented approach of PAR involved collective knowledge production through cycles of reflection and iteration by the research team and the partners. In accordance with the PAR process, the collective knowledge production was relevant to the local context and the stakeholders were empowered to own the research project by readily implementing the outcomes (Rumsey, Stowers, Sam, Neil, Rodrigues, Brooks & Daly 2022:7). Section 4.13 will discuss the instruments used to collect data.

4.13 DATA GENERATING INSTRUMENTS

Instruments are the tools that assisted in effecting change in participants 'engagement with the exploration of the guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE programme at the school (Bissoonauth, Fischer & Herr 2020:214). Zoom meetings, a qualitative method of doing online videoconferencing, were used to generate data. The Zoom online platform was chosen because it enabled audio recordings, and control is limited to the host of the meeting, who decided to share it with other participants (Lobe *et al.* 2020:3).

In order to ensure anonymity of the participants according to the ethical considerations of research, participants were obscured in video recordings. I requested permission from the participants to audio record their conversations for transcription and further analysis. This type of online qualitative data gathering method was suitable for responding to the aim and objectives of the study on understanding experiences, opinions, attitudes, values and processes of distant participants during a time of unprecedented disruptions due to COVID-19 pandemic (Lo lacano *et al.* 2016:10). In exceptional cases, arrangements were made with co-researchers to arrange face-to-face interviews to collect data.

The study used online platforms to support the focus groups and individual interviews. The focus groups were an opportunity for the participants to share lived experiences, beliefs and ideas on the research topic, while the interviews were relevant tools for the solicitation of in-depth knowledge from the participants (Namey, Guest, O'Regan, Godwin, Taylor & Martinez 2020:59). Focus group discussions were used to generate rich data from SMT members, teachers and SGB parents. Individual interviews were

conducted one-on-one with the SES and the principal. Individual interviews were conducted in an open atmosphere, to allow participants to share personal experiences and opinions on the research questions (Bertschy, Geyh, Pannek & Meyer 2015:2). According to Saito and Ruhanen (2017:189), focus group discussions afforded the participants safe and open spaces for their social collaboration, so that they could express their views and opinions regarding the research questions.

The study used probing discussions based on free attitude interviews to encourage the participants to narrate their experiences and opinions on the research topic with a frank and open-minded attitude. As part of all meeting protocols with participants, the posing of probing questions in the discussions directed the course of each meeting. Section 4.15 will outline the steps of data analysis.

4.14 DATA ANALYSIS

The study used Teun van Dijk's CDA to analyse both oral and written discourses of co-researchers pertinent to the research questions. Van Dijk's CDA uses a combination of three dimensions or structures that were inclusive of text, social cognition and social context, as indicated in figure 4.3 below (Nazar, Rutumalessy & Purba 2021:5624). I used the text dimension to transcribe the spoken discourses into written texts, to elicit emerging themes from the participants' dialogue. I used social cognition as indicative of the conscious intellectual capacity of the co-researchers regarding thinking and reasoning skills for the co-production of relevant knowledge pertinent to the exploration of the envisaged guidelines. The social context dimension was used to analyse data elicited from the perspectives, beliefs and lived experiences of the broader community on the implementation of the WSE programme as experienced as a social challenge by the school.

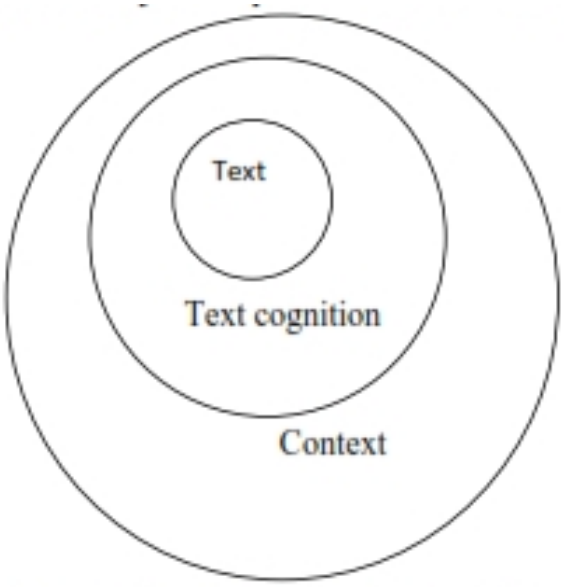

Figure 4.3: The Model of Teun A. van Dijk's CDA

Source: Nazar *et al.* (2021:5624)

CDA refers to critical language elements that are responsive to "why" and "how" questions. CDA was used to analyse social interactions by focusing on linguistic elements relating to why there was a need to explore the guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE policy at the school. Furthermore, the linguistic elements sought responses from data analysis on the best way to demonstrate the success of the exploration of the envisaged guidelines as informed by best practices worldwide (Santoso & Wardani 2021:123).

CDA is a discourse analytical approach that usex text and talk to resist dominance and inequalities in the research process (Khan, Adnan, Kaur, Khuhro, Asghar & Jabeen 2019:115). CDA ensures an equitable power distribution among the participants through the attainment of equal status in minds and actions in a research project. That implies that there no idea from a team member was considered superior to others during discourse analysis. Using CDA, as Sahmeni and Afifah (2019:42) explain, contributes to the linguistic structures that support the construction of knowledge and belief systems, such as those that are embedded in the exploration of the guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE policy as a social practice. The origins of CDA will be discussed in section 4.15.1.

4.14.1 Origins of critical discourse analysis

Krzyzanowski (2016:309) posits that CDA is rooted in the critical ideologies of scholars such as Fairclough, Wodak, Van Leeuwen, Fowler, Kress and Van Dijk. CDA, as espoused by various proponents, is most potent in discourses such as policies with the power to regulate the social order of school communities. Nursanti and Triyono (2022:10) argue that CDA empowers participants to use language to communicate and express thoughts and ideas, both spoken and written during the research process. From the Frankfurt School's point of view, a knowledge system represents power, which was realised through language usage. CDA was useful for analysing social issues entailing linguistic features that are embedded in social processes and cultural structures (Wu & Sun 2019:220).

In the context of this study, the participants were empowered by CDA to provide rich data based on their lived experiences, beliefs and ideas, and resulting from collaborative social interactions. The data thus analysed were incorporated in the exploration of the guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE policy at the school, as a social challenge, and to improve performance as a school culture.

According to Liu and Guo (2016:1076), CDA has its roots in critical linguistics as coined by Roger Fowler and Gunther Kress, in their book *Language and Contro*l. CDA, as indicated by its pioneers, uses language in ideological processes to mediate relationships between power and control in a research process. In this light, CDA exposes the hidden power of participants who intended to take control of the research proceedings, by allowing the equitable distribution of power among the co-researchers, which assisted to restore the confidence of participants to participate on an equal footing.

Krzyzanowski (2016:34) points to the importance of Kress' development of the multimodal theory of communication, which emphasises the benefits of using verbal and non-verbal communication. That theory encourages co-researchers to observe verbal and non-verbal cues or signs among themselves during the research process. Such types of communication are useful during meaning-making in CDA. Bouvier and Machin (2018:179) recommend that verbal data from interviews are transcribed into texts. Texts are analysed into categories to reveal the themes emerging from the analysed data in the research. In light of this theory, CDA conscientised co-

researchers about the importance of non-verbal data during data analysis. Those types of data were derived from the facial and bodily expressions of the participants when they discussed their lived experiences, beliefs and perspectives.

In line with one of the tenets of CDA, CDA was a means of illuminating discourses that influenced "knowledge, beliefs, understanding, plans, attitudes, ideologies, norms, and values" (Foste, Duran & Hooten 2022:4). To understand how CDA articulated data analysis, the study employed Van Dijk's dimensions of discourse, namely, textual analysis, discursive practice analysis and social structure analysis. The three levels of discourse will be discussed in the following subsections.

4.14.2 Levels of critical discourse analysis

4.14.2.1 Textual analysis

This level used linguistic analysis to attach meanings to texts and talk in the in-depth interviews of the participants in the research process. Recorded versions of interviews were transcribed into texts. That was in line with Van Dijk's opinion that CDA supported the collaborative action of co-researchers in using spoken and written language as texts to elicit categories from the data. From the expression of ideas resulting from the participants' arguments during the interviews, the categories were subsequently coded into the emerging themes of the research (Siregar *et al.* 2021:52).

According to Fairclough (in Berkovich and Benoliel 2020:504), CDA involves the investigation of texts, their processing, and their social context through their description, interpretation, and explanation. That implies that the text productions are processed from the non-verbal data of co-researchers. Non-verbal data are constituted by facial and bodily expressions of the participants, which are interpreted and coded accordingly to give rise to the knowledge pertinent to the research objectives. As Van Dijk (in Adisa, Oruh & Akanji 2020:9) explain, CDA is a problem-oriented and meaning-making tool that allows the voices of the participants to be heard and acknowledged in the research project. That means that co-researchers use language as a vehicle to co-create alternative views and new knowledge that emerge as themes from data analysis. The co-created alternative views and new knowledge in the form of themes were incorporated as solutions into guidelines that contributed to the improved implementation of WSE programme.

4.14.2.2 Discursive practice analysis

The central aim of CDA is to explore the links between language use and social practice. Through the application of discursive practice, participants utilise language to produce texts during the research process (Zhou & Qin 2020:3). Using CDA was justified for use in this study, because it primarily considers the way power inequalities and dominance are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in social contexts (Mabhala, Yohannes, Massey and Reis 2020:2). Discursive practices of data ensured the critical examination and analysis of text, spoken words and audio sounds gathered from the in-depth interviews and the focus group discussions (Lopez 2020:19). It was apparent that discursive practices, as embedded in CDA, were critical approaches that call for social change in the way the explored guidelines were implemented to improve the implementation of the WSE policy at institutions by the relevant stakeholders.

Using the tenets of CDA, participants as social and cultural beings used language in the form of texts to analyse data at the school, as their social context. The use of language by CDA ensured text production during data analysis. Texts and talk assisted in the co-creation of useful knowledge, which subsequently addressed the real situation in the exploration of the envisaged guidelines. Through discourse, the co-researchers were able to communicate and interpret data by eliminating power inequalities and dominance within their interdisciplinary groups (Bila & Ivanova 2020:221).

In CDA, language use was regarded as a social practice that, in this study, facilitated the exploration of the guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE policy as a social event occurring within broader institutional and community contexts (Lunkka, Lukkarila, Laulainen & Suhonen 2020:33). That implies that clarity and lack of language ambiguity during the communication of co-researchers ensures clear and correct information during the data analysis. Clear and correct information was utilised for meaning-making and incorporated in the envisaged guidelines.

Pan, Isakhan and Nwokora (2020:61) postulate that, by using language from a CDA point of view, co-researchers are able to analyse the hidden structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control emanating from the discourse. The implication is that participant discourse during data analysis assists in eliminating bias,

dominance of one idea over another, and, hence, the diffusion of power of one group over another. That also assists in dissecting the data analysis process into a fair and just research activity, without favouritism or hegemony.

4.14.2.3 Social structure analysis

Social structure analysis focuses on discourses of information and ideologies of the participants emerging from the analysed data. Participants use their social interactions and collaboration to elicit in-depth knowledge from the rich data. The analysis led to social construction of the idea of an ideal, explored knowledge that contributed to the guidelines to improve the implementation of the WSE programme at the school, and further perceived by society as a social product (Al Falaq & Puspita 2021:67). The literature by De Bernardi (2019:254) that I reviewed reveals that CDA supports the improved implementation of WSE programme, because, as a social challenge, the stakeholders had a need for solutions. Consequently, through CDA, participants were empowered to analyse data, and to generate categories and themes that contributed to applicable solutions to enhance implementation the WSE programme.

Van Dijk (as quoted by Nwagbara & Belal 2019:2401) states that social structure analysis, as embedded in CDA, allows co-researchers to use language to elicit useful knowledge from data, in order to strengthen social belief systems, institutional norms and values. Since the study was qualitative and exploratory in nature, social structure analysis sought to assist the participants with new insights, so that they could respond to research questions that explored the WSE programme in a new light. Wodak and Meyer (in Sahmeni & Afifah 2019:40) explain that CDA assists participants to gain enlightenment and illumination, in this case, of the exploration of the envisaged guidelines, as the phenomenon under investigation. Social structure analysis was employed to uncover the hidden ideologies and the social power of texts and words through the data analysis. This implies that the ideas and opinions solicited from the data were utilised to enrich the knowledge that was included in the exploration of the guidelines, and that benefitted the WSE policy and the school community in general.

4.15 TRUSTWORTHINESS

In order to ensure the trustworthiness of the study, credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability will be discussed.

4.15.1 Credibility

Credibility is considered one of the most important indicators of quality in qualitative research. With reference to the degree to which the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE programme at school was described, credibility ensured that defensible information, convincing arguments and interpretations were provided during data analysis (Liao 2015:28).

To ensure the credibility of the study's findings, I utilised different data collection methods, namely one-on-one interviews, focus group discussions and field notes taken during the collection of data. These methods allowed the participants to narrate their lived experiences, beliefs and opinions on the categories, and enabled us to identify themes in the data, because they were actively involved in the research. Credible knowledge obtained from data analysis, wherein the participants' voices were heard, assisted minimising researcher bias, and the researcher being the sole source of information.

Furthermore, the researcher and participants needed to problematise the exploration of the guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE programme at the school, to arouse the awareness of the stakeholders. Credibility was evident from the texts and meaning-making that resulted from the co-researchers' interpretation of data. The involvement of a wide range of participants assisted in eliminating partiality claims in data collection and analysis (Abdalla, Oliveira, Azvedo & Gonzalez 2018:84). The advantage of involving diverse co-researchers was that their points of view and experiences were compared, contradicted and accepted during the coding process.

The implementation of peer review of the research project contributed to the correctness, enhancement of research methods and strengthening of participant arguments (Abdalla *et al.* 2018:85). In order to strengthen the credibility of data, I also employed the member checking technique, which afforded co-researchers the opportunity to give feedback on data, analytical categories, data interpretations, and even on the conclusion of the research process (Amin, Norgaard, Cavaco, Witry, Hillman, Cernasev & Deselle 2020:1475). Those practices ensured trust, rigour and quality of the scientific knowledge thus produced.

4.15.2 Transferability

Transferability refers to the extent to which the researchers' and co-researchers' interpretations or conclusions are applicable to other, similar contexts (Nassaji 2020:428). As McGinley, Wei, Zhang and Zheng (2021:11) explain, a study is considered to meet the criterion of transferability when its findings can fit into contexts outside the study situation. I ensured the transferability of the analysed data by maintaining rich descriptions of the research activities and assumptions of the research project. The rich data descriptions were achieved by revisiting the coded data until the categories and the emerging themes reached a saturation point.

Johnson, Adkins and Chauvin (2020:141) postulate that the provision of detailed contextual information of the research process supports the veracity and transferability of the generated and analysed data. This implies that, from the rich description of one school's case study, other school settings could select the information and experiences that fit their situation, and which might provide solutions to the effective implementation of the WSE policy for them.

4.15.3 Dependability

Stenfors, Kajamaa and Bennett (2020:598) define dependability as the extent to which research could be replicated in similar conditions. That implied the provision of sufficient information about the research process, such that another researcher could follow the same procedural steps, although, possibly reaching different conclusions (Stenfors *et al.* 2020:599).

I employed a peer debriefing technique to ensure the dependability of the research. Peer debriefing allowed a peer to identify the gaps in the data collected, and, hence, redirected the research process. I outsourced the services of an independent and unbiased peer to scrutinise the research process. The outsourced peer was someone with no personal interest in the research project (Stahl & King 2020:27).

StatisticsSolutions.com (2017) posits that dependability is important, because it establishes the research study's findings as consistent and repeatable. Dependability means the research findings are distinctive to a specific time and place. To ensure dependability, coherent themes that emerged from the coding process across the transcripts were identified (Lemon & Hayes 2020:605). This implies that, to enhance

the quality of the research findings, the narratives of different participants were coded in such a way that the emerging and relevant themes were incorporated in the guidelines to improve the implementation of the WSE policy.

4.15.4 Confirmability

Confirmability is a measure of how well the study findings are supported by the collected data. Confirmability focusex on the connection between the data and the research results (Kyngäs, Kääriänen & Elo 2020:46). According to Karanko (2020:46), confirmability draws on the data collected, and relates to the probability that identical findings were produced by other researchers. To ensure confirmability, I transcribed the information from interviews and focus group discussions verbatim. Using a coding system, I reduced and reconstructed the data into categories and logical themes.

Plummer (2017:346) asserts that confirmability relates to whether the findings were the product of focus group discussions, and not a reflection of the researcher's biases. In enhancing the confirmability of the study, I practiced a peer review strategy, which solicted the opinion of another researcher to ascertain the consistency of the data with the research findings. Doing so implied recognition of the experience of someone not involved in the research, and enhanced the rigour of the study.

4.16 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

The chapter focused on explaining PAR as the methodological approach used, and the design of the study. The historical background and the relevance of PAR as a methodological approach to this study were also discussed. The chapter outlined the objectives, principles, and ontological and epistemological aspects of PAR, as well as the relationship between the researcher and participants. Participants' credentials, the findings of a SWOT analysis guiding the activities of the participants, and the spiral nature of PAR were also delineated. The chapter explored how data were generated and subsequently analysed by employing the three levels of CDA, in order to record the emerging themes from the rich data descriptions of diverse experiences.

Chapter 5 will focus on the analysis, presentation and discussion of the data and the research findings on the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE policy at the school.

CHAPTER 5: DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION, AND INTERPRETATION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The study explored guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE in a secondary school in Motheo district in the Free State. This chapter will present and analyse the generated data in relation to the objectives of the study. The study's objectives that were responded to in this chapter were as follows:

1. To justify the need to explore the challenges facing the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at secondary schools;

2. To determine conditions conducive to the improvement of the implementation of WSE at schools;

3. To develop strategies to improve the implementation of WSE at secondary schools;

4. To identify the roles of different stakeholders in improving the implementation of WSE at schools; and

5. To demonstrate the success of the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools as informed by best practices.

The study used CDA to analyse and present the themes that emerged from the generated data. Using argumentation as a two-way process, as embedded in Van Dijk's CDA, communication among the participants or groups who exchanged ideas with one another resulted in the coding of data into categories and themes (El-Nashar & Nayef 2022:169). Pseudonyms were used to conceal the real names of the participants. Section 5.2 will present an analysis of the challenges the school encountered in the implementation of WSE.

5.2 ANALYSIS OF CHALLENGES

The inadequate implementation of WSE guidelines in some secondary schools in the Free State necessitated the exploration of the guidelines to improve the implementation of the programme. According to Setlalentoa (in Dike 2022:17), the inadequate implementation of WSE guidelines are the result of the failure of educators, supervisors and district support services to identify the extent to which the school was adding value to learners' knowledge and skills. The following subsections will focus on an analysis of data based on the objectives of the study.

5.2.1 Challenges justifying exploration of the guidelines

In tackling the challenges, the team analysed the themes resulting from the coding process and ascertained their correlation against the findings of the literature review. The findings assisted in guiding the discussions, which resonated with the challenges emanating from the reviewed literature, which were identified as being inadequate training; lack of commitment by the SMT; inadequate funding, and a lack of parental involvement in the programme.

5.2.1.1 Inadequate training

Training is an activity that is undertaken to teach a person a skill and to fine-tune the skill already acquired (Ouyang, Wu, Jiang, Almeida, Wainwright, Mishkin, Zang, Agarwal, Slama, Ray, Schulman, Hilton, Kelton, Miller, Simens, Askell, Welinder, Christiano, Leike & Lowe 2022:5). Devine and Ash (2022:407) contend that a variety of training ensures effective communication with a diverse participant base to create problem-solving skills. Even though the WSE policy was based on the notion that standardised and consistent quality, and the development of staff and training, were key aspects that the school community members must be proud of (South Africa 2001c:3), the focus of the school in teacher development seemed to be mainly on curriculum content and instruction. Verbatim utterances of the participants as extracted from the recordings make up the data that will be presented throughout the chapter. Participants revealed that training offered on the guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE was inadequate.

Mr Mokatsane, the principal, broke the ice by elucidating that,

> As a school, we do have challenges in some key areas of WSE.

Mr Podumo, an HOD, responded by saying,

> Some teachers are sceptical about the need to be developed on the guidelines of some key areas of the WSE.

Ms Mafoko, an SES from the district office, nodded her head and said,

> Maybe these are signs of lack of openness to training as a means of teacher development.

Ms Mothupi, a teacher, asserted that,

> Given the fact that training for the WSE programme is conducted once a year, I do not think that is enough.

Ms Mafoko continued,

> No school self-evaluation is done, if present tools completed from neighbouring schools are used.

Mr Radinotsi, also a teacher, corroborated Ms Mothupi's assertion by saying that,

> Even the training material compiled does not contain all the information.

Mr Modabi, the SGB chairperson, postulated that,

> Think of us parents, we need more time to be trained on the aspects of WSE programme.

Throughout the chapter, the generated data will be presented by employing the three analysis levels of CDA, namely textual analysis, discursive practice analysis and social structure analysis.

The inferences from the participants exhibited a similar pattern as had been reported in Chapter 3 (see section 3.4.1, inadequate training) that the school did indeed experience challenges with the effective implementation of the guidelines to improve certain key areas of the WSE programme. The utterances of the SMT members and educators suggested that not enough time was allocated for training, as Mr Modabi asserted that "*training for the WSE programme was conducted once a year".* The excerpt by Mr Radinotsi that "*training material compiled did not contain all the*

information" indicates a compromise on the quality of the training offered. The SES reminded the team that the district support teams were expected to conduct the capacity programmes in a fair and consistent manner (see section 3.7.1, roles of senior education specialist). That, according to the SES, implies that the WSE training was conducted in order to share insights, knowledge, experiences and skills with the relevant stakeholders.

At the textual level, the response "*some teachers were sceptical about the need to be developed"* by Mr Podumo violates the stipulation that the WSE policy was based on the notion that the development of staff and training were key aspects, of which the school community members must be proud (see section 3.2.6, White Paper No. 1 of 1995). On the social structure level, inadequate training impacted negatively on teacher development, and, hence, school performance. The utterance "*we did have challenges in some key areas of WSE"* showed Mr Makatsane's acknowledgement and frustration, and, hence, the need to explore the guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE.

At the discursive practice analysis level, Ms Mafoko's non-verbal gesture of nodding her head signified the importance of training the SMT and teachers on the effective implementation of the guidelines to improve the WSE programme at the school. At the textual level, her statement that "*these were signs of lack of openness to training as a means of teacher development"* implied that the time allocated for training was not enough to ensure proper and adequate training of the SMT and the teachers.

Mr Modabi's assertion, "*think of us parents",* was an indication of dissatisfaction with the time allocated for training, which suggested that the training was compromised. On the social structure level, the statement reflected the frustration of the parent component about their minimal involvement in the implementation of the WSE programme. On the discursive practice level, the utterance indicated an absence of social justice, which could encourage different stakeholders to collaborate to achieve a common cause. On the textual level, Mr Modabi's comment, "*we need more time to be trained on the aspects of WSE programme",* was understood to indicate a challenge in the implementation of WSE guidelines. The statement, "*I do not think that was enough*" by Ms Mothupi was a clear suggestion that the training of SMT and teachers on the implementation of WSE guidelines did not meet the standard set at national

level, and that was also the opinion of parents. Those views contradicted the literature, as captured by Hanna and Minton (see section 3.6.1, strategies on training) in relation to WSE policy. Geldenhuys and Oosthuizen (2015:204) also report that, in some instances, the time allocated for training on the voluminous package of the WSE material was inadequate.

Ms Mafoko's statement that *"no school self-evaluation was done"* depicted an issue of power differentiation. On the discursive level, the utterance showed that she believed that SMT member on that decision. The view, however contradicted the literature (see section 3.3.5, demands of WSE in Zambia)). Msezane (2020:721) reports that the WSE guidelines depict a collaborative process that embraces the involvement of external evaluators, SMTs, teachers, learners and parents. Ms Mafoko's statement is clear evidence that other stakeholders were not involved in the effective implementation of the WSE guidelines that would improve the overall school performance. The statement, furthermore, did not appreciate the effort and support of the district office, and compromised the training conducted by the district office.

The assertion that "*Tools completed from neighbouring schools were used",* by Ms Mafoko, was an indication of how dishonest the SMT members and teachers at other schools were with regard to the implementation of WSE guidelines. Reference to that practice was evidence that some schools completed WSE forms just for the sake of compliance. On the social practice level, that practice revealed social injustice, which was supported by a negative attitude by stakeholders who were tasked with implementing the WSE guidelines effectively at schools.

I argued that the implementation of WSE guidelines was unlikely to be improved if the school did not adhere to the explored guidelines, and failed to take the district training seriously, and to consider it as binding.

5.2.1.2 Lack of commitment by school management team

Commitment refers to employees' emotional bond to their organisation (Mihalache & Mihalache 2022:298). Van Rossenberg, Cross and Swart (2022:3) contend that commitment is an emotional attachment of an individual, which identifies them with active participation in the organisation's activities and responsibilities. The SMT's obligations to execute their managerial and administrative responsibilities were

reflected in their commitment to carry them out diligently and with accountability. In terms of commitment and accountability of the SMT, the WSE policy afforded the school an opportunity to account for the performance of the school in relation to the national goals and the needs of the public and communities (South Africa 2001c:3). Failure to fully commit to the responsibility of implementing the WSE guidelines was tantamount to an abdication of accountability systems.

Ms Mafoko, the district SES stated that,

> Even if the SMT had identified the developmental gaps during teacher development, nothing was done to address them.

Mr Mabote, a teacher, retorted,

> The emphasis was put on extra classes at all times to address curriculum coverage.

Mr Mokhele, another teacher, posited that,

> There were no formal work programmes and clear communication from the school authorities on WSE programme.

Ms Mafoko went further and said,

> The school self-evaluation forms were not filled with other stakeholders. The WSE programme had been made the principal's own baby.

Ms Khothatso, a parent, contradicted them:

> We as SGB members, we gave the principal and his team support. We encouraged them not to file policies like WSE policy in their cupboards.

Ms Morobe, an HOD, pointed out that,

> Some teachers only arranged their WSE files when there was an expected visit from the district officials.

At the social level, Ms Mafoko's statement, "*even if the SMT had identified the developmental gaps during teacher development, nothing was done to address them",* was understood as a clear indication that the SMT did not do enough to support the teachers and SGB members to implement the WSE guidelines on the school premises. She inferred a lack of commitment, support and cooperation between the

SMT, teachers and the SGB to ensure effective implementation of the WSE programme. The responses of the SMT, teachers and the SGB member was a violation of the stipulation of White Paper 6, that the WSE policy should advocate for regular district support through programmes for professional development of teachers and schools to improve learner performance (South Africa 2001c:4).

At a textual level, the statement by Mr Mabote that "*the emphasis was put on extra classes at all times to address curriculum coverage"* was understood to mean that priority was given to extra classes and curriculum coverage instead of the effective implementation of the WSE guidelines by the SMT. Mr Mabote's statement was corroborated by Mr Mokhele's assertion that "*there were no formal work programmes and clear communication from the school authorities on WSE programme".* From the researcher's point of view, the SMT had failed to draw up a comprehensive, inclusive and workable programme of action to support the teachers and SGB on the implementation of the WSE policy.

On the discursive practice level, Ms Mafoko's statement that "*the school self-evaluation forms were not filled with other stakeholders. The WSE programme had been made the principal's own baby",* was an indication of her frustration about the level and standard of the implementation of the WSE programme at that school. The statement revealed the existence of power differentiation and inequalities in the school hierarchy. The utterance, "*the WSE programme had been made the principal's own baby",* on the social level depicted an SMT that operated on different levels, and, hence, indicated the absence of teamwork, collaboration and support, which were required to inculcate a spirit of unity as far as the implementation WSE policy was concerned. In accordance with the principle of collaboration theory (see discussion on cooperative or collaborative learning perspectives in section 2.5. 2), the SMT needed to ensure positive member interdependence and mutual responsibility regarding fulfilling their managerial obligations of motivating teachers and SGB members in the effective implementation of WSE policy and to achieve the goals and objectives of the school (Buchs *et al.* 2017:297).

On a social practice analysis level, the statement of Ms Khothatso, that "*we as SGB members we gave the principal and his team support",* was understood to mean that, despite findings on the state of the implementation of WSE policy at the school, the

SGB members, as policymakers of the school, gave continuous support to the SMT. The aforementioned statement is supported by the literature. Tshabalala (2020:47) states that the SGB, by virtue of their obligations as set out in the Constitution of the country, shared power equally with SMT members, and encouraged them in the implementation of WSE policy guidelines (see section 3.7.4, roles of SGB members). On the textual level, Ms Khothatso's statement, "*we encouraged them not to file policies like WSE policy in their cupboards",* was understood to mean that the SMT should constantly peruse the WSE guidelines, and consider its effective implementation. That revealed that the practice of filing the WSE policy document and storing it in the SMT members' cupboards deprived other stakeholders of the opportunity to intervene if the need arose.

The utterance by Ms Morobe that "*some teachers only arranged their WSE files when there was an expected visit from the district officials",* was a clear indication of dereliction of responsibilities by HODs and teachers. The statement emphasised that stakeholders' abdication of involvement in implementing the WSE policy was a challenge for the school, and it hindered sustainability of the programme. The statement revealed, furthermore, that the SMT and teachers did not take the implementation of WSE policy seriously or consider it binding. The behaviour of these stakeholders was evidence of a lack of commitment and accountability. Based on CDA's social practice analysis, for the effective implementation of the WSE programme, the school needed a united and strong SMT, with moral standards and an approach to eliminating social inequalities and power abuse on school premises (Sugianto, Rustono & Santoso 2022:165).

5.2.1.3 Inadequate funding

Funding refers to the provision of money by an organisation for an event or activity (Cambridge English Dictionary 2022). Kamal, Mohamed and Ali (2016:3) define funding as the act of providing resources in the form of money, effort or time. Section 3(4) of the NEPA stipulates that the education minister must determine the national policy for planning, provision, financing, staffing, co-ordination, management, governance, programmes, monitoring, evaluation and well-being of the education system (South Africa 1996a:4). Even though section 38(1) of the SASA, which mandates the SGB to use the guidelines determined by the Member of the Executive

Council to prepare a budget for each year (South Africa 1996b:25), it seemed there were discrepancies in the allocation of school funds for WSE activities. In some of our focus group discussions, deliberations were put forward as follows:

Mr Mokatsane clarified the matter of funding by citing that,

> The school received the conditional grant from the department due to it its no-fee paying school status.

Mr Morailane, the HOD, claimed that,

> In terms of school finances, we did not have a deeper knowledge.

Ms Magubane, the co-opted SGB member, articulated that,

> The SGB provided support from funds from fundraising.

Ms Mhlambi, a teacher, remarked that,

> Since that was a no-fee-paying school, lack of resources impacted negatively on curriculum provision.

The statement by Mr Mokatsane that "*the school received the conditional grant from the department due to it its no-fee paying school status",* was a clear indication of the socio-economic situation of the school, which was that the school was a quintile 1 school in a previously disadvantaged community. At a textual level, the statement denoted that the money emanating from the Department of Education was not sufficient to support all the programmes on school premises, with WSE policy included. Mr Mhlambi's statement that, "*since that was a no-fee-paying school, lack of resources impacted negatively on curriculum provision",* corroborated Mr Mokatsane statement and indicated that lack of money was a hindrance to the implementation of WSE guidelines as far as curriculum provision was concerned. At the social practice level, based on curriculum provision and resources, as one of the nine key areas of the WSE policy, lack of money was understood to represent a failure on the part of teachers to reach all learners in terms of the provision of quality education.

The quote by Mr Morailane that, *in terms of school finances, we did not have a deeper knowledge",* was understood to mean that HODs were not involved in the running of school finances. The statement, "*we did not have a deeper knowledge",* indicated Mr Morailane's frustration and a lack of transparency about the school's financial position

and how it supported the implementation of the WSE programme. At the discursive practice level of CDA, Mr Morailane's utterance sought to uncover different hidden realities, by making the finance issue at school transparent, and thereby raising the voices of marginalised members against that of the dominant group (Jan 2022:6277).

The statement by Ms Magubane that "*the SGB provided support from funds from fundraising",* showed a willingness and enthusiasm of the SGB to support the school activities and the effective implementation of WSE policy. Ms Magubane's assertion supported the claim by Buys, Du Plessis and Mestry (2020:3) that it was imperative for SGB members to consider innovative fundraising initiatives to supplement funds received from the state. The utterance was also in compliance with SASA section 36(1) that, central to the functions of SGBs was the effectiveness of SGBs in school governance (Kekana & Makura 2020:440). At the social practice level, SASA section 36(1) mandates the SGB and, hence, the school to use funds from the fundraising activities to capacitate the SMT, teachers and parents with WSE policy guidelines in order to improve the quality of education for all the learners at the school.

There was a need for collaborative efforts from the SMT, teachers and SGB members to ensure the effective implementation of WSE policy guidelines on the school premises. All the stakeholders privy to the effective implementation of the envisaged WSE guidelines were expected to sing from the same hymn sheet. In accordance with the ontological and epistemological stances of collaboration theory, the social communication and interactions of the SMT, teachers and SGB members ought to be based on a system of transparency, consensual sharing of information and informed decision-making (see sections 2.7 and 2.8). In relation to PAR principles, the school should support social justice that opposes marginalisation and exclusion of other stakeholders in the administration of funds that have been budgeted for the effective implementation of WSE policy guidelines (see section 4.4.5, PAR supports social justice).

5.2.1.4 Lack of parental involvement

Epstein (in Durisic and Bunijevac 2017:140) defines parental involvement as the collaborative interactions between the school and parents on community partnership programmes that improved policy and practice and increased learners' academic achievement and success. Section 16A(8) of the SASA stipulates that the SGB was

responsible for determining policies, while the principal and other educators must implement them (Van der Merwe 2013:239). In view of the statements above, it was advisable that the SGB was involved in school policy review and implementation. In the focus group discussions, some of the remarks of the research team participants were captured as follows:

Ms Mothupi complained that,

> There was a shortage of textbooks. Majority of learners shared the textbooks because the school overspent on copies.

Mr Radinotsi added,

> Some parents shifted their responsibilities to other family members when invited to school to address their children's challenges on the WSE policy implementation.

Ms Mohlominyane, the deputy principal, articulated that,

> Our education was based on a three-legged model, teachers, parents and the learners. If only some parents could understand that by not acceding to the invitation to the school, they were breaking one leg of the model.

Mr Podumo nodded his head and said,

> Some SGB members crossed their boundaries regarding the implementation of WSE programme. They imposed on teachers in classes, forgetting that they were dealing with governance.

Ms Mothupi's remarks that "*there was a shortage of textbooks. Majority of learners shared the textbooks because the school overspent on copies",* was a direct appeal to the SMT and SGB to avail money to address the daunting challenge of the scarcity of resources. A shortage of textbooks meant learners had to share textbooks, which impacted negatively on curriculum provision and learner achievement, as components of the WSE programme. The utterance, "*the school overspent on copies",* was understood to mean that photocopies of textbooks depleted the money of the school. It also suggested that some learners were unable to study on their own, due to the shortage of textbooks. At the discursive level, the shortage of textbooks was understood to mean that the SMT and the SGB were failing the teachers and learners,

as they were not promoting and supporting the effective implementation of WSE guidelines on school premises.

The statement by Mr Radinotsi, that "*some parents shifted their responsibilities to other family members when invited to school to address their children's challenges on the WSE policy implementation",* indicated the frustration of school staff about the uncooperative behaviour exhibited by some parents. The extract, "*some parents shifted their responsibilities to other family members",* was understood to mean that family members stood in for the biological parents of the learners when parents were invited to school meetings. This behaviour rendered stakeholders such as SMT, teachers and SGB hapless and directionless on the effective implementation of the WSE programme. Teachers could not effectively address the WSE guidelines on learner achievement, curriculum provision and resources, which contradicted the claim of Fronius *et al.* (2019:13) that, when trained teachers interacted with parents and leaners, they fostered group cooperation and learned how to solve school and community challenges, such as the implementation of WSE guidelines (see section 3.8.1., best practices in the USA). Analysing the utterance at the discursive practice level shows that it refers to social injustice caused by the failure of some parents to avail themselves when they were called to do so by the school. I viewed the behaviour of some parents when they failed to attend school meetings disturbing and not supportive of a good cause.

The inference by Ms Mohlominyane, that "*our education was based on a three-legged model, teachers, parents and the learners",* was understood to mean that, for the successful and effective implementation of WSE guidelines on school premises, teachers, parents and learners needed to support each other and function as a team. The adoption of collaboration and co-leaning by these stakeholders was considered to provide a pillar of strength and success for the implementation of the WSE programme. One of the principles of collaboration theory was that collaboration influenced and shaped participation in groups, in order to optimise participants' co-learning (Le *et al.* 2018:103) (see section 2.3, objectives of SCT). Ms Mohlominyane's response, that "*if only some parents could understand that by not acceding to the invitation of the school they were breaking one leg of the model",* referred to a violation of one of PAR's characteristics as espoused by Manley (2015:4), namely that PAR's participatory nature reflected cooperative learning between the teachers and school

community members in implementing the WSE programme, as a way to resolve the social challenge together.

Mr Podumo's statement that "*some SGB members crossed their boundaries regarding the implementation of WSE programme",* was understood to refer to interference by SGB members in teaching and learning processes in classes. The statement contradicted section 20(e) of SASA (South Africa 1996b), that the SGB must support the principal, educators and other staff of the school in the performance of their professional functions. The statement also suggests that SGB members were not aware of the restrictions in their line of power as entrenched in governance. The behaviour of SGB members in that regard revealed the presence of a power imbalance between the teachers and SGB members on the school premises. Mr Podumo's claim that "*they imposed on teachers in classes, forgetting that they were dealing with governance",* was a clear indication that the school needed to improve governance and relationships in order to encourage stakeholder collaboration and teamwork. Hill *et al.* (2018:23) argue that lack of teamwork and participation in the school's programmes denied teachers the opportunity to collaborate and communicate their ideas, beliefs and experiences with SGB members, and identified the difference between governance and professional responsibilities. At the social practice level, the utterance indicates a need for the SMT team to revisit the co-functions of the SGB, as opposed to the professional responsibilities of the teachers. This exercise could conscientise SGB members and teachers, so that they work together in relation to their work ethic and responsibilities. Section 5.3 will discuss conditions favourable for the implementation of the explored guidelines on and off the school premises.

5.3 CONDITIONS CONDUCIVE TO THE EXPLORATION OF GUIDELINES TO IMPROVE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION

Ensuring conditions conducive to maximising learner learning in a school setup was of paramount importance. Such conditions augured well for the implementation of WSE and the successful delivery of lessons for the learners (Ahmad, Shaari, Hashim & Kariminia 2015:117). According to Dictionary.com (2022), conducive refers to something being contributive or helpful or favourable. The section will discuss conditions as follows: conditions that were conducive to training of stakeholders; conditions that were conducive to obtaining commitment from the SMT; conditions that

were conducive to the provision of funds, the conditions that were conducive to parental involvement.

5.3.1 Conditions conducive to training of stakeholders

Training supported the stakeholders with knowledge and skills to carry out their responsibilities in order to do the job. It enhanced their confidence, which improved their overall performance. Rodriguez and Walters (2017:206) posit that schools aspire to be successful through differentiated programmes and capabilities. During the focus group discussion with SMT members and teachers we agreed that the guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE needed to be implemented and sustained by well-trained individuals.

Ms Mafoko stated that:

> Drawing of a simple management plan with activities by SMT to be included in a school year plan assisedt in effective implementation of WSE programme.

Mr Mokatsane posited that:

> Allocation of nine keys areas to different committees to deal with during a training process helped a lot.

Mr Morailane added that:

> That was a great idea. Committees met for consolidation after such meetings.

These utterances indicate that all the participants agreed about the challenge the school was experiencing, which was the ineffective implementation of the WSE programme. In order to tackle the challenge, the co-researchers worked collaboratively to the benefit of the learners and school community, as suggested by Kelly and Cherkowski (2015:4), that, it was a school's mandate to create an environment that enhanced collaborative accountability among the stakeholders for the task at hand (see section 2.2, SCT and CT). The statement by Ms Mafoko that "*drawing of a simple management plan with activities by SMT included in a school year plan assisted in effective implementation of WSE programme",* was understood to give the SMT a mandate to come up with an action plan on stakeholder training that could empower all. The statement was also in line with the tenet of the PAR approach that equitable sharing of school responsibilities empowered participants to apply their

confidence, desires, and abilities to bring about real solutions and change for the effective implementation of the WSE programme (see section 4.4.2, PAR empowers stakeholders). The quote, "*management plan with activities by SMT to be included in a school year plan",* was understood to illuminate the need for transparency regarding the activities on the school year plan, which ensured successful training on the explored and envisaged WSE guidelines.

Mr Mokatsane's utterance, that "*allocation of nine keys areas to different committees to deal with during a training process helped a lot",* was viewed as a step in the right direction to ensure collaboration of stakeholders in the co-creation of useful knowledge to explore the guidelines to improve the implementation of the WSE programme at the school. The reference to "*allocation of nine keys areas to different committees"* was understood to highlight the importance of groupwork and co-learning among the participants, which is a trait of collaboration theory as espoused by Fung (2010:18), namely that mutual interaction, negotiations and shared expertise are the ingredients of shared decision-making and responsibility for the resolution of the guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at the school, as a social challenge.

Mr Morailane's agreement that "*that was a great idea"* is an indication of his support for a conducive condition created by stakeholders interacting as a group. The statement also indicated the importance of attaining empowerment for the participants through the critical construction of new knowledge and skills. That can be explained by constructivism, namely that collaboration as an in-depth exploration of participants' narrative beliefs and ideas assists in responding to the research questions (Carr 2015:234). The utterance by Mr Morailane that "*committees met for consolidation after such meetings"* is understood to indicate a favourable condition, in which social interaction among the participants strengthened trust and confidence, so that they could be decisive on the construction of new knowledge pertinent to the research project.

In view of the views expressed above, and the review of the related literature (section 3.5.1, conditions conducive to training), it stands to reason that well-thought-out and arranged training plays a pivotal role in the creation of a stimulating and conducive environment. The participants were afforded conditions conducive to receiving training and integrating the explored WSE guidelines with other school programmes, so that

they could improve the implementation of the WSE programme for the betterment of the school community.

5.3.2 Conditions conducive to the school management team to commit

In a school setup, SMT members as school managers are expected to manage teachers who work in different policy areas or sectors (Finkel, Gron & Hughes 2021:3). In accordance with the Personnel Administration Measures, the administrative role of the SMT was to assist in the crafting and implementing of policies, such as the WSE policy (Maja 2016:52). As stipulated in section 3(4) of the NEPA (South Africa 1996a), the focus group discussion resolved that, once the minister of Education had determined the national policy for programmes, monitoring and evaluation, it was incumbent on the SMT and other relevant stakeholders to ensure commitment to and full compliance with the implementation of the WSE policy. Flowing from the in-depth probes and focus group discussions, the following inferences emerged:

Ms Mafoko opined that,

> WSE management file was not updated. Tools to sustain the WSE programme were not properly completed.

Mr Mokhele asserted that,

> Staff WSE files needed to be evaluated outside the school premises to avoid intimidation.

Mr Radinotsi posited that,

> If the misunderstanding among SMT members was lessened, the WSE programme implementation would be improved.

From the assertions above, it is clear that the principal needed to motivate the team to encourage one another regarding the effective implementation of the WSE programme at the school. In a dynamic school environment, the principal ensures that communication is clear, concise, and ongoing, as the defining characteristic of a successful team is being committed to a shared goal (Educator Australia 2018). Staying informed and motivated ensured good execution of plans and tasks.

The utterance of Ms Mafoko that "*WSE management file was not updated"* indicates a lack of commitment by the SMT to ensure the effective implementation of WSE

guidelines on school premises. This practice contradicted the recommendation in the literature (Alexander 2020:2) that regularly checking in with one's team nurtured the team and encouraged teamwork and honesty. As Jeynes (2018:152) state, there is a need for the principal, as a team leader in the school, to inspire confidence in their staff by realising their potential to complete the assigned task successfully. The statement by Ms Mafoko, that "*tools to sustain the WSE programmes were not properly completed",* reveals that the implementation of the WSE guidelines was not taken seriously by the SMT. That practice by the SMT signifies a lack of accountability. This lackadaisical approach by the SMT calls for the principal, in collaboration with the team, to devise a plan of checking and monitoring of the process for compliance, thereby creating conditions conducive for the effective implementation of the WSE programme.

The statement by Mr Mokhele that "*staff WSE files needed to be evaluated outside the school premises to avoid intimidation"* is understood to mean that the presence of district officials on school premises on the day of monitoring and evaluation caused fear among the staff. The synopsis, "*to avoid intimidation",* is considered to refer to a lack of teamwork and cooperation to be passionate about improving the implementation of the WSE guidelines as stipulated by the WSE policy. Section 16A sub-sections 2(i and ii) of the SASA (South Africa, 1996b) mandate the principal to assist the staff to implement school policies and programmes. In its mandate, the SASA, and as supported by the literature review of Lynch (2019:1), indicates that the SCT is premised on an emphasis on knowledge evolution that occurs as a result of processes of co-creation, negotiation and evaluation. In view of the SASA, it was incumbent on the principal to alleviate uncertainty and fear among his colleagues, and to, instead, cultivate a sense of ownership, belonging and collaboration regarding improvement of the implementation of the WSE programme.

The response by Mr Radinotsi, that "*if the misunderstanding among SMT members was lessened",* is a clear indication that disagreements and unsupportive actions among the SMT members were holding back the implementation of the WSE programme. This practice reveals the presence of social injustice among the SMT members. At the discursive practice level, social injustice hinders teachers from implementing the envisaged WSE guidelines effectively, thereby affecting basic school functionality negatively. In my view, holistic improvements in the

implementation of the WSE programme could be attained when stakeholders are steadfast about working as a well-oiled machine through collaboration, support and mutual trust.

5.3.3 Conditions conducive to funding

According to Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD 2021:2), policymakers assert that learners, even if they also benefit from government funding, to some extent, bear some of the costs of their education. Stipulations on favourable conditions for equitable funding, as outlined in the Constitution of South Africa, are that basic education must be physically and economically accessible to all (McLaren 2017:40). In view of this legal obligation, economic access means that no learner may be denied access to a public school due to an inability to pay fees or to pay for basic school supplies. Targeted programmes, such as the WSE, are of significant importance in improving the overall quality of education at schools (OECD 2017:22). During the one-on-one probing session with the principal, and in the focus group discussions with SGB members, their financial support for the implementation of the WSE programme were tabled as follows:

Mr Modabi hinted that,

> Our SGB outsources financial assistance from the businesspeople in our local vicinity. We regard them as agents of change.

Mr Mokatsane nodded his head and contended that,

> We use a portion of funds from the department and the fundraising by SGB to support the implementation of WSE programme.

Mr Modabi's assertion that "*our SGB outsources financial assistance from the business people",* analysed discursively, is understood to mean that the school regards businesspeople as coexisting with the school. The coexistence of the school community and businesses is based on mutual benefits. The school community supports businesses through the purchase of various items from them, and the businesses, in return, assist by raising funds for the school (see section 3.5.3). The excerpt, "*in our local vicinity",* confirms the collaboration, coexistence and social interactions between the school and businesspeople within the same area. The trust and monetary assistance provided by local businesses are used to promote

programme awareness and for packaging material for implementation purposes. Baker *et al.* (2016:3) report that responsible funding, accompanied by sound accountability systems, breed successful implementation of policies such as WSE.

Mr Modabi's inference that "*we regard them as agents of change"* is a clear indication that businesspeople are held in high esteem by the school community as a result of their financial support, which assists to implement policies such as WSE. The money from fundraising projects is used to make photocopies of handouts for training sessions and workshops on how to implement the WSE programme. This is in line with the PAR principle captured by Macaulay (2017:256), that PAR promotes empowerment and social equity among school staff and the school community. In this regard, the social connections and the empowerment emanating from the businesspeople and the school staff create conditions conducive to the implementation of WSE policy.

The response by Mr Mokatsane, that "*we use a portion of funds from the department and the fundraising by SGB",* is understood to emphasise the importance of fiscal responsibility in the envisaged exploration of the guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE programme at schools. Naidoo and Mestry (2017:93) accentuate that, in South Africa, schools perform best under conditions in which the management of resources, such as knowledge, power, information and finance, are decentralised to the stakeholders.

5.3.4 Conditions conducive to parental involvement

In general, if the aim of the implementation of the explored guidelines is to improve the implementation of the WSE policy at schools, school activities need to intertwine with activities of parents. According to Gubbins and Otero (2020:140), during collaboration between the community and the school, parental involvement assists in strengthening and supporting the implementation of educational programmes and policies, such as the WSE. By ensuring the meaningful interplay between school managerial activities and parental involvement, the principal motivates staff and parents, so that they gain a clearer understanding of other stakeholders' views on school programmes.

Consequently, the team agreed that communication among the school and the community was one of the best foundations for guiding the SMT and parents to make

informed decisions. In support of this finding, Reparaz and Sotes-Elizalde (2019:34) posit that school decision-making that is inclusive of parents enhances the development of parent leaders and representatives. The participants commented as follows in this regard.

Ms Mohlominyane postulated that,

> In some instances, age cohort is a challenge in our school.

Mr Mabote remarked that,

> Our school should introduce remedial classes for the struggling learners.

Mr Modabi recommended that,

> Our school needs to apply for an introduction of a full-time social worker.

Mr Mhlambi nodded and testified that,

> That is a great plan. Some former model C schools do have fulltime social workers.

From the responses above, it is evident that the school needs to come up with a plan to encourage parents to participate more in the implementation of school programmes and policies, such as the WSE policy. Veas, Castejon, Minano and Gilar-Corbi (2019:405) suggest that favourable conditions are created when parents are in a stimulating environment with other stakeholders – this is likely to enhance open discussions on school programmes.

Ms Mohlominyane's assertation that, "*in some instances, age cohort is a challenge in our school",* is understood to mean that the over-aged learners are difficult to handle on the school premises. The belief that over-aged learners contributed to the school not being able to implement the WSE guidelines effectively, was in violation of the *Education White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education,* which advocates for learner participation in curricula that assist educational institutions to uncover and minimise barriers to learning (South Africa 2001c:16) (see section 3.2.7, White Paper No. 1 of 1995). On the social structure analysis level, that implies that the over-aged learners' social adaptabilities, such as uniqueness, background, age and gender, put them on the wrong side of community settings that prejudice negotiations about the implementation of the WSE programme.

Mr Mabote‘s inference that “*our school should introduce remedial classes for the struggling learners”,* is understood to be acknowledgement of the rights to education of learners. Furthermore, the response is in line with the White Paper 1 (South Africa 1995b), which stipulates that education and training are basic human rights (see section 3.2.6). At the discursive practice level, Mr Mabote’s extract is understood to embrace the notion that learners cannot be discriminated against on the basis of their ages. The statement is, furthermore, viewed as supporting Ms Mohlominyane’s utterance, and, additionally, as a strategy to create favourable conditions that would assist the school to involve the parents in dealing lawfully with the learner age cohort.

The utterance by Mr Mhlambi that “*that is a great plan”* I understood to mean that the school needs to recommend the appointment of full-time social workers on the school premises. The plan was anticipated as a strategy to assist teachers in implementing the envisaged guidelines of the WSE programme, and, hence, to help over-aged and struggling learners to overcome their challenges. The presence of social workers on the school premises was viewed as vital, because, in collaboration with teachers and parents, the social workers' association with such learners could improve aspects such as relationships, communication and discipline on school campuses. The claim that “*some former model C schools do have full-time social workers”* strengthens the notion that social interactions among learners, teachers, parents, social workers and the district office could eliminate social injustice on school premises.

The discussions above are in line with the PAR principle explained by White, Nary and Froehlich (2021:31), namely that PAR enhances the trust relationship among the stakeholders by allowing their voices to be heard in their social challenges. Within the confinements of SCT, intersubjective learning among the stakeholders ensures transformation through active participation in the implementation of guidelines to improve the WSE programme (Arpentieva, Retnawati, Akhmetova, Azman & Kassymova 202).

5.4 5STRATEGIES TO EXPLORE GUIDELINES TO IMPROVE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION

The section will discuss strategies that were devised and suggested by stakeholders with an interest in education. The strategies focus on the roles played by the training

of participants, the commitment of the SMT, funding of schools and the participation of the SGB on behalf of the majority of parents.

5.4.1 Strategies relating to training

The basis of stakeholder collaboration is to integrate the skills and knowledge acquired by team members. The acquisition of skills and knowledge enables knowledge sharing and the management of diversity on the school premises and among the school community as it relates to the implementation of WSE programme (Grant 2021:83). In the literature, the importance of training is expressed by Dassanayake *et al.* (2017:2), who suggest that policy, social and physical environments, teaching and learning and partnerships and services, as the four components of the whole-school approach, encompass actions that must be integrated to provide skills, supports, and improvements in the implementation of WSE (see section 3.6.1), as confirmed by participants.

Ms Mafoko denoted that,

> Departmental training on WSE policy is geared for skills development.

Mr Mokatsane affirmed that,

> Our school ensures the proper attendance of policy training through the keeping of registers.

The responses above emphasise the importance of structured training. Furthermore, the responses support the premise of White Paper 1 (South Africa 1995b), that the National Education and Training policy clearly embraces the improvement of quality education through training services (see section 3.2.6). The provision of training, as discussed in section 3.4.1, seeks to increase the role of skills, attitudes and lifelong learning of stakeholders regarding the implementation of the guidelines of WSE on school premises (Brunetti *et al.* 2019:2). In view of this discussion, it is imperative to subject stakeholders to intensive and ongoing training to develop and improve their skills as far as the implementation of the WSE programme is concerned. Trained and skilful personnel benefit and can empower each other on WSE policy guideline implementation.

From a social structure analysis' point of view, Mr Mokatsane's assertion that "*our school ensures the proper attendance of policy training through the keeping of registers"* can be understood to mean that the SMT needed to track down and ensure that every teacher attended training. The SMT had realised that collaboration and social interaction among the staff members would enhance their capacity to explore the guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools. Collaboration and social interaction offered teachers the opportunity to co-construct rich knowledge on the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of the WSE programme. Therefore, it is emphasised that stakeholder collaboration and co-learning are some of the strategies that can be applied to improve implementation of WSE policy at schools.

The discussion confirms SCT, since SCT advocates for the creation of new knowledge among the SMT, teachers, SGB members and the SES through learning (Allen & Bickhard 2022:279). Constructivists see subjective experiences as having real meaning, which is mutually constructed among the stakeholders (Deepa, Sujatha & Mohan 2022:7). This implies that stakeholders, as co-researchers, utilise strategies to generate new knowledge as reality to respond to the objectives of the study. Collaboration and social interaction among stakeholders enable them to acquire strategies that enhance their learning and development, and serve as empowerment.

5.4.2 Strategies relating to commitment of the school management team

Strategies are important for any organisation to achieve its envisaged goals. According to Sutherland (2022:983), strategies are adopted to leverage change on the local level by empowering SMTs, teachers, parents and school communities. This can be achieved by involving every school community member in WSE policy implementation. Strategies on how to support the implementation of the WSE policy focus largely on the role of the SMT, which is at the top of the school as an organisation. Integrating, as one of the strategic levels, was used during the focus group discussions to develop a shared understanding among the group members (Zhang, Wong & Wang 2021:443):

Ms Mafako pointed out that,

> Adherence to social cohesion improves teamwork during the implementation of WSE policy guidelines.

Mr Mokhele accentuated that,

> Learning from my peers clarifies the more challenging sections of the WSE document.

Mr Morailane emphasised that,

> Care should be taken that holism and transparencies are maintained when the WSE guidelines are implemented.

Ms Mafako's statement that "*adherence to social cohesion improves teamwork during the implementation of WSE policy guidelines",* is understood to mean that cooperation among the research committee members fostered a spirit of teamwork. Teamwork as social engagement seeks more robust and sustained access to social support for carrying out the accountability aspect of effectively implementing the guidelines to improve the implementation of the WSE programme at schools (Kumar & Tissenbaum 2022:1553). This is in line with one of the tenets of collaboration theory, that emphasises that research members must work together to arrive at a shared and informed decision about solving the implementation of WSE as a social challenge (see section 2.2.).

The response of Mr Mokhele, that "*learning from my peers clarifies the more challenging sections of the WSE document",* is understood as corroborating Ms Mafoko's narrative that collaboration and social interactions based on cooperation and co-learning generate useful knowledge for incorporating in the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE policy at schools. Mikami, Ikegami and Bird (2022:7) suggest that the presence of interpersonal justice among co-researchers, as one of the components of organisational justice, embraces the presence of fairness, and subsequently the prevalence of trust, in this case, to ensure guidelines are implemented to improve the implementation of the WSE programme. In my view, this implies that credible information elicited from the informed decisions of the research team would be trustworthy and could be incorporated in the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of the WSE policy on school premises.

Mr Morailane's statement, that "*care should be taken that holism and transparencies are maintained when the WSE guidelines are implemented",* is understood to mean that, for an effective and sound exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE policy at the school, stakeholders need to consider that all

nine key areas of the WSE programme worked in synergy. That implies that stakeholders need to make sure that the nine key areas for school improvement supported one another in improving the activities at the school. The interconnection between key areas encourages transparency among co-researchers in the implementation of the envisaged guidelines.

Viewed through the lens of collaboration theory, the discourses in this subsection characterise the interactions among the autonomous stakeholders in pursuit of joint and common objectives. The participants were motivated to devise strategies based on the sharing of information to solve challenges related to collective social issues (Tseng, Tran, Wu, Tan & Bui 2022:412). Consequently, applying collaboration theory to strategic decision-making is essential for the SMT, as it would facilitate the process by which the school recognises clear goals and indispensable activities in the implementation of the WSE programme (Tseng *et al.* 2022:413).

5.4.3 Strategies relating to funding

Strategies for funding educational programmes, such as the WSE, are fundamentally vital. According to Hassan, Groot and Volante (2022:1), such strategies improve the quality of education and learning outcomes, as constituents of education under the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations. The research team agreed that well-resourced programmes capacitate the stakeholders with resource allocation decisions, and policymakers with the formulation and implementation of national education plans (Hassan *et al.* 2022:11). In one of our meetings, the research group resolved the importance of funding strategies as follows:

Mr Mokatsane stated that,

> We normally encourage our SGB to conduct awareness programmes on funding strategies.

Mr Modabi nodded his head and added that,

> As SGB members we use Letsema programme to negotiate with personnel with expertise on finance.

The assertion by Mr Mokatsane that "*we normally encourage our SGB to conduct awareness programmes on funding strategies"* indicates a clear understanding of

leadership by the principal and his team. The principal motivated and guided the SGB members to arrange for the fundraising activities that complemented the conditional grant the school obtained from the Department of Education. Socially, the implementation of awareness programmes is regarded as a strategy to conscientise teachers and the school community about the importance of funding for the successful implementation of guidelines to improve the implementation of the WSE programme at schools. Discursively, the constant encouragement from peers, SMT members and teachers implies that SGB members collaborate with other stakeholders to ensure the sustainability of the WSE programme on and off the school premises. In line with one of the principles of PAR, the discourse on the improvement of policy funding at schools assists in addressing the inequalities and social injustice (see section 3.6.3, strategies to support funding).

Analysed on a textual level, Mr Modabi's nod is understood as a sign of an approval of Mr Mokatsane's statement. The excerpt suggests that an awareness programme on funding strategies is necessary to improve the implementation of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE policy at schools, because adequate funding improves the quality of the training that can be provided. The response by Mr Modabi that, "*as SGB members we use Letsema programme to negotiate with personnel with expertise on finance",* is understood to mean that the Letsema programme was used by the SGB members as a platform to approach people with a background knowledge of finance. Qobo and Soko (2015:6) support the notion of sourcing outside personnel with financial skills, as they could contribute to human development and capacity building as part of stakeholder empowerment (see section 3.6.3). In my view, this would represent a giant step for SGB member capacitation as far as financial control and governance in general are concerned.

5.4.4 Strategies in relation to parental involvement

Parental empowerment promotes accountability, communication, capacity building, community ownership and democratic participation, amongst other benefits (Fetterman 2019:139). Logically, parents typically know the school and the community better than any other external party. Furthermore, parents have a vested interest in improving the guidelines, to improve the implementation of the WSE programme, to

the benefit of the school and the community. To substantiate these points, responses that emanated from our focus group discussions are quoted.

Mr Modabi suggested that,

> The SGB agreed with SMT that at least two key areas of WSE be discussed in our quarterly meetings.

Ms Mothupi added that,

> There is a need for inclusion of parents in policy discussions.

Ms Mohlominyane conceded,

> The strengthening of the retrieval policy will come in handy.

Mr Morailane retorted that,

> Dilapidated classrooms should be renovated. They are a haven for gangs.

The response by Mr Modabi, that "*the SGB agreed with SMT that at least two key areas of WSE policy be discussed in our quarterly meetings",* is seen as a good initiative to bring the parents on board and constantly remind them of the importance of the WSE programme, on and off school premises. This collaborative venture is, furthermore, viewed as an effort by the SMT and SGB to incorporate everyone and to obtain successful support for the effective implementation of the key areas of the WSE policy and the explored guidelines. The collaboration of the co-researchers supports the dictate of the NEPA (South Africa 1996a), namely that the minister of Education shall determine the national policy, such as the WSE, for governance, monitoring and evaluation of the education system (see section 3.2.1). In my view, the response, and hence the agreement, is a clear indication of the school's intention to support the effective implementation of the guidelines to improve the implementation of the WSE policy.

Analysed on a discursive practice level, the assertion by Ms Mothupi that "*there is a need for inclusion of parents in policy discussions",* is understood as a request for the practice of democratic process and transparency in communication. The inclusion of parents in policy discussions is seen empowering the marginalised and raising the voices of the voiceless. We argue that the inclusion of parents in policy discussions provides a unique opportunity to minimise social injustice, by mediating what

marginalised groups such as parents seek to express (Tawodzera, Mabasa & Themane 2022:6).

On a textual level, the utterance by Ms Mohlominyane that "*the strengthening of the retrieval policy will come in handy",* is a clear indication that the retrieval policy supports the implementation of the WSE policy, in that the correct retrieval of textbooks from the learners ensures that textbooks are returned and stored for the following academic year. It also enforces the accountability of parents and teachers as far as learner resources is concerned. An adequate supply of textbooks for learners supports curriculum provision, as one of the key areas of the WSE policy.

The statement by Mr Morailane that "*dilapidated classrooms should be renovated",* is indicative of his frustration, and that their safety as teachers, parents and learners is at risk. At a discursive practice level, the statement is understood to mean that it is impossible to expect effective education to take place under such conditions. The extract, "*they are a haven for gangs",* refers to a violation of school safety, security and discipline, as one of key areas of the WSE policy (see section 3.2.1). The extract is a further manifestation of an insecure school environment that exposes both the teachers and learners to danger.

5.5 ROLES OF STAKEHOLDERS IN THE EXPLORATION OF GUIDELINES TO IMPROVE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION

The section will outline the roles played by the different stakeholders tasked with overseeing the effective implementation of WSE at schools. The paramount role and responsibility of such personnel is to build team spirit among the groups they are leading. Team building is important for increasing group cohesion, mutual support and cooperation (Armstrong & Taylor 2023:163).

5.5.1 Roles of the senior education specialist

In one of our focus group discussion meetings, the following suggestions were presented:

Ms Mafoko stressed that,

> As part of the district capacity building, we share latest trends and information with schools on WSE programme.

Mr Mokatsane nodded his head and conceded that,

> As schools we familiarise our staff and SGB members with the new developments on the WSE programme.

The assertion by Ms Mafoko that, "*as part of the district capacity building, we share latest trends and information with schools on WSE programme",* is understood to mean that the district office is respecting accountability, cooperating and implementing mutual support strategies to enhance the team spirit among the SMTs, teachers and SGB members. The statement supports one of the tenets of collaboration theory, namely that cooperative learning among the stakeholders involves social interaction in small groups that work together to support each other (see section 2.5.2). The assertion is a clear indication that the district office is steadfast in supporting the mentoring and team building programmes of SMTs through conducting workshops. This is in line with the NEPA*,* which supports the monitoring and evaluation of programmes such as the WSE, and which are embedded in the national policy to improve the overall quality of education in South African schools (see section 3.2.1).

Analysed on the textual level, nodding his head is a gesture of appreciation by Mr Mokatsane and is in agreement with Ms Mafoko's statement that the district office is compliant to the accountability sessions. At social practice level, Mr Mokatsane's inference that, "*as schools we familiarise our staff and SGB members with the new developments on the WSE programme",* is indicative of the decentralisation of power and knowledge. Power diffusion and knowledge decentralisation contribute to the elimination of social injustice, through the co-production of rich and useful knowledge on the explored and envisaged guidelines to improve the implementation of the WSE policy, which is availed to the SMT, teachers and SGB members. The SMT, teachers and SGB members are expected to acquaint the majority of the school community with information on the envisaged guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools.

5.5.2 Roles of the school management team

In order to operationalise the goals of an institution, the SMT needs to create a culture in a school, as a setting that affords the staff opportunities to implement the drafted policies and programmes in accordance with their guidelines (Khassawneh, Mohammad & Momany 2023:2). Since education is regarded as a process to empower the nation in developing the learners into citizens who are reliable and competitive, it is incumbent on the SMT to effectively implement the policies and the guidelines of programmes such as the WSE in order to achieve these goals (Setyaningsih, Handayani, Solissa, Sapulete & Fathurohman 2023:3). According to Iftach and Lishchinsky (2023:6), the WSE policy encompasses social ideologies, laws and regulations that empower the SMT to share information and ideas with teachers and SGB members, so that they can make decisions collaboratively. To substantiate the discussion above, the following are contributions made by the co-researchers in response to our probes:

Ms Mohlominyane illustrated that,

> The SMT guides the teachers and SGB members on the implementation of the WSE guidelines.

Mr Podumo acknowledged that,

> The implementation of the WSE guidelines assists in the elimination of the relaxation of staff, leading to wrongdoing.

Ms Mothupi added,

> Effective implementation of WSE guidelines allows the SMT to get to the bottom of what is happening in the school.

The snippet from Ms Mohlominyane that "*the SMT guides the teachers and SGB members on the implementation of the WSE guidelines",* is understood to mean that, despite acknowledgement of the presence of challenges facing some key areas of the WSE policy by the SMT, the SMT never abdicates its responsibilities of overseeing the effective implementation of the WSE policy guidelines on school premises. The management of the WSE policy by the SMT is in accordance with Assessment Policy of 1998, as repealed (Department of Basic Education 2010). The Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) ensurea alignment with regard to systemic

monitoring, evaluation and the quality assurance of assessment (see section 3.2.4, Assessment Policy of 1998).

The statement by Mr Podumo that "*the implementation of the WSE guidelines assists in the elimination of the relaxation of staff, leading to wrongdoing",* is understood to mean that the persistent, accountable actions of the SMT to keep the staff on their toes in terms of the effective implementation of the WSE policy guidelines does have positive results. The snippet that "*it assists in the elimination of the relaxation of staff, leading to wrongdoing"* implies that, if staff are not consistently reminded of their responsibilities with regard to the implementation of the WSE policy guidelines, they tend to relax and fail to meet the requirements. Furthermore, if staff relax, which leads to ineffective implementation of the WSE policy guidelines, they have abdicated their responsibilities. At a social practice level doing so constitutes a social injustice, because it denies other staff members and parents the chance to acquire the latest information and to develop skills that fast-track the effective implementation of the WSE programme. The practice, furthermore, contradicts the application of the assessment policy of 1998, as repealed (Department of Basic Education 2010) (see section 3.2.4, as repealed.).

The comment by Ms Mothupi that "*effective implementation of WSE guidelines allows the SMT to get to the bottom of what is happening in the school"* is understood to imply that, if the SMT is hands-on regarding the effective implementation of the guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE policy, the practice could yield positive results. In my view, this implies that the feedback the SMT gets clearly indicates the specific areas that need urgent attention to ensure the basic functionality of the school.

In line with the SCT and collaboration theory, the exploration and co-construction of knowledge, based on teamwork by the SES, SMT, teachers and SGB members, contributes immensely to achieving the research objectives. SCT embraces the notion that the SES, SMT, teachers and SGB members, as social beings, collaborate with each other to tackle social challenges, such as the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE programme at schools. Collaboration theory ensures that these stakeholders collaborate as a group to take informed decisions on societal issues, such as the exploration of the guidelines to improve the implementation of the

WSE programme, which affects the overall performance of the school (Ke, Friedrichsen, Rawson & Sadler 2023:11).

5.5.3 Roles of teachers

The collaboration of teachers in a school setting is a key aspect of meaningful teaching and learning. Collaboration theory embraces the notion that teacher learning that results from cooperation and collaboration is socially situated (Mitchel 2023:2). This implies that teacher collaboration with each other ensures the acquisition of knowledge and skills on the interpretation and implementation of school policies such as the WSE from more capable peers. Based on SCT, the value of peer social interaction is evident, and has supported or enhanced knowledge production on the explored guidelines to improve the implementation of the WSE programme. During the focus group discussions, participants commented as follows:

Mr Mabote articulated that,

> We need to make inputs as no answer is wrong or right.

Mr Mokhell asserted that,

> Colleagues, it is better to lead from the front on the WSE programme implementation.

Ms Mhlambi postulated,

> We need to be the agents of change in policy implementation in our school.

The statement by Mr Mabote that "*no answer is wrong or right"* expressed clear support for alleviating fear and uncertainty and encouraging stakeholders to participate freely in the focus group discussions and interviews. The statement served as motivation for other colleagues to articulate their lived experiences, beliefs and views on the research questions. The excerpt that "*we need to make inputs"* is understood as encouragement for teachers to work as team, because teamwork assists teachers to make informed decisions, as espoused by collaboration theory. At the discursive practice analysis level, teamwork among the teachers embraces rapport, which assists to support of the notion that all the views and ideas of the participants pertinent to the objectives of the research were equally important (see section 2.10, roles of teachers). In my view, the creation of a free research zone for teachers allowed them to make

positive inputs without fear or prejudice about the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE policy at schools.

The expression "*colleagues"* by Mr Mokhele is indicative of teachers working together as a team in pursuit of the co-creation of knowledge and information pertinent to the envisaged guidelines to improve the implementation of the WSE programme as a common goal. At the social practice analysis level, in this way, the responses of teachers reflect a collectivist orientation and ownership of the research as participants (Mitchel 2023:7). The snippet that "*it is better to lead from the front on the WSE programme implementation"* is understood to mean that there is a high expectation that teachers, as implementers of policies, serve as role models for the school community. Analysed discursively, the extract is an embodiment of action, communication and cooperation among the teachers, to create channels of excellence regarding improvement of the implementation of the WSE policy on and off school premises. In accordance with PAR, this research strategy is based on the principle that assists teachers to construct new knowledge for bringing about change by developing new ways of thinking, acting, and relating to each other in the school setting (Fabri & Jober 2023:4). Consequently, I considered the process of collaborative work among teachers assisting them in the involvement of dialogues that help them to construct new knowledge. The construction of new knowledge by the teachers could be considered useful knowledge for inclusion in the improved implementation of WSE guidelines. The communication among the teachers strengthens cooperation, which gives rise to new perspectives on the best way to improve the implementation of the WSE programme at schools.

The statement by Ms Mhlambi that "*we need to be the agents of change in policy implementation in our school"* is understood to corroborate Mr Mokhele's opinion that teachers need to lead from the front in the exploration and implementation of guidelines to improve the WSE programme at schools. Analysed at the social practice level, new insights emerging from teacher discourses create conditions for bringing about change that is beneficial to the implementation of the WSE programme. The collaborative practices of teachers provide opportunities for collegial conversations that favour changing practice on the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of the WSE programme (Fabri *et al.* 2023:14).

5.5.4 Roles of school governing body members

Promoting and supporting the policies that enhance the work of educators is critically important (Allsop, McKinley, Douglass, Pope & MacDougall 2023:2). From the stakeholders' point of view, Hussain, García-Sanchez, Khan, Khan and Martinez-Ferrero (2023:364) posit that the SGB is the "structure of rights and responsibilities among the parties with a stake in the school". As part of accountability and governance, the SGB is entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring the crafting of school policies (Thoburn 2023:144).

Mr Mokatsane remarked that,

> The prerogative of the SGB is the policy drafting.

Mr Modabi stated that,

> The SGB, in collaboration with the principal, administers the policy induction if a need arises.

Ms Khothatso smiled and said,

> Safety first, as an embodiment of the WSE policy.

The response by Mr Mokatsane that "*the prerogative of the SGB is the policy drafting"* is understood to mean that one cannot undermine the importance and the roles of SGB members when school policies are debated. Some of the policies, such as WSE policy, in our South African education system, needed the blessing of the SGB members before they could be made public and implemented at the school. At the social practice level, the SGB, in collaboration with the principal, ensures the participation of the majority of parents in the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of the WSE programme on and off school premises. This practice is a legislative responsibility of the SGB, which is in line with SASA dictates (see section 3.2.2, roles of SGB members). Consequently, as part of their social responsibility, one of the roles of the SGB members was to lead the majority of parents to implement WSE guidelines effectively. That also implied that WSE policy guideline implementation should result in improved school performance.

In accordance with the literature, as reported by Tshabalala (2020:47), by virtue of its status in the Constitution of the country, the SGB shares power equally with other

stakeholders in the understanding, encouragement and implementation of WSE guidelines. The statement by Mr Modabi that "*the SGB, in collaboration with the principal, administers the policy induction if a need arises"* is an indication of the assumption of legislative accountability on the part of the SGB. This implies that the SGB plays the role of working with the principal to ensure that the explored guidelines to improve the implementation of the WSE programme are effectively implemented. The comment, "*the SGB, in collaboration with the principal"* – as embedded in collaboration theory – denotes the importance of the SGB and the principal working as a team to achieve the holistic functionality and improvement of the school as an institution through the effective implementation of the envisaged WSE guidelines. In light of an induction of the WSE policy by the SGB and the principal, at the social practice level, I view practice as the assurance of understanding of the WSE guidelines among all the stakeholders prior to its implementation.

The smile on the face of Ms Khothatso, as non-verbal data, denotes her satisfaction about the teamwork displayed by the SGB members regarding the induction process of the SGB in collaboration with the principal in ensuring the implementation of the WSE guidelines. As supported by Berkovich and Benoliel (2020:504), the smile is understood as a token of appreciation, and conveys rich knowledge pertinent to the role of the SGB members in the research project. At the textual analysis level, the smile of Ms Khothatso is an indication of happiness and acknowledgement of the effort the SGB is putting in to promote the implementation of the explored WSE guidelines.

The snippet by Ms Khothatso, "*safety first",* is understood to mean that the envisaged exploration of the guidelines to improve the implementation of the WSE programme at schools would be achievable in a relaxed school environment. In the context of the study, the school environment presented a platform for the social interactions of the participants to engage in constructive communications applicable to respond to the research questions (Almusharraf & Almusharraf 2021:3950). In my view, the school's socio-interactive environment afforded the SGB members an opportunity to engage in a collaborative learning platform. The SGB's communicative experiences in the WSE induction sessions assisted in building rapport and trust and provided social reinforcement. The statement, "*as an embodiment of the WSE policy",* is understood to mean that the explored guidelines put emphasis on safety as one of the key areas of the WSE policy. At the social practice level, the SGB is expected to maintain the

school's infrastructure, which ensures that the social and learning collaborations of teachers and learners take place in a safe and conducive environment.

5.6 INDICATORS OF THE SUCCESS OF THE EXPLORED GUIDELINES

The study's main research question was aimed at exploring the guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE in Free State secondary schools, with subsidiary research questions relating to the challenges involved; conditions that are conducive to implementation; strategies that can be employed for implementation, and the roles of different stakeholders on the implementation. In this subsection, the fifth objective will be discussed: the indicators of success for the explored guidelines, namely, in-service training and workshops, stakeholder and community mobilisation and monitoring and evaluation.

5.6.1 In-service training and workshops

Training is a planned set of activities for imparting and equipping personnel with knowledge and skills required for job growth (BasuMallick 2020:4). Movchan (2020) posits that training helps research participants to attain the necessary knowledge and skills to boost their performance in their current roles, in this study, as agents of WSE policy implementation. Stakeholder collaboration during in-service training allows them to share their perspectives, experiences, beliefs and skills (Mashhadi & Dehghani 2022.94). Providing administrative support, inclusive training, hands-on workshops and cultural adaptation are best practices in countries such as the USA, Canada, Zambia and South Africa. In working collaboratively, the district office, SMT, teachers and parents make use of the explored WSE guidelines to nurture factors such as ethos, relationships, organisational and management structures, the physical environment, the taught curriculum and pedagogic practice as embedded in the whole school fraternity (see section 3.6.1, strategies on training).

Training and workshops enhance the attainment of stakeholder motivation and goal setting. Motivation and goal setting are among the ingredients of the improvement of the implementation of the WSE programme, because they ensure the building of a strong organisational foundation and cultural cohesion (see section 3.6.1). Puig, Daradoumis, Arguedas and Liñan (2021:210) explain that their research committee

realised that training and workshops assisted co-researchers to acquire metacognition, which comprises planning, setting goals, monitoring and evaluating. The SMT and teachers agreed that working together as a school to compile a plan of action regarding the implementation of the explored guidelines would benefit the school in its entirety. The research committee and all the stakeholders, furthermore, agreed that setting achievable goals as far as the implementation of the WSE programme was concerned, was vital. HODs were tasked with the responsibilities of closely monitoring the implementation process and reporting monthly to the senior management of the school.

The meeting resolved that mutual trust, as a complementary belief the research participants displayed among themselves, acted as a confidence enhancer as far as the implementation of the WSE guidelines were concerned. The development of mutual trust ensured stable and enduring cooperative relationships, and, hence, effective collaborations between the SES, SMT, teachers and the SGB (Kim, Wang & Chen 2018:947). Training and workshops are important, because they improve communication between the district office, schools and the SGB. Communication helps stakeholders to identify areas of WSE policy that need improvement regarding implementation, and the type of improvement to be effected. In one of our meetings, the co-researchers resolved that transparent communication that is aligned with social interaction will assist with the sharing of information that is truthful, substantial, and complete, on the best way the explored guidelines can improve the implementation of the WSE programme (Thelen & Formanchuk 2022:4).

5.6.2 Stakeholder and community mobilisation

The team agreed that there was a need to implement campaigns to effect stakeholder and community mobilisation. The benefit of such a campaign was to conscientise the relevant stakeholders and the school community about the importance of effectively implementing the WSE programme (see section 3.8.1). The meeting resolved that the services of the SES would be sought to outline the expectations of the district and the national office regarding the WSE policy. During one of our focus group discussions, some of the responses supported the motion tabled:

Ms Mafoko posited that,

> Always bear in mind, colleagues, that the proper usage of the correct tools ensures the clear understanding of the implementation of the programme.

Mr Mokatsane emphasised that,

> Let us remember that practice makes perfect. If we can all embrace teamwork and togetherness, half the battle is won.

Analysed from a textual point of view, Ms Mafoko's statement, "*always bear in mind, colleagues, that the proper usage of the correct tools ensures the clear understanding of the implementation of the programme",* is understood to mean that the point of departure in ensuring the effective implementation of the explored guidelines to improve the implementation of the WSE policy, is to use each designed tool for its particular purpose. The statement, furthermore, emphasises the roles and duties of the HODs in the management of the implementation process of the WSE guidelines. Elisado (2022:90) reports that the correct use of tools in programme management assures that efficiency and effectiveness emanates from the active collaboration and commitment of co-researchers to achieving the goals of the group in a school setting. This is in line with collaboration theory, which embraces active participation in decision-making regarding the WSE programme, which is considered a social challenge on school premises and in the community.

The snippet from Mr Mokatsane, "*let us remember that practice makes perfect",* is a clear indication of motivation and encouragement that, if the stakeholders persist in working diligently and adhering to the requirements that support the effective implementation of the explored guidelines, then they will eventually improve the situation on and off the school premises (see section 3.8.1). At the social structure analysis level, the response is, furthermore, understood to mean that all the stakeholders need to embrace the notion that repetition and confidence in the application of the guidelines to improve the implementation of the WSE policy are part and parcel of their accountability. This is premised on the notion that teachers can support community mobilisation, which encourages the active participation of parents in the implementation process of WSE guidelines (De Clercq & Shalem 2021:7).

The statement of Mr Mokatsane, that "*if we can all embrace teamwork and togetherness, half the battle is won",* is viewed as an appeal to all co-researchers to support the efforts and mission of the district and the school, and to encourage

teamwork and cooperation on the effective implementation of the guidelines to improve the implementation of the WSE programme. According to Lin (2022), that appeal is based on democratic values, according to which stakeholder decisions are reached through a process of deliberation among free and equal partners, who hare endowed with the rationality of argumentation. Furthermore, Małecka, Mitręga and Pfajfar (2022:2449) emphasise that stakeholders identify with groups on the basis of shared beliefs, lived experiences and values about the attainment of the goals of the institution.

The assertion by Mr Mokatsane that "*half the battle is won"* is understood to mean that social interactions of stakeholders that support cooperative learning and critical thinking are among the best practices. Cooperative learning was used as a strategy to foster active engagement of the SES, SMT, teachers and SGB members in motivating one another and the school community to sustain the effective implementation of the WSE programme (Yang, Zhou & Hu 2022:1356). The collaboration of these stakeholders was important during the research process, and for SCT, which states that stakeholder learning is constructed, and the generation of new knowledge is based on the foundation of previous learning (McLeod, S 2018:3). This implies that the co-researchers were able to involve other stakeholders in the exploration of the envisaged guidelines using their existing knowledge. The involvement of stakeholders and community mobilisation are indicative that the research project was a social challenge that needed the views and contributions of all stakeholders in the exploration of the guidelines to improve the implementation of the WSE policy at schools.

5.6.3 Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring assists in the achievement of organisational goals. Monitoring is beneficial in that it reinforces teamwork with other team members involved in the project regarding the achievement of the best results (Seidametova, Abduramanov & Seydametov 2022:26). As one of the indicators of success, the research team discovered that monitoring the implementation of the guidelines to improve the implementation of the WSE policy increased the effectiveness, efficiency and institutionalisation of the programme (Costache, Crai & Ivan 2022:149). This implies that stakeholders with a vested interest in education are conscientised about the

importance and success of correctly implementing the WSE policy, and other school policies. Discursively, the persistent implementation of monitoring on the effective implementation of the WSE programme reduces school inequities and inequalities, thereby improving learning outcomes for learners. The benefit of consistent monitoring of the effectiveness of implementation of the guidelines to improve the implementation of the WSE policy endorses teachers as agents of change. Teachers, as social beings and members of the school community, motivate parents to actively participate in school policy discourses (see section 3.8.4). One of the binding indicators of success is for the principal, as an accounting officer at school, to put in place an implementable plan that assists the entire staff to effectively implement the guidelines in all the key areas of the WSE programme. This implies that the principal is expected to be at the forefront of the monitoring of such a plan, to ensure the sustainability of the plan, and, hence, the implementation of WSE policy.

Evaluation ensures that the explored guidelines are responsive to the changes and the needs of the school and the community, by identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the programme, as well as being able to provide the stakeholders with information on the implementation progress (Nazardani, Dehkordi & Ghorbani 2022:14). This implies that, after performing the needs analysis and identifying the weaknesses relating to implementing the WSE policy guidelines, the SMT would know which areas need to be improved to achieve holistic functionality of the school. Grune, Popp, Carl, Semrau and Pfeifer (2022:10) reveal that policy evaluations that entail co-creation approaches and interventions among stakeholders enhance sustained ownership and empowerment. In my view, this was evident during our focus group discussions, as the SMT, teachers and SGB members were motivated to participate in the research project because they believed that they were co-researchers and had equal status and ownership of the research. That encouraged them, furthermore, to narrate their lived experiences, beliefs and opinions pertinent to the research questions, and they viewed their active participation as empowering for the effective implementation of the WSE programme and school policy discourse. Section 5.7 will be the chapter summary.

5.7 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter analysed and presented the data, and discussed the findings. The initial segment of the chapter outlined challenges related to the implementation of the guidelines of the WSE programme. The conditions that impacted the implementation of the programme were also discussed. Regarding challenges, the strategies that would address them were delineated. In ensuring accountability for the implementation of the programme, the roles of the different stakeholders were discussed. Furthermore, situations that enhanced the success of the implementation of the programme were deliberated. The final chapter will present the findings, recommendations, and a conclusion of the study.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The study explored guidelines to improve the implementation of the WSE in a secondary school in the Motheo district of the Free State. This chapter presents the findings of the analysed data, recommendations, discussions and conclusions. The chapter commences by giving an overview of the study, followed by the problem statement. The aim and research questions, as the backbone of the research project, will also be outlined. The aim and research questions, as the backbone of the research project, are also outlined. The chapter also discusses the findings and recommendations, that are aligned with the objectives of the study. PAR, as the methodological approach of the study, is discussed. The chapter concludes with a summary of the findings and makes recommendations for future research regarding the exploration of the guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools. An overview of the study is provided in Section 6.2.

6.2 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

Even though school principals are presumed to be the pillars of WSE implementation, through their critical thinking and problem-solving skills on school premises, effective implementation of WSE policy guidelines had been neglected (Kwatubana, Nhlapo & Mateetee 2021:304). So neglected was the implementation of the WSE policy guidelines at some schools that the programme had been reduced to a paperwork activity. In some schools, SMTs and school staff carried out the implementation of the WSE programme merely for the sake of compliance. Schools were obsessed about achieving the provincial pass rate targets, at the expense of the implementation of other key areas of the WSE programme.

In some instances, some key areas of WSE policy were not properly implemented according to the document guidelines. The focus was on complementing the curriculum through teaching and learning activities, and presenting Grade 12 extra lessons. Therefore, the chapter justified the exploration of the guidelines to improve

the implementation of the WSE programme. To enhance an exploration of the envisaged guidelines, the analysis of the data provided by the participants suggested categories and themes as solutions to the implementation challenges, conditions under which the implementation of the explored guidelines could flourish, and the successes of such an exercise.

6.1.1 Problem statement

Inadequate stakeholder training, lack of SGB involvement in policy discussions, and the reduction of the programme to paperwork for the sake of compliance, contributed to the dysfunctionality of the school as far as the implementation of the explored guidelines of the WSE policy was concerned. At the secondary school that was selected as the research site, the primary focus was on Grade 12 curriculum coverage, at the expense of the implementation of the WSE guidelines in other key areas. Despite the introduction of the Programme to Improve Learning Outcomes (PILO), as a tool to monitor curriculum coverage and reciprocal accountability among teachers and HODs at the school, other WSE keys areas were still neglected (De Clercq, Shalem & Nkambule 2015:164). Therefore, this chapter justified the need to explore why there was a disparity in the implementation of the WSE guidelines at the school. I will, therefore, present the findings from the analysed data and suggest recommendations for improving the situation.

6.1.2 Research question

Which explored guidelines can be used to improve implementation of WSE in Free State secondary schools?

6.1.3 Aim of the study

The aim of the study was to explore guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at Free State secondary schools.

6.1.4 Objectives of the study

1. To justify the need to explore the challenges facing the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at secondary schools;

2. To determine conditions conducive to the improvement of the implementation of WSE at schools;

3. To develop strategies to improve the implementation of WSE at secondary schools;

4. To identify the roles of different stakeholders in improving the implementation of WSE at schools; and

5. To demonstrate the success of the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools as informed by best practices.

6.2 FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.2.1 Inadequate training

6.2.1.1 Findings on inadequate training

Our study found a failure to effectively implement the guidelines of the WSE policy on some key areas by the SMT and teachers. The finding was supported by the literature reviewed that reported that lack of knowledge and strategies on how the guidelines were to be implemented, was among the prominent challenges causing the school's failure to comply (see section 3.4.1, inadequate training).

The generated data showed that the time allocated for training on WSE policy was not adequate and needed to be revised, and also revealed that the provision of curriculum content and instruction compromised the effective implementation of the WSE programme (see section 5.2.1.1, inadequate training). This was evident during one of our focus group discussions, in which a teacher elucidated that,

> Given the fact that training for the WSE programme was conducted once a year, I did not think that was enough.

The dissatisfaction of the teachers corroborated that more time was allocated to curriculum coverage, at the expense of training. For teachers, this was a clear indication that time allocated for training, skills development and capacity building on the implementation of WSE was comprised, and this undermined the quality of training (Geldenhuys & Oosthuizen 2015:204). The assertion by one participant that "*even the training material compiled did not contain all the information"* signified the failure to devote adequate time to the preparation of training manuals (see section 5.2.1.1, inadequate training). That implies that minimal expertise and effort were applied to the preparation of the training manuals, hence, the training lacked the potency it was supposed to have.

From these findings, it can, thus, be concluded that a lack of knowledge and strategies and allocation of too little time for training were congruent with presenting inadequate training on the implementation of the WSE programme. It can be deduced that mediocrity – a result of inadequate training of teachers on the implementation of the WSE policy guidelines – brought about uncertainty about the implementation of the guidelines in some key areas earmarked for stakeholder capacity and empowerment.

6.2.1.2 Recommendations to address inadequate training

The study makes several recommendations that could be supportive of enhancing training regarding the implementation of WSE guidelines. Training assisted in the acquisition of knowledge and the development of skills required to enhance the performances of the SES, the SMT, teachers and SGB members, as agents of change for the effective implementation of the WSE programme on and off school premises (Movchan 2020:3). Training and workshops ensured positive stakeholder collaborations during which the district office (the SES), SMT, teachers and SGB members nurtured factors such as ethos, relationships, and organisational and management structures needed for the implementation of the WSE guidelines (see section 3.6.1, strategies on training). In my view, such stakeholder collaborations play a pivotal role in the sharing of lived experiences, beliefs and values pertinent to the improved implementation of the explored WSE guidelines.

Training and workshops enhanced the attainment of stakeholder motivation, and goal setting. Apart from ensuring the building of a strong organisational foundation and cultural cohesion among the stakeholders, training and workshops inculcated the

habits of good planning, improvements relating to goal setting, continuous monitoring and evaluation of the success of the implementation process (see section 3.6.1, strategies on training).

The study, furthermore, recommends adequate training and workshops on the effective implementation of the explored WSE guidelines, because such activities could improve communication between the district office, the school and the SGB. Honest and open communication among the stakeholders helps them to embrace mutual trust, which enhances the provision of truthful and reliable information on the implementation of the explored WSE guidelines (Thelen & Formanchuk 2022:4).

6.2.1.3 Threats posed by inadequate training

The section outlined threats posed by a lack of training for role players, and solutions to mitigate these threats. According to the findings of the study, inadequate training produces unskilled SMT members and teachers who are unable to effect the effective implementation of WSE guidelines. Such stakeholders posed a threat to the transfer of skills to learners and members of the school community (Talvio *et al.* 2013:696). That implies that stakeholders were not sufficiently equipped with skills to implement the necessary changes and strategies to effectively implement the explored guidelines to improve the implementation of the WSE programme.

Some teachers were not open about their uncertainty about effectively implementing the guidelines of some of the key areas of the WSE for development, which posed a threat to the implementation process. That finding was evident from the utterance of a participant that "*some teachers were sceptical about the need to be developed on the guidelines of some key areas of the WSE"* (see section 5. 2.1.1, inadequate training). That is a clear indication that dishonesty among the teachers, as agents of change as far as the implementation of the programme is concerned, disadvantaged the school regarding its effective implementation of its mission, and, hence, compromised the provision of quality education. The lack of competence and confidence of the inadequately trained district officials posed a threat to conveying the socially constructed knowledge on WSE implementation to teachers.

To circumvent the lack of training, inputs were made to the district office to conduct training sessions on the WSE programme once per semester, as opposed to once a

year. The inputs also advised the district office to assemble a three-person team to ascertain the quality of the compiled training manuals prior to programme advocacy. Retraining of the affected district officials who exhibited a lack of competence and motivation, was recommended as part of reskilling and capacitation to assist the officials. HODs submitted progress reports on teachers in their departments to senior management, to indicate in which developmental areas a specific teacher needed empowerment, to eliminate dishonesty with regard to a lack of openness. In the next section, findings on the lack of commitment from the SMT will be delineated.

6.2.2 Lack of commitment by school management team

6.2.2.1 Findings on lack of commitment by SMT

Findings from the reviewed literature and the data generated on the SMT of the school that was the research site are important. The literature reveals that inadequate management of responsibilities and accountability of staff members at various levels at the school by the SMT was one of the glaring challenges (Taahayadin & Daud 2018:27). McGrath and Noble (2010:87) report that failure by some SMTs in American schools, and elsewhere, to adequately involve parents in policy discussions undermined the importance and implementation of WSE at schools. Some schools in Ghana report a lack of commitment by senior SMT members to effectively monitor and supervise the WSE process as one of their stumbling blocks (Cobbinah & Eshun 2021:10). Lack of support and communication were discovered to be among the highlights of failures to implement the explored guidelines to improve the implementation of the WSE policy (Gautam & Ramashia 2017:2).

From the analysis of the generated data, the study found that the SMT did nothing to identify developmental gaps in terms of the performance of teachers regarding the implementation of the envisaged guidelines. It was evident from an assertion made by the SES in one of our meetings that "*even if the SMT had identified the developmental gaps during teacher development, nothing was done to address them"* (refer to section 5. 2.1.2, lack of commitment by SMT). Furthermore, another finding from the analysed data is the absence of a formal work programme and clear communication from the SMT on the implementation process. The evidence was embedded in one educator's narrative that "*there were no formal work programmes and clear communication from*

the school authorities on WSE programme" (see section 5.2.1.2, lack of commitment by SMT).

By taking the findings presented in this section into consideration, I conclude that there is a need to explore the guidelines to improve the implementation of the WSE policy.

6.2.2.2 Recommendations to ensure the commitment of the SMT

By definition, power is a means by which a leader influences their team (Sturm, Herz & Antonakis 2021:1). In the context of the study, the team recommended that the principal, as an instructional leader, needed to influence his staff in a positive way to achieve the aims and objectives of the WSE programme, and, hence, achieve the vision and mission of the school. In my view, that implies that the principal must be at the forefront and must lead by example regarding the development of positive habits pertinent to the effective implementation of the WSE guidelines on and off the school premises. The principal needs to take his team into his confidence in relation to achieving the goals of an effective implementation process. It is the principal's prerogative to put in place an implementable plan in collaboration with the staff.

In terms of parents' involvement in school policy discussions, the study recommends that the principal and teachers need to adopt the inspirational motivation aspect of the transformational leadership style. Transformational leadership can assist the principal and teachers, as leaders, to transform SGB members into motivated followers who can mobilise the majority of parents to buy into participation in policy discussions (Yulianti, Denessen, Droop & Veerman 2022:100). Parents needed parent–teacher communication and invitations to acquire the capacity to form a strong parent–school partnership. Collaboration between the SMT, teachers and SGB members is needed to accelerate the participation of the majority of parents in the implementation of the WSE guidelines. In view of this, transformational leadership involves the principal and teachers, as important agents and enablers of the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of the WSE programme at the school.

The NEPA (South Africa 1996a) is clear about monitoring and evaluation as embedded in the WSE policy. The policy stipulates that it is the prerogative of the minister of Education to determine the WSE policy, as a national policy on monitoring and evaluation for the overall quality of the education system at South African schools

(see section 3.2.1, National Education Policy Act 27 of 1996). The research team agreed and recommended that the principal, as a transformational leader, needed to collaborate with his team and redo advocacy for the WSE policy.

It was evident that the SMT needed a refresher course or training on the implementation of the WSE policy on and off school premises. For such collaborative interactions it is recommended that the entire SMT revises all the keys areas relevant for the improvement and successful implementation of the WSE guidelines. Revision of the key areas for improvement will assist the SMT to close the information gaps that existed in the implementation of the explored WSE guidelines.

Regarding communication, using the right language in dialogues among the stakeholders are of paramount importance. In line with CDA, language assumes a socially constructed understanding of social reality that seeks to uncover knowledge from meanings, rather than seeking to discover causal connections (Bansal *et al.* 2018:1192). The study recommends the adoption of team communication because it is vital for the exchange of information, which occurs through both verbal and nonverbal channels among the stakeholders (Paxino, Denniston, Woodward-Kron & Molloy 2020:3253). According to Vatamanescu, Dinu, Stratone, a Staneiu and Vintila (2022:6424), strong team communication creates a positive feeling of trust among the team members, which then boosts their appetite for sharing knowledge.

6.2.2.3 Threats to commitment by the SMT

Findings of the generated data reveal a lack of support and cooperation between the SMT, teachers and SGB as a threat to the effective implementation of the explored WSE guidelines. The generated and analysed data reveal that the focus was more on Grade 12 extra lessons and curriculum coverage, at expense of the effective implementation of the WSE guidelines (see section 5.2.1.2, lack of commitment by SMT). Failure by the SMT to draw up a comprehensive, inclusive and workable programme of action to support the teachers and SGB poses a threat to the implementation of the WSE programme.

Completion of the school self-evaluation forms by some of the SMT members in the absence of other stakeholders, is a serious violation of the WSE policy guidelines and poses a threat to the effective implementation of the WSE programme. The assertion

by a participant that "*the WSE programme had been made the principal's own baby"* (see section 5.2.1.2, lack of commitment by SMT) implies a violation of the spirit of cooperation, teamwork and collaboration as espoused by collaboration theory (see section 2.2, SCT and collaboration theory as theoretical frameworks). The literature reveals that, in Zambia, a failure by SMTs to align education policies with pedagogical practices for the school staff poses a threat to the effective implementation of the WSE guidelines at schools (Qablan 2018:133). These findings support the need to explore the guidelines to improve the implementation of the WSE programme at schools.

6.2.3 Inadequate funding

6.2.3.1 Findings on inadequate funding

Findings from the reviewed literature reveal that, in countries such as the USA, the Great Recession and COVID-19 pandemic contributed to school funding cuts. In a country such as Finland, budget cuts culminated in poor teacher training for the WSE programme (see section 3.4.3, inadequate funding). Chen (2020:5) asserts that less resources contributed to poor implementation of guidelines for improving key areas and the WSE programme, such as training, provision of curriculum and maintenance of infrastructure.

Investigation of the Nigerian perspective reveals low levels of accountability and delays in funding allocation for programmes such as WSE as factors that hamper the effective implementation process (section 3.4.3, inadequate funding). In Botswana, UNICEF (2017:12) suggests that poor budgeting resulted in restrictions on the spending of money allocated for educational programmes. Due to inadequate funding, district offices and schools are unable to fund training meant for programmes such as WSE. Due to a scarcity of money, the Zambian Ministry of General Education was unable to utilise training on WSE to develop skills (UNICEF 2019:6). In South Africa, the reviewed literature reveals that money for training on the WSE programme ceased to exist when a conditional grant that assisted districts and schools was stopped.

In the context of the study and the school as a research site, the analysed data reveal that the school received a conditional grant from Department of Basic Education to function. The data also reveal that the school received that conditional grant because it was a non-fee-paying school [quintile 1] located in a disadvantaged community. The

implication is that the school needed to set aside money from its shoestring budget to fund WSE training (see section 5.2.1.3, inadequate funding). A comment by a participant that "*the SGB provided support from funds from fundraising"* reveals that it was the prerogative of the SGB to devise means to augment the budget from the conditional grant for training on WSE guidelines (section 5.2.1.3, inadequate funding).

6.2.3.2 Recommendations for the provision of adequate funding

Because of budget cuts due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the team recommended enhancement and improvement of the fundraising model as part of mutual empowerment and the fostering of growth of the capabilities of stakeholders, to assist the SGB to access and exchange resources and information on fundraising through social networking (Herrero & Kraemer 2022:282). Fundraising through social networks, inclusive of local municipalities, churches, small and large businesses, amongst others, augmented the conditional grant offered to the school by the Department of Basic Education. Having such a social network played a pivotal role in building trust in relationships, and, hence, resilience to mitigate the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the context of the study, accountability refers to the provision of information to the school and community regarding trust, programme implementation and performance (Overman & Schillemans 2022:12). Regarding accountability, the team recommended that the district office and the SMT improve the financial management skills of the SGB, as custodians of transparent governance. That finding confirms the recommendation by Sofyani, Pratolo and Saleh (2022:403), that competence of staff and the SGB positively influence the financial accountability of the school regarding the adequate distribution of funds during the budgeting process, in support of the WSE programme.

On the school premises, it was the prerogative of the SMT to support the notion that organisational commitment was a key success factor of the organisation for achieving targets, including performance, accountability, and transparency (Sofyani *et al.* 2022:403). In view of that, the team recommended presenting financial training on budgeting to improve the competence, transparency, and accountability of the SGB and the staff. Training on budgeting assists the SGB, and hence the school, to put

aside money for effectively supporting and improving the implementation of the WSE guidelines.

6.2.3.3 Threats posed by inadequate funding

A lack of money posed a threat to the training of stakeholders on policy empowerment and accountability; it also hindered sound training due to poorly prepared training materials. Data that were analysed revealed that the school in this study was a no-fee-paying school [quintile 1] and was situated in a disadvantaged community (section 5.2.1.3, inadequate funding). The school's quintile 1 status implied that the majority of the parents, if not all, could not afford to pay school fees. Consequently, the socio-economic background of the school posed a threat to the generation of money specifically for training on empowerment and the effective implementation of the explored WSE guidelines.

Lack of transparency on the financial position of the school posed a threat as far as planning was concerned, because various school departments could not budget to support the training of their teachers. That was evident from a participant's assertion that "*in terms of school finances, we did not have a deeper knowledge"* (see section 5.2.1.3, inadequate funding). Lack of resources posed a threat to the effective implementation of WSE guidelines.

6.2.4 Lack of parental involvement

6.2.4.1 Findings on parental involvement

Parents' education background play a pivotal role in parental involvement in school matters. Studies reveal that parents with low levels of education do not feel confident about participating in academic matters, also programmes such as WSE (Jafarov 2015:38). Section 5.2.1.4 (lack of parental involvement) discussed the disharmony that was caused by some parents, who shifted their responsibilities to other family members when parents were invited to school to address the discipline issues of their children, as one key area of WSE programme. Higgins and Katsipataki (2015:282) suggest that a lack of parental involvement compromises decision-making of stakeholders about forging a way forward in the implementation of the WSE programme.

The literature reviewed reveals, furthermore, that some parents did not participate in school programmes such as WSE, because they were intimidated by the language used during stakeholder collaboration (Durisic & Bunijevac 2017:145). Section 5.2.1.4 (lack of parental involvement) also revealed that some parents crossed boundaries regarding the implementation of the WSE programme by interfering with the professional work of teachers, instead of following governance protocols. Teachers who doubted parents' self-efficacy were considered to be barriers to parental involvement, because their actions demoralised the parents' passion to participate effectively in the implementation of the guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at the school (Akindipe 2015:41).

The study's findings expose a lack of communication between teachers and parents about the discourse around the implementation of the explored guidelines to improve implementation of the WSE programme. Because communication was lacking, the attitudes of some teachers made some parents feel unwelcome (Mwase *et al.* 2020:358). Allen and White-Smith (2018:413) posit that poor and unresponsive relationships with teachers, as suggested by parents, were among the factors contributing to decreased parental involvement in academic programmes, such as WSE, at the school. Consequently, a lack of constructive parental involvement resulted in parents not being empowered regarding informed decision-making on sound school policies such as WSE.

6.2.4.2 Recommendations for improving parental involvement

The team agreed that, to improve parental involvement , the school should ensure that the conditions conducive to active participation of SGB members and other stakeholders are created. Each stakeholder, including the SGB and most of the parents, must execute their roles to the best of their ability for the implementation of the envisaged WSE guidelines. The creation of conducive conditions pertinent to the research questions, and the aims and objectives of the WSE programme and collaborative interactions that were driven by the WSE-policy, had to be prioritised.

The importance of communication based on transparency and the clearly defined roles of different stakeholders were discussed in sections 3.5.4 (conditions conducive to parental involvement) and 3.7 (roles of parents) respectively. In summary, clear communication must embrace the role of parents as "partners and active participants"

in the holistic and effective implementation of school policies (Jabar 2021:202). This implies that parental involvement is important for ensuring a collaborative partnership between SGB members and other stakeholders, and contributes to the crafting and implementation of the WSE policy. Similarly, section 3.7 outlined the role played by the SGB, on behalf of most parents, in the delivery and implementation of WSE. In line with the transformative initiative of PAR, in South African schools, parents were involved in school programmes to defuse power relations. Power diffusion is beneficial, because it assists all co-researchers to attain equal status in the research project, and, furthermore, empowers SGB members to be the voices of marginalised parents in WSE guideline implementation.

As part of parental empowerment with regard to WSE policy implementation in schools, the study recommends promoting parental involvement that embraces the restoration of harmonious relationships among all stakeholders. Such relationships must foster trust, teamwork, and respect among the stakeholders, to achieve the effective implementation of the WSE guidelines as a common goal and a social challenge (Mwase *et al.* 2020:363). Stakeholder collaboration enabled co-researchers to achieve goals beyond the capabilities of any one individual co-researcher in a research project (Xiang, Velez & Gershman 2023:1). In line with collaboration theory principles, collaboration between different stakeholders enables them to explore and connect new ideas and knowledge bases, share resources and capabilities, and foster the capacity and commitment to implement novel and bold ideas regarding the WSE programme (Callens 2023:330). Collaborating with the SMT and teachers was highly beneficial for SGB members in the partnership, as the latter could acquire knowledge and experiences from the SMT and teachers that were pertinent to the effective implementation of the envisaged WSE guidelines.

In view of the discussion in this section, I therefore considered that it was essential to build a strong teacher–parent partnership within school policy systems, to develop the skills and competence needed for the co-creation of useful knowledge and understanding regarding the implementation of WSE programme.

6.2.4.3 Threats facing active parental involvement

Findings from the generated data in relation to parental involvement point to parents' low levels of education leading to parents lacking confidence to participate in school

policy discussions. Placing qualifications at the forefront of quality policy discussions involving parents with low levels of education posed a threat when the effective implementation of the explored WSE guidelines was discussed (see section 5.2.1.4, lack of parental involvement). The shifting of responsibility by some parents to other family members when they were invited to the school was a clear abdication of responsibility and posed a threat to the implementation of the WSE guidelines regarding discipline (section 5.2.1.4, lack of parental involvement).

Lack of parental involvement in the implementation of the explored WSE guidelines posed a threat to informed decision-making, as parents were among the most important stakeholders (Higgins & Katsipataki 2015:282). In view of that threat, failure to involve parents in informed decision-making resulted in uncertainty and social injustice. Using a language that was foreign to the SGB members during policy discussions was viewed as a threat to participants to participate effectively in the research project. This practice prevented some parents from tabling useful ideas, experiences, and beliefs on WSE implementation. The interference by some parents in the professional spaces of some teachers, instead of concentrating on the governance side of their responsibilities, posed a threat to the effective implementation of the WSE programme guidelines (Section 5.2.1.4, lack of parental involvement).

Teachers who doubted parents' self-efficacy were considered barriers to parental involvement, because their actions demoralised the parents' passion to participate effectively in the implementation of the guidelines to improve the implementation of the WSE at the school (Akindipe 2015:41). Ineffective communication about the implementation of the explored WSE guidelines posed a challenge. Poor and unresponsive relationships with teachers, as suggested by parents, were some of the contributing factors to decreased parental involvement in academic programmes at the school, such as WSE (Allen & White-Smith 2018:413). Section 6.4 will propose solutions to the challenges discussed in Section 6.3.

6.3 SOLUTIONS TO THE CHALLENGES

6.3.1 Solutions for inadequate training

The literature reviewed and the data generated reveal the importance of sound training for the stakeholders regarding the effective implementation of the explored WSE

guidelines at the school. Inadequate training led to defective implementation of the explored WSE guidelines, and it was addressed by the implementation of the devised and recommended strategies by the research team. The team agreed that the SES, in collaboration with the district office, should arrange venues and dates for training purposes.

Firstly, training for schools on WSE guidelines should be integrated, to provide skills, support, and improvements for stakeholders, as was the case in Canadian schools. The Canadian education department used knowledge and information from the social and physical environment, and partnerships and services, to perfect skills, and to give more support and to improve the implementation of the WSE programme (Dassanayake *et al.* 2017:2). The principal was expected to provide administrative support and execute the supervisory role over the staff with regard to the implementation of strategies on school premises. Hands-on workshops that accommodated the specific needs of staff members should be administered.

Extensive teacher collaboration ensures teamwork and the sharing of ideas and skills among peers in the implementation of the WSE guidelines. In line with constructivism, training of stakeholders on the implementation of the WSE guidelines accords them an opportunity to learn and construct knowledge from their experiences, and to reflect on their experiences for future improvement (De Gagne, NPD-BS & Phillips 2017:22). Well planned and organised training enhances effective communication among stakeholders. Effective communication among peers develops critical thinking strategies that empowers them to implement the explored WSE guidelines effectively and in accordance with the policymakers' intentions (Tran *et al.* 2019:80).

To address feelings of being unwelcome due to the attitudes displayed by some teachers towards parents in policy discussions, training and workshops should be conducted to enhance the attainment of stakeholder motivation and goal setting. Motivation and goal setting supports the building of a strong organisational foundation and cultural cohesion regarding an effective implementation of the WSE guidelines at school (see section 3.6.1, strategies on training).

6.3.2 Solutions to a lack of commitment by the school management team

Lack of commitment by the SMT was the second challenge that stood in the way of the effective implementation of the WSE guidelines at the school. To mitigate a lack of commitment by the SMT regarding the improvement of the implementation of the WSE guidelines, Australian schools used a peer learning strategy among principals. Peer learning as a strategy assisted the principal and the SMT members to construct new knowledge pertinent to school needs, to enhance the SMT's capacity to run the WSE programme at schools (see section 3.6.2, strategies to support SMT).

In the South African context, social cohesion as a strategy was used to support the SMT to improve the implementation of the WSE guidelines at the school. A social cohesion strategy involved SMT members as agents in the capacity building of teachers and SGB members for WSE implementation at the school. Their involvement had an empowering effect, and they acquired new experiences that informed their thinking, knowledge and skills regarding the explored guidelines (MogliaccI *et al.* 2016:163). The team, furthermore, agreed that transparent and genuine communication among all the stakeholders was key. Communication allowed the SMT and other stakeholders to narrate the sections of WSE guidelines that posed challenges, and the type of corrective measures the SMT implemented timeously. The SES was mandated to oversee the progress by eliciting reports from the SMT.

Regarding the identification of developmental gaps, the team agreed that the principal, as an instructional leader, and in collaboration with the team, had to develop a workable and supervised action plan. The plan included strategies to correct the identified developmental gaps and set due dates by which each gap was expected to be addressed. The principal as a supervisor had to submit progress reports the SES, who was a district office overseer.

6.3.3 Solutions to inadequate funding

Inadequate funding was the third aspect that was viewed as a challenge that hampered the effective implementation of WSE guidelines. The team agreed and recommended that the national Department of Basic Education should increase the subsidy of money for resources allocated for programmes such as WSE. The strategy on funding stipulates that money resources should be allotted for capacity building for

the development of district leadership and school leadership regarding the training of teachers and parents on WSE policy guidelines (Campbell 2021:414). Because money was no longer being supplied for programmes such as WSE, there was a need for transparency from the provincial Department of Basic Education, and for it to provide reasons for that decision. Depending on the reasons advanced, the team recommended the reinstatement of funding for the WSE programme.

In South Africa, the team recommended that the national Department of Basic Education should obtain money from the public and private sectors, locally and abroad. The money thus obtained could be used in WSE programmes countrywide for human resource development and institutional capacity building (Qobo & Soko 2015:6). To enforce accountability and to avoid participants relaxing their involvement, there was a need to monitor the performance of all stakeholders in accordance with the line of responsibility. Monitoring was beneficial for reinforcing teamwork with other team members involved (Seidametova *et al.* 2022:26). To mitigate poor planning, which resulted in the late distribution of funds, as happened in Botswana, the team recommended a comprehensive financial recovery plan, which included official responsibilities and due dates, from the provincial level down to the school level. Such a plan could assist all the authorities to plan accordingly.

According to the analysed data, the school receives a quarterly conditional grant from the Department of Basic Education to meet the day-to-day needs for running the school. The team recommended that it was the prerogative of the SGB to devise means to augment the budget from fundraising and the conditional grant regarding the training of WSE guidelines (section 5.2.1.3, inadequate funding).

6.3.4 Solutions to lack of parental involvement

Lack of parental involvement was the fourth component that was found to pose a threat, and which impacted negatively on the effective implementation of the explored WSE guidelines. Regarding the active involvement of parents with low levels of education, the team recommended that the school should provide support and act with warmth and responsiveness to make parents feel comfortable and accepted in policy discussions at the school, as that was common practice at schools in the USA (Elsaesser *et al.* 2017:63). This implies that, regarding the enhancement of parental involvement to improve the implementation of WSE guidelines, the district office, SMT

and teachers need to be accommodative and responsive to the experiences, beliefs and opinions of parents. That is in line with collaboration theory, which provides co-researchers with opportunities to share experiences and ideas in decision-making during friendly and supportive social interactions that form part of collaborations during teamwork sessions (see section 2.2, SCT and collaboration theory as theoretical frameworks).

Regarding the social injustice caused by some parents who shifted their responsibilities to other family members when parents were invited to school to discuss the discipline issues of their children as one of the key areas of WSE policy, (see section 5.2.1.4, lack of parental involvement), the study recommends that meetings between trained SMT members, teachers, SGB members, parents and leaners be convened such that they foster group cooperation and learning to solve challenges (Fronius *et al.* 2019:13). It was incumbent on parents, as the custodians of their children, when parents were called to school to address policy issues, to support the school to effectively implement the explored WSE guidelines. To address the issue of uncertainty about decision-making in parents, the team agreed that some parents lacked information on what the WSE guidelines entailed. The principal, in collaboration with the SMT, were tasked to administer proper training that would serve as empowerment. In line with the PAR approach, empowerment was driven to implement action and should foster change in the thinking of SGB members, as the voices of the voiceless in policy discourses (Gaya 2021:172).

To mitigate the negative impact of using a language foreign to the parents for communication, the team recommended to the SMT that the explored guidelines be interpreted to the SGB members and the majority of parents of the school, in the language of their choice, to enhance understanding. The study emphasises that the school should not use language to discriminate against the parents during WSE policy discussions; doing so would be a rights violation according to the SASA Act 84 of 1996, 6(3) that states that "no form of racial discrimination, either as language or colour may be practised in policy implementation" (South Africa 1996b). Regarding interference by SGB parents in the professional concerns of teachers, the research team tasked the SES, in collaboration with the principal, to remind the SGB about their scope of operation in line with governance issues as set out by the SASA. To resolve the issue of a lack of communication and parents' beliefs in their capacities to execute

performance attainment regarding WSE, (see section 6.3.4.2, recommendations for improving parental involvement). In section 6.5, the methodology that contributed to the exploration of the envisaged guidelines to improve the implementation of the WSE programme in schools will be delineated.

6.4 CONTRIBUTION OF METHODOLOGY TO THE EXPLORATION OF THE GUIDELINES

PAR was employed as a research approach to explore the guidelines to improve the implementation of the WSE policy at the school. PAR prioritised the value of experiential knowledge for solving the problem of ineffective implementation of the WSE guidelines, for the envisioning and implementation of alternatives. To correct the ineffective implementation of WSE guidelines, PAR's collaborative, iterative, and open-ended nature utilised the expertise of the SMT, teachers, SGB members and the SES, as stakeholders who had experienced the inadequate implementation as a social issue, to generate new insights (Cornish, Breton, Moreno-Tabarez, Delgado, Rua, de-Graft & Hodgetts Aikins 2023:2). By using PAR, the SMT, teachers, SGB members and SES used collaboration through critical dialogue to provide guidance on constructive and reflective learning (Findyartini, Syah, Susilo, Nurokhmanti, Qomariyah, Greviana, Ainin, Sari & Claramita 2023:12).

PAR enabled a deep exploration of the guidelines to improve the implementation of the WSE through the involvement of key stakeholders. To ensure active stakeholder engagement, support and participation, the research team utilised conducive platforms during their meetings and focus group discussions to ensure the inclusion of the diverse voices of the key stakeholders. The inclusion of the diverse voices of SMT members, teachers, SGB members and the SES, as key stakeholders, assisted in the co-creation and co-production of a diverse range of knowledges (Sharmil, Kelly, Bowden, Galletly, Cairney, Wilson, Hahn, Liu, Elliot, Else, Warrior, Wanganeen, Taylor, Wanganeen, Madrid, Warner, Brown & Crespign 2021:3). In utilising the diverse, co-created and co-produced range of knowledges, the key stakeholders discharged their roles respectfully and democratically, as pertinent to the improved implementation of the explored WSE guidelines.

The utilisation of PAR in the research empowered community members “to become critical inquirers of their lived experiences and producers of knowledge, rather than just consumers of knowledge” (Smolarek & Wolfgram, 2020:2). Employing the PAR approach in the research established a shared, collaborative environment for the SMT, teachers, SGB members and SES, as key stakeholders regarding learning and critical inquiry on the best way the explored WSE guidelines could be implemented (Vivona & Wofgram 2021:515). That was evident in group discussions, when stakeholders worked together as equal partners in the research process by sharing their lived experiences, beliefs and opinions; thus, everyone contributed to knowledge production pertinent to the research questions.

PAR embraced the notion of reflexivity. Reflexivity ensured working partnerships and good relationship dynamics among the stakeholders to achieve the effective implementation of the envisaged WSE guidelines in a research project. From the reflexive processes, the stakeholders benefitted tremendously from working according to grounded principles that supported power sharing, respect, trust, equality, flexible thinking, valuing relationships and reciprocal learning (Pettican, Goodman, Bryant, Beresford, Freeman, Gladwell, Kilbride & Speed 2023:203). The benefits of the co-production of knowledge in such stakeholder collaborations gave the assurance the working partnerships needed for effective implementation of the WSE guidelines, as a mutually defined aim of the research project, and where everyone connected with the exploration of the WSE guidelines for improved implementation played an active role, and the existing skills, experience and knowledge were valued and utilised (Pettican *et al.* 2023:204).

PAR supported collaborations that enhanced fruitful communication on the effective implementation of the explored WSE guidelines. Stakeholder meetings facilitated stakeholder collaborations and discussions based on vigorous dialogue, and decision-making entailing shared meaning making on the WSE guidelines as a social challenge (Callary, Gearity, Eagles & Szedlak 2023:390). The meetings, furthermore, emphasised the importance of awareness of sociocultural competencies, such as power control, diversity and social justice. The emphasis was on the premise that acknowledging and addressing the presence of power imbalances among the diverse co-researchers led to adaptations and had a positive impact on the implementation of the WSE guidelines, and hence social justice (Callary *et al.* 2023:387). That implies

that, once the different stakeholders had adapted well and felt equally important as partners in the research project, they were able to freely narrate their lived experiences, beliefs and values on the implementation of the explored WSE guidelines.

PAR embraced the notion of a commitment to democratic praxis. The SMT, teachers, SGB members and SES were assisted in the co-production of democratic knowledge during their collaborative meetings. PAR afforded these stakeholders an opportunity to contribute to the production of democratic knowledge regarding the effective implementation of the explored WSE guidelines, because they were the people most affected by the issue under inquiry, and therefore best placed to suggest solutions (Janes 2016:73). PAR also assisted in the development of collective critical consciousness. The practical knowledge produced from the stakeholders' critical consciousness was beneficial in that it made them aware of the need to explore the WSE guidelines for improved implementation and saw themselves as able to shape the programme and their learners' futures (De Oliveira 2023:290). Consequently, the practical concerns and voices of the voiceless were heard during the research process. This democratic praxis motivated them to express their lived experiences, beliefs and opinions on the best ways the explored WSE guidelines could implemented on and off school premises.

During the research process, inequitable and uncertain statuses of stakeholders were replaced by assurance of confidence and the building of trust to enhance active participation and collaboration. The practice assisted the stakeholders to unfold their individual and social potential, as pertinent to their involvement in the achievement of the research project objectives. The social interactions and positive collaboration among stakeholders enhanced critical self-reflection and the development of critical consciousness towards personal transformation in relation to policy discourses and implementation (Riedy, Parenti, Childers-McKee & Teehankee 2023:4). As a process that assisted individuals, through emancipation, to discover their own voice in a research project, the SMT, teachers, SGB members and SES were recognised as active social agents who transformed their school into a centre of excellence using the explored WSE guidelines (Martos-Garcia & Garcia-Puchades 2023:45). Section 6.6 will provide a summary of the study findings.

6.5 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The study revealed that the implementation of the WSE programme at the school was not up to scratch, because stakeholders had received minimal training, because the SMT exhibited lackadaisical performance and poor commitment, because inadequate communication hindered parental involvement in policy issues, and because of inadequate funding, which hampered the sustainability of resources required for a good standard of training.

Using the explored WSE guidelines in collaboration with the suggested strategies, the study outlined ways in which an improvement in the implementation of WSE policy at schools could be realised. The study embraced stakeholder collaboration and social interaction that encompassed motivation, teamwork, empowerment and critical reflection on the effective implementation of the WSE guidelines at the school. Motivation assisted in building passion among the stakeholders regarding the improved implementation of the WSE programme. Teamwork intensified the prevalence of trust through the utilisation of democratic principles. Through the application of democratic principles, stakeholders managed to involve one another in informed decision-making. Empowerment allowed the stakeholders to utilise their acquired research skills to assist the school to improve application of the explored WSE guidelines in accordance with their individual roles. Critical reflection assisted the stakeholders in the tightening of loose ends, where the school realised that improvement on the implementation of WSE guidelines was still a challenge, they could further enlisted the services of the district support team via the SES.

The use of PAR as the research approach meant that integrated knowledge translation among the stakeholders was effected, which ensured that the SMT, teachers, SGB members and SES, as decision-makers, collaborated in the research process with the aim of enhancing the relevance and use of research (Ormel, Salsberg, Hunt, Doucet, Hinton, Macaulay & Law 2020:2). The application of PAR assisted to expose the co-researchers' ideas and beliefs to scrutiny and critique among themselves (Brydon-Miller *et al.* 2020:108).

The SCT, in turn, supported the notion that knowledge is socially produced and co-constructed among the stakeholders through sharing experience, reflecting, interacting with their environment, participation, discussion, and sharing (Saleem,

Kausar & Deeba 2021:407). SCT allowed the SMT, teachers, SGB members and the SES to participate in the research project to discuss and share their lived experiences, beliefs and the newly co-created knowledge, to enhance implementation of the explored WSE guidelines at the school. Section 6.7 will delineate the limitations of the study.

6.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study focused on the exploration of the guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at secondary schools. The study was limited to only one secondary school as a research site. This qualitative research gathered only the experiences of stakeholders in a specific school context; therefore, the findings pertain to the context in which the study took place and the perceptions of a limited number of participants (Vazquez-Calatayud, Regaira-Martinez, Rumeu-Casares, Paloma-Mora, Esain & Oroviogoicoechea 2022:87). Furthermore, despite the generated data offering rich information, the findings cannot be replicated and generalised to include the circumstances of other schools (Boy, Uitermark & Wiersma 2018:38).

In terms of best practices, they study revealed that consistent and intensive monitoring of the programme assisted the school to be responsive to the monitoring challenges. Such a practice enhanced team work among the staff members of the school with the purpose of increasing the effectiveness, efficiency and institutionalisation of the programme. The benefit of continuous monitoring of the effectiveness of implementation of the guidelines to improve the implementation of the WSE policy endorsed teachers as agents of change. The principal was assisted to put in place an implementable plan that guided the staff for effectively implementing the guidelines in all the key areas of the WSE programme.

Using the PAR approach was a limitation, as some of participants were not at ease working with others in groups as equal co-researchers. That feeling was exacerbated by a lack of information on the research topic. One of the main limitations were the disruptions caused by some of the meetings, that had to be held online, being affected by electricity blackouts. Some participants started becoming impatient because meetings had to be reconvened repeatedly. Section 6.8 will outline recommendations for future research.

6.7 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could devise more applicable strategies for the effective implementation of the WSE guidelines, to augment the ones proposed by this study. Greater involvement of stakeholders, particularly SGB members and parents, in policy discussions could prevent inadequate knowledge becoming a hurdle and avoid the sporadic engagement of these important stakeholders. Section 6.9 will present a conclusion, including a summary of each chapter.

6.8 CONCLUSION

The study explored guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE at schools. This chapter presented the findings and recommendations of the study. The study overview revealed that implementation of the WSE guidelines was not effective, despite the principal being at helm of the process. Amongst the reasons for the ineffective implementation was inadequate stakeholder training, a lack of SGB involvement in policy discussions, failure by SMT members to manage the effective implementation of the WSE programme, inadequate funding and the programme being reduced to paperwork due to a need for compliance, which was at the forefront of the failure to adhere to the guidelines of the programme.

The findings, recommendations and threats posed by different components of the study were delineated. Strategies were proposed as solutions to the challenges that were identified. PAR methodology was applied as research approach to enhance democratic principles. PAR was relevant for the study, because it is committed to the generation of democratic knowledge for the analysis of issues, and to generating systemic change regarding the improved implementation of the WSE guidelines (Vaccarino-Ruiz, Gordon & Langhout 2022:441). As the saying goes, “it takes two to tango”, and SCT supported the use of PAR through the notion that all the stakeholders shared their lived experiences, beliefs and values in leveraging their power to effectively implement the explored WSE guidelines. The study’s limitations and aspects encouraging future research were also outlined.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A1: TRANSCRIPT 1 (INTRODUCTORY MEETING)

As a principal researcher, it is expected of me to introduce myself to the co-researchers in our first meeting. The co-researchers are also expected to introduce themselves. The meeting is further convened to outline the research topic: Exploring guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in Free State secondary schools. , and the five objectives of the study:

- To justify the need and challenges for the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE in secondary schools.
- To determine conditions conducive to the improvement of the implementation of WSE in schools.
- To develop the strategies to improve the implementation of WSE in secondary schools.
- To identify the roles of different stakeholders in improving the implementation of WSE in schools.
- To demonstrate the success of the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE in schools as informed by best practices.

The study uses Free Attitude Interviews (FAIs) in a form of focus groups on online Zoom platforms. The discussions in groups will be directed by the study's objectives. The meeting further seeks to explain why Participatory Action Research (PAR) as a methodology is adopted for this study. PAR is a methodology used in research, where as co-researchers collaborate in justifying a need to explore guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE in our schools.

Having identified a need, according to PAR, is then followed by a series of actions that are aimed at solving that need, which could also be called a problem. Those actions are undertaken by all of us as participants. Your ideas, opinions and shared experiences in this study will be recorded for further analysis. Your inferences will be confidential and your names, as well as those of your institutions be disguised for the purpose of your safety and this study. All qualitative data in the form of transcripts, notes and recorded versions will be safeguarded in my home as a hideout from any accessibility. Remember, you are obliged to pull off from this research at any stage if you feel your life is threatened. Go well until we meet in our next meeting as per the study's five objectives. The meeting is adjourned.

APPENDIX A2: TRANSCRIPT 2 (INTERVIEW PROTOCOL WITH A PRINCIPAL: ONE-ON- ONE)

I. Opening

a) **(Establish Rapport)** My name is Samuel Mlangeni and a registered Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Education student at the University of The Free State. I intend to conduct an interview with you on my research topic.

b) **(Purpose)** The title of my research is: Exploring guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in Free State secondary schools. Participatory Action Research (PAR) is adopted as a methodology for this research (**A description of PAR is outlined by a researcher to the co-researcher)**

c) I hope to use the data (information) collected from this interview to assist schools with an effective implementation of WSE regarding an improvement of learner outcomes through effective teaching and learning.

d) **(Time Line)** The interview will last for 90 minutes (1H30).

e) **(Ethical considerations)** Your names and those of your institutions will be disguised for the purpose of this research and your safety. This interview will be recorded with your consent. You are at liberty to withdraw at any stage of this research if you feel uncomfortable.

Transition: Our interactions and discussions will be directed by the study's five objectives:

II Body

A. Objective 1: To justify the challenges for the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in schools.

1.1 What are the challenges for an effective implementation of whole-school evaluation in schools?

Transition to the next objective.

B. Objective 2: To demonstrate the components of an exploration to improve the implementation of WSE in schools.

2.1 What are the components of the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE in schools?

Transition to the next objective.

C. Objective 3: To discuss the conditions which are conducive for an exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE in schools.

3.1 Which conditions are conducive for an exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE in schools?

Transition to the next objective.

D. Objective 4: To highlight possible threats, weaknesses, strengths and opportunities of exploring guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE in schools.

4.1 What are the possible strength, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of exploring guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE in schools?

Transition to the next objective.

E. Objective 5: To demonstrate the success of an exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE in schools as informed by best practices.

5.1 How can we demonstrate a success of an exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of WSE in schools as informed by best practices?

III Closing

A. **(Summarize)** Let me briefly summarize the information that I have recorded during our interview.

B. **(Main Rapport)** Well it has been a pleasure to interview you. I appreciate the time you took for this interview. Do you think is there anything else that would be helpful for us to know before we close?

C. **(Action to be taken)** Would it be alright to call you any time if I have any more questions? Thanks again. I am looking forward to meeting you again.

APPENDIX A3: TRANSCRIPT 3 (INTERVIEW PROTOCOL WITH THE SMT: FOCUS GROUPS)

I. Opening

a) **(Establish Rapport)** My name is Samuel Mlangeni and a registered Doctor of Philosophy's Degree in Education student at the University of The Free State. I intend to conduct an interview with you on my research topic.
b) **(Purpose)** The title of my research is: Exploring guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in Free State secondary schools. Participatory Action Research (PAR) is adopted as a methodology for this research (**A description of PAR is outlined by a researcher to co-researchers)**
c) I hope to use the data (information) collected from this interview to assist schools with an effective implementation of whole-school evaluation regarding an improvement of learner outcomes through effective teaching and learning.
d) **(Time Line)** The interview will last for 120 minutes (2Hrs).
e) **(Ethical considerations)** Your names and those of your institutions will be disguised for the purpose of this research and your safety. This interview will be recorded with your consent. You are at liberty to withdraw at any stage of this research if you feel uncomfortable.

Transition: Our interactioins and discussions will be directed by the study's five objectives:

II Body

A. Objective 1: To justify the challenges for the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in schools.

1.1 What are the challenges for the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in schools?

Transition to the next objective.

B. Objective 2: To demonstrate the components of an exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in schools.

2.1 What are the components of an exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in schools?

Transition to the next objective.

A. Objective 3: To discuss the conditions which are conducive for an exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation in schools.

3.1 Which conditions are conducive for an exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in schools?

Transition to the next objective.

B. Objective 4: To highlight possible threats, weaknesses, strengths and opportunities of exploring guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in schools.

4.1 What are the possible threats, weaknesses, strengths and opportunities of exploring guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in schools?

Transition to the next objective.

C. Objective 5: To demonstrate the success of exploring guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation as informed by best practices.

5.1 How can we demonstrate a success of an exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in schools as informed by best practices?

III Closing

a) **(Summarize)** Let me briefly summarize the information that I have recorded during our interview.

b) **(Main Rapport)** Well it has been a pleasure to interview you. I appreciate the time you took for this interview. Do you think is there anything else that would be helpful for us to know before we close?

c) (Action to be taken) Would it be alright to call you any time if I have any more questions? Thanks again. I am looking forward to meet you again.

APPENDIX A4: TRANSCRIPT 4 (INTERVIEW PROTOCOL WITH TEACHERS: FOCUS GROUPS)

I. Opening

a) **(Establish Rapport)** My name is Samuel Mlangeni and a registered Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Education student at the University of The Free State. I intend to conduct an interview with you on my research topic.

b) **(Purpose)** The aim of my research is: Exploring guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in schools. Participatory Action Research (PAR) is adopted as a methodology for this research (**A description of PAR is outlined by a researcher to co-researchers)**

c) I hope to use the data (information) collected from this interview to assist schools with the effective implementation of whole-school evaluation regarding learner outcomes through effective teaching and learning.

d) **(Time Line)** The interview will last for 90 minutes (1H30).

e) **(Ethical considerations)** Your names and those of your institutions will be disguised for the purpose of this research and your safety. This interview will be recorded with your consent. You are at liberty to withdraw at any stage of this research if you feel uncomfortable.

Transition: Our interactions and discussions will be directed by the study's five objectives:

II Body

A. Objective 1: To justify the challenges for the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation schools.

1.1 What are the challenges for an exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in schools?

Transition to the next objective.

B. Objective 2: To demonstrate the components of the exploration of guidelines to improve implementation of whole-school evaluation in schools.

2.1 What are the components of an exploration to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in schools?

Transition to the next objective.

C. Objective 3: To discuss the conditions which are conducive for an exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in schools.

3.1 Which conditions are conducive for an exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in schools?

Transition to the next objective.

D. Objective 4: To highlight possible threats, weaknesses, strengths and opportunities of exploring guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in schools.

4.1 What are the possible threats, weaknesses, strengths and opportunities of exploring guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in schools?

Transition to the next objective.

E. Objective 5: To demonstrate the success of exploring guideline to improve implementation of whole-school evaluation as informed by best practices.

5.1 How can we demonstrate a success of exploring guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in schools as informed by best practices?

III Closing

a) **(Summarize)** Let me briefly summarize the information that I have recorded during our interview.

b) **(Main Rapport)** Well it has been a pleasure to interview you. I appreciate the time you took for this interview. Do you think is there anything else that would be helpful for us to know before we close?

c) **(Action to be taken)** Would it be alright to call you any time if I have any more questions? Thanks again. I am looking forward to meet you again.

APPENDIX A5: TRANSCRIPT 5 (INTERVIEW PROTOCOL WITH SGB MEMBERS: FOCUS GROUPS)

I. Opening

A. **(Establish Rapport)** My name is Samuel Mlangeni and a registered Doctor of Philosophy's Degree in Education student at the University of The Free State. I intend to conduct an interview with you on my research topic.

B. (Purpose) The title of my research is: Exploring guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in Free State secondary schools. Participatory Action Research (PAR) is adopted as a methodology for this research (**A description of PAR is outlined by a researcher to co-researchers)**

C. I hope to use the data (information) collected from this interview to assist schools with an effective implementation of whole-school evaluation regarding an improvement of learner outcomes through effective teaching and learning.

D. (Time Line) The interview will last for 120 minutes (2Hrs).

E. (Ethical considerations) Your names and those of your institutions will be disguised for the purpose of this research and your safety. This interview will be recorded with your consent. You are at liberty to withdraw at any stage of this research if you feel uncomfortable.

Transition: Our interactions and discussions will be directed by the study's five objectives:

II Body

C. Objective 1: To justify the challenges for the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in schools.

1.1 What are the challenges for the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in schools?

Transition to the next objective.

D. Objective 2: To demonstrate the components of an exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in schools.

2.1 What are the components of an exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in schools?

Transition to the next objective.

D. Objective 3: To discuss the conditions which are conducive for an exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation in schools.

3.1 Which conditions are conducive for an exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in schools?

Transition to the next objective.

E. Objective 4: To highlight possible threats, weaknesses, strengths and opportunities of exploring guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in schools.

4.1 What are the possible threats, weaknesses, strengths and opportunities of exploring guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in schools?

Transition to the next objective.

F. Objective 5: To demonstrate the success of exploring guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation as informed by best practices.

5.1 How can we demonstrate a success of an exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in schools as informed by best practices?

III Closing

a) **(Summarize)** Let me briefly summarize the information that I have recorded during our interview.

b) **(Main Rapport)** Well it has been a pleasure to interview you. I appreciate the time you took for this interview. Do you think is there anything else that would be helpful for us to know before we close?

c) **(Action to be taken)** Would it be alright to call you any time if I have any more questions? Thanks again. I am looking forward to meet you again.

APPENDIX A6: TRANSCRIPT 6 (INTERVIEW PROTOCOL WITH SENIOR EDUCATION SPECIALIST (SES): FOCUS GROUPS)

I. Opening

A. **(Establish Rapport)** My name is Samuel Mlangeni and a registered Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Education student at the University of The Free State. I intend to conduct an interview with you on my research topic.

B. **(Purpose)** The aim of my research is: Exploring guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in schools. Participatory Action Research (PAR) is adopted as a methodology for this research (**A description of PAR is outlined by a researcher to co-researchers)**

C. I hope to use the data (information) collected from this interview to assist schools with the effective implementation of whole-school evaluation regarding the improvement of learner outcomes through effective teaching and learning.

D. **(Time Line)** The interview will last for 120 minutes (2Hrs).

E. **(Ethical considerations)** Your names and those of your institutions will be disguised for the purpose of this research and your safety. This interview will be recorded with your consent. You are at liberty to withdraw at any stage of this research if you feel uncomfortable.

Transition: Our interactions and discussions will be directed by the study's five objectives:

II Body

A. Objective 1: To justify the challenges for the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in schools.

1.1 What are the challenges for an exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in schools?

Transition to the next objective.

B. Objective 2: To demonstrate the components of an exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in schools.

2.1 What are the components of an exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in schools?

Transition to the next objective.

C. Objective 3: To discuss the conditions which are conducive for an exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in schools.

3.1 Which conditions are conducive for an exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in schools?

Transition to the next objective.

D. Objective 4: To highlight possible threats, weaknesses, strengths and opportunities for an exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in schools.

4.1 What are the possible threats, weaknesses, strengths and opportunities of an exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in schools?

Transition to the next objective.

E. Objective 5: To demonstrate the success of an exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation as informed by best practices.

5.1 How can we demonstrate a success of an exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in schools as informed by best practices?

III Closing

A. **(Summarize)** Let me briefly summarize the information that I have recorded during our interview.

B. **(Main Rapport)** Well it has been a pleasure to interview you. I appreciate the time you took for this interview. Do you think is there anything else that would be helpful for us to know before we close?

C. **(Action to be taken)** Would it be alright to call you any time if I have any more questions? Thanks again. I am looking forward to meet you again.

APPENDIX B1: CONSENT LETTER FOR THE PRINCIPAL

RESEARCH STUDY INFORMATION LEAFLET AND CONSENT FORM

CONSENT LETTER TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

DATE

01 September 2022-28 September 2022

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

Exploring guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in Free State secondary schools.

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

Mr Lehlohonolo Samuel Mlangeni 2003095326 0827421199

FACULTY AND DEPARTMENT:

Name of Faculty: Education

Name of Department: Education management and leadership

STUDY LEADER(S) NAME AND CONTACT NUMBER:

Name of Study Leader (UFS staff member): Dr. Ntombizandile Gcelu

Contact number: 0723773177 / 0710444316/ 0514012909

WHAT IS THE AIM / PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

The research project seeks to explore guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in Free State secondary schools. This will assist in a creation and provision of sustainable quality education.

WHO IS DOING THE RESEARCH?

I am Mr Lehlohonolo Samuel Mlangeni. I have enrolled for a Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Education with the University of the Free State.

HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICAL APPROVAL?

This study has received approval from the Research Ethics Committee of UFS. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher.

Approval number: *Insert approval number*

AN INVITATAION TO PARTICPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

Your school is invited to take part in this important and valuable research project.

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL WITH A DISTRICT OFFICIAL: FOCUS GROUP

I. Opening

F. *(Establish Rapport) [Waving a hand] My name is Samuel Mlangeni and a registered Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Education student at the University of The Free State. I would like to conduct an interview with you on my research topic.*
G. *(Purpose) The title of my research is: Exploring guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in Free State secondary schools. Participatory Action Research (PAR) is adopted as a methodology for this research (A description of PAR is outlined by a researcher to co-researchers)*
H. *I hope to use the data (information) collected from this interview to assist schools with an effective implementation of whole-school evaluation regarding an improvement of learner outcomes through effective teaching and learning.*
I. *(Time Line) The interview will last for 120 minutes (2Hrs).*
J. *(Ethical considerations) Your names and those of your institutions will be disguised for the purpose of this research and your safety. This interview will be recorded with your consent. You are at liberty to withdraw at any stage of this research if you feel uncomfortable.*

Transition: *Our interactions and discussions will be directed by the study's five objectives:*

II Body

E. *Objective 1: To justify the challenges for the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in schools.*

1.1 What are the challenges for the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in schools?

Transition to the next objective.

F. *Objective 2: To demonstrate the components of an exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in schools.*

2.1 What are the components of an exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in schools?

Transition to the next objective.

G. *Objective 3: To discuss the conditions which are conducive for an exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation in schools.*

3.1 Which conditions are conducive for an exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in schools?

Transition to the next objective.

H. *Objective 4: To highlight possible threats, weaknesses, strengths and opportunities of exploring guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in schools.*

4.1 What are the possible threats, weaknesses, strengths and opportunities of exploring guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in schools?

Transition to the next objective.

I. *Objective 5: To demonstrate the success of exploring guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation as informed by best practices.*

5.1 How can we demonstrate a success of an exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in schools as informed by best practices?

III Closing

A. *(Summarize)* *Let me briefly summarize the information that I have recorded during our interview.*
B. *(Main Rapport)* *Well it has been a pleasure to interview you. I appreciate the time you took for this interview. Do you think is there anything else that would be helpful for us to know before we close?*

C. *(Action to be taken) Would it be alright to call you any time if I have any more questions? Thanks again. I am looking forward to meet you again.*

CAN THE PARTICIPANT WITHDRAW FROM THE STUDY?

Statement that participation is voluntary and that there is no penalty or loss of benefit for non-participation. Being in this study is voluntary, and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. Although the participation in this research is voluntary and consensual, and you are also at liberty to withdraw at any time if you feel discomfort, it is expected of you to finish off your views, experiences and beliefs you shall have put forward in other to assist the success of the study.

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

The participation in this study is voluntary and such no benefits have been allocated for the participants. The participants assist the school and the community with the effective implementation of the whole-school evaluation regarding the provision of quality education and hence the improvement of quality life. Names of participants and the participating secondary school will be disguised as pseudonyms for assurance of anonymity. In order to ensure confidentiality, data will be safeguarded by the removal of any identifiers.

WHAT IS THE ANTICIPATED INCONVENIENCE OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

The presence of covid-19 pandemic. The use of non-pharmaceutical protocols like sanitation, mask-wearing and social distancing. I will advise the participants that everyone's opinions with respect to the research topic are invaluable and his or hers, and have nothing to do with their personalities. No opinion is right or wrong. Medical assistance will be sought with the relevant medical professionals. I, as a principal researcher, will foot the bills of the medication assistance as the study is not sponsored.

WILL WHAT I SAY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

Participants will be assured of concealment of their credentials as maintenance of anonymity. Pseudonyms will be used in order to protect their names. All these steps will be thoroughly explained to

the participants before they consent to take part in a research. Nevertheless the participants will be reminded of their rights to withdraw from the research if they feel their rights have been infringed on. In terms of data storage, a protocol will be communicated to the participants prior to data generation and analysis. All qualitative data in the form of transcripts, notes, and recorded audio-visual versions will be locked up in my home for prevention of any form of unauthorised access. Through your permission the study may avail your credentials to the third party to be used for other purposes, e.g. research report, journal articles, conference presentation, etc. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report. Focus groups are semi-structured interviews on the interaction among the group members to enhance the collection of deep, strongly held beliefs and perspectives. Focus group meetings are used to collect rich, detailed data. They occur between two or more people. Focus groups consist of open-ended questions. While every effort will be made by the researcher to ensure that you will not be connected to the information that you share during the focus group, I cannot guarantee that other participants in the focus group will treat information confidentially. I shall, however, encourage all participants to do so. For this reason I advise you not to disclose personally sensitive information in the focus group. The rights of the participants will be protected at all times. Participation of participants will be purely voluntary and consensual. Participants will be informed of their rights to withdraw from the research at any time.

HOW WILL THE INFORMATION BE STORED AND ULTIMATELY DESTROYED?

Hard copies of your answers will be stored by the researcher for a period of five years in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet in my home for future research or academic purposes; electronic information will be stored on a password protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subjected to further Research Ethics Review and approval. I will make a point that a reputable company is hired to destroy the hard copies and electronic data. This step will ensure that the remanence of such data is totally disposed of. By disposing of the electronic data through recycling or deleting may result in the remanence of such a file being illegally retained. I will advise the participants that everyone's opinions with respect to the research topic are invaluable and his or hers, and have nothing to do with their personalities. No opinion is right or wrong. Medical assistance will be sought from reputable medical authorities.

WILL I RECEIVE PAYMENT OR ANY INCENTIVES FOR PARTICPATING IN THIS STUDY?

Participants will not be paid to participate in the research. If, in exceptional cases, a participant needs a financial assistance to reach the venue of the research, or some refreshments to sustain the duration of the interviews or so, I will gladly foot the bills as this research is not sponsored.

HOW WILL THE PARTICIPANT BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS / RESULTS OF THE STUDY?

If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact Mr. Lehlohonolo Samuel Mlangeni on 0827421199 or fax number :0862196870 or email address: mlangenils@gmail.com. The findings are accessible for 01 January 2023. Should you require any further information or want to contact the researcher about any aspect of this study, please contact Mr. Mlangeni on 0827421199, mlangenils@gmail.com, and fax number: 0862196870.Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact Dr. Gcelu on 0723773177, including email address: GceluN@ufs.ac.za, tel: 0514012909. In the nutshell of this study, the date of the dissemination of the research findings is a proposed one, pending to the success and completion of the whole study. The study's successful and timeous completion depends on the availability of the research participants. Some participants may be skeptical of the contribution of other participants. I will inform the culprits of their invaluable contribution to the study by emphasising that there is correct or wrong response in a research. Include any risk that may come from others identifying the person's participation in the research. I will summon the medical assistance from the health department. Describe the measures that will be taken if injury or harm attributable to the study occurs.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX B 2: CONSENT LETTER FOR TEACHERS

RESEARCH STUDY INFORMATION LEAFLET AND CONSENT FORM

CONSENT LETTER TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

DATE

01 September 2022-28 September 2022

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

Exploring guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in Free State secondary schools.

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

Mr Lehlohonolo Samuel Mlangeni 2003095326 0827421199

FACULTY AND DEPARTMENT:

Name of Faculty: Education

Name of Department: Education management and leadership

STUDY LEADER(S) NAME AND CONTACT NUMBER:

Name of Study Leader (UFS staff member): Dr. Ntombizandile Gcelu

Contact number: 0723773177 / 0710444316/ 0514012909

WHAT IS THE AIM / PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

The research project seeks to explore guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in Free State secondary schools. This will assist in a creation and provision of sustainable quality education.

WHO IS DOING THE RESEARCH?

I am Mr Lehlohonolo Samuel Mlangeni. I have enrolled for a Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Education with the University of the Free State.

HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICAL APPROVAL?

This study has received approval from the Research Ethics Committee of UFS. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher.

Approval number: *Insert approval number*

AN INVITATAION TO PARTICPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

You are cordially invited to take part in this important and valuable research project.

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL WITH A DISTRICT OFFICIAL: FOCUS GROUP

I. Opening

K. ***(Establish Rapport)*** *My name is Samuel Mlangeni and a registered Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Education student at the University of The Free State. I would like to conduct an interview with you on my research topic.*
L. ***(Purpose)*** *The title of my research is: Exploring guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in Free State secondary schools. Participatory Action Research (PAR) is adopted as a methodology for this research (**A description of PAR is outlined by a researcher to co-researchers)***
M. *I hope to use the data (information) collected from this interview to assist schools with an effective implementation of whole-school evaluation regarding an improvement of learner outcomes through effective teaching and learning.*
N. ***(Time Line)*** *The interview will last for 120 minutes (2Hrs).*
O. ***(Ethical considerations)*** *Your names and those of your institutions will be disguised for the purpose of this research and your safety. This interview will be recorded with your consent. You are at liberty to withdraw at any stage of this research if you feel uncomfortable.*

Transition: *Our interactions and discussions will be directed by the study's five objectives:*

II Body

G. *Objective 1: To justify the challenges for the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in schools.*

1.1 What are the challenges for the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in schools?

Transition to the next objective.

H. *Objective 2: To demonstrate the components of an exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in schools.*

2.1 What are the components of an exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in schools?

Transition to the next objective.

J. *Objective 3: To discuss the conditions which are conducive for an exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation in schools.*

3.1 Which conditions are conducive for an exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in schools?

Transition to the next objective.

K. *Objective 4: To highlight possible threats, weaknesses, strengths and opportunities of exploring guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in schools.*

4.1 What are the possible threats, weaknesses, strengths and opportunities of exploring guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in schools?

Transition to the next objective.

L. *Objective 5: To demonstrate the success of exploring guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation as informed by best practices.*

5.1 How can we demonstrate a success of an exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in schools as informed by best practices?

III Closing

D. *(Summarize)* *Let me briefly summarize the information that I have recorded during our interview.*
E. *(Main Rapport)* *Well it has been a pleasure to interview you. I appreciate the time you took for this interview. Do you think is there anything else that would be helpful for us to know before we close?*

F. *(Action to be taken) Would it be alright to call you any time if I have any more questions? Thanks again. I am looking forward to meet you again.*

CAN THE PARTICIPANT WITHDRAW FROM THE STUDY?

Being in this study is voluntary, and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. Although the participation in this research is voluntary and consensual, and you are also at liberty to withdraw at any time if you feel discomfort, it is expected of you to finish off your views, experiences and beliefs you shall have put forward in other to assist the success of the study.

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

The participation in this study is voluntary and such no benefits have been allocated for the participants. The participants assist the school and the community with the effective implementation of the whole-school evaluation regarding the provision of quality education and hence the improvement of quality life. Names of participants and the participating secondary school will be disguised as pseudonyms for assurance of anonymity. In order to ensure confidentiality, data will be safeguarded by the removal of any identifiers.

WHAT IS THE ANTICIPATED INCONVENIENCE OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

The presence of covid-19 pandemic. The use of non-pharmaceutical protocols like sanitation, mask-wearing and social distancing. I will advise the participants that everyone's opinions with respect to the research topic are invaluable and his or hers, and have nothing to do with their personalities. No opinion is right or wrong. Medical assistance will be sought with the relevant medical professionals. I, as a principal researcher, will foot the bills of the medication assistance as the study is not sponsored.

WILL WHAT I SAY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

Participants will be assured of concealment of their credentials as maintenance of anonymity. Pseudonyms will be used in order to protect their names. All these steps will be thoroughly explained to the participants before they consent to take part in a research. Nevertheless the participants will be

reminded of their rights to withdraw from the research if they feel their rights have been infringed on. In terms of data storage, a protocol will be communicated to the participants prior to data generation and analysis. All qualitative data in the form of transcripts, notes, and recorded audio versions will be locked up in my home for prevention of any form of unauthorised access. Through your permission the study may avail your credentials to the third party to be used for other purposes, e.g. research report, journal articles, conference presentation, etc. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report. Focus groups are semi-structured interviews on the interaction among the group members to enhance the collection of deep, strongly held beliefs and perspectives. Focus group meetings are used to collect rich, detailed data. They occur between two or more people. Focus groups consist of open-ended questions. While every effort will be made by the researcher to ensure that you will be connected to the information that you share during the focus group, I can guarantee that other participants in the focus group will treat information confidentially. I shall encourage all participants to do so. For this reason I advise you not to disclose personally sensitive information in the focus group. The rights of the participants will be protected at all times. Participation of participants will be purely voluntary and consensual. Participants will be informed of their rights to withdraw from the research at any time.

HOW WILL THE INFORMATION BE STORED AND ULTIMATELY DESTROYED?

Hard copies of your answers will be stored by the researcher for a period of five years in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet in my home for future research or academic purposes; electronic information will be stored on a password protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subjected to further Research Ethics Review and approval. I will make a point that a reputable company is hired to destroy the hard copies and electronic data. This step will ensure that the remanence of such data is totally disposed of. By disposing of the electronic data through recycling or deleting may result in the remanence of such a file being illegally retained. I will advise the participants that everyone's opinions with respect to the research topic are invaluable and his or hers, and have nothing to do with their personalities. No opinion is right or wrong. Medical assistance will be sought from reputable medical authorities.

WILL I RECEIVE PAYMENT OR ANY INCENTIVES FOR PARTICPATING IN THIS STUDY?

Participants will not be paid to participate in the research. If, in exceptional cases, a participant needs a financial assistance to reach the venue of the research, or some refreshments to sustain the duration of the interviews or so, I will gladly foot the bills as this research is not sponsored.

HOW WILL THE PARTICIPANT BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS / RESULTS OF THE STUDY?

To be informed of the final research findings, please contact Mr. Lehlohonolo Samuel Mlangeni on 0827421199 or fax number :0862196870 or email address: mlangenils@gmail.com. The findings are accessible for 01 January 2023. Should you require any further information or want to contact the researcher about any aspect of this study, please contact Mr. Mlangeni on 0827421199, mlangenils@gmail.com, and fax number: 0862196870.Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact Dr. Gcelu on 0723773177, including email address: GceluN@ufs.ac.za, tel: 0514012909. In the nutshell of this study, the date of the dissemination of the research findings is a proposed one, pending to the success and completion of the whole study. The study's successful and timeous completion depends on the availability of the research participants. Some participants may be skeptical of the contribution of other participants. I will inform the culprits of their invaluable contribution to the study by emphasising that there is correct or wrong response in a research. I will summon the medical assistance from the health department.

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

Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX B 3: CONSENT LETTER FOR SGB MEMBERS

RESEARCH STUDY INFORMATION LEAFLET AND CONSENT FORM

CONSENT LETTER TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

DATE

01 September 2022-28 September 2022

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

Exploring guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in Free State secondary schools.

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

Mr Lehlohonolo Samuel Mlangeni 2003095326 0827421199

FACULTY AND DEPARTMENT:

Name of Faculty: Education

Name of Department: Education management and leadership

STUDY LEADER(S) NAME AND CONTACT NUMBER:

Name of Study Leader (UFS staff member): Dr. Ntombizandile Gcelu

Contact number: 0723773177 / 0710444316/ 0514012909

WHAT IS THE AIM / PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

The research project seeks to explore guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in Free State secondary schools. This will assist in a creation and provision of sustainable quality education.

WHO IS DOING THE RESEARCH?

I am Mr Lehlohonolo Samuel Mlangeni. I have enrolled for a Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Education with the University of the Free State.

HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICAL APPROVAL?

This study has received approval from the Research Ethics Committee of UFS. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher.

Approval number: *Insert approval number*

AN INVITATAION TO PARTICPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

You are cordially invited to take part in this important and valuable research project.

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL WITH A DISTRICT OFFICIAL: FOCUS GROUP

I. Opening

- *P.* *(Establish Rapport)* *My name is Samuel Mlangeni and a registered Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Education student at the University of The Free State. I would like to conduct an interview with you on my research topic.*
- *Q.* *(Purpose)* *The title of my research is: Exploring guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in Free State secondary schools. Participatory Action Research (PAR) is adopted as a methodology for this research (A description of PAR is outlined by a researcher to co-researchers)*
- *R.* *I hope to use the data (information) collected from this interview to assist schools with an effective implementation of whole-school evaluation regarding an improvement of learner outcomes through effective teaching and learning.*
- *S.* *(Time Line)* *The interview will last for 120 minutes (2Hrs).*
- *T.* *(Ethical considerations)* *Your names and those of your institutions will be disguised for the purpose of this research and your safety. This interview will be recorded with your consent. You are at liberty to withdraw at any stage of this research if you feel uncomfortable.*

Transition: *Our interactions and discussions will be directed by the study's five objectives:*

II Body

I. *Objective 1: To justify the challenges for the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in schools.*

1.1 What are the challenges for the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in schools?

Transition to the next objective.

J. *Objective 2: To demonstrate the components of an exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in schools.*

2.1 What are the components of an exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in schools?

Transition to the next objective.

M. *Objective 3: To discuss the conditions which are conducive for an exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation in schools.*

3.1 Which conditions are conducive for an exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in schools?

Transition to the next objective.

N. *Objective 4: To highlight possible threats, weaknesses, strengths and opportunities of exploring guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in schools.*

4.1 What are the possible threats, weaknesses, strengths and opportunities of exploring guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in schools?

Transition to the next objective.

O. *Objective 5: To demonstrate the success of exploring guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation as informed by best practices.*

5.1 How can we demonstrate a success of an exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in schools as informed by best practices?

III Closing

G. *(Summarize)* *Let me briefly summarize the information that I have recorded during our interview.*
H. *(Main Rapport)* *Well it has been a pleasure to interview you. I appreciate the time you took for this interview. Do you think is there anything else that would be helpful for us to know before we close?*

I. *(Action to be taken) Would it be alright to call you any time if I have any more questions? Thanks again. I am looking forward to meet you again.*

CAN THE PARTICIPANT WITHDRAW FROM THE STUDY?

Being in this study is voluntary, and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. Although the participation in this research is voluntary and consensual, and you are also at liberty to withdraw at any time if you feel discomfort, it is expected of you to finish off your views, experiences and beliefs you shall have put forward in other to assist the success of the study.

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

The participation in this study is voluntary and such no benefits have been allocated for the participants. The participants assist the school and the community with the effective implementation of the whole-school evaluation regarding the provision of quality education and hence the improvement of quality life. Names of participants and the participating secondary school will be disguised as pseudonyms for assurance of anonymity. In order to ensure confidentiality, data will be safeguarded by the removal of any identifiers.

WHAT IS THE ANTICIPATED INCONVENIENCE OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

The presence of covid-19 pandemic. The use of non-pharmaceutical protocols like sanitation, mask-wearing and social distancing. I will advise the participants that everyone's opinions with respect to the research topic are invaluable and his or hers, and have nothing to do with their personalities. No opinion is right or wrong. Medical assistance will be sought with the relevant medical professionals. I, as a principal researcher, will foot the bills of the medication assistance as the study is not sponsored.

WILL WHAT I SAY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

Participants will be assured of concealment of their credentials as maintenance of anonymity. Pseudonyms will be used in order to protect their names. All these steps will be thoroughly explained to the participants before they consent to take part in a research. Nevertheless the participants will be

reminded of their rights to withdraw from the research if they feel their rights have been infringed on. In terms of data storage, a protocol will be communicated to the participants prior to data generation and analysis. All qualitative data in the form of transcripts, notes, and recorded audio versions will be locked up in my home for prevention of any form of unauthorised access. Through your permission the study may avail your credentials to the third party to be used for other purposes, e.g. research report, journal articles, conference presentation, etc. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report. Focus groups are semi-structured interviews on the interaction among the group members to enhance the collection of deep, strongly held beliefs and perspectives. Focus group meetings are used to collect rich, detailed data. They occur between two or more people. Focus groups consist of open-ended questions. While every effort will be made by the researcher to ensure that you will be connected to the information that you share during the focus group, I can guarantee that other participants in the focus group will treat information confidentially. I shall encourage all participants to maintain confidentiality. For this reason I advise you not to disclose personally sensitive information in the focus group. The rights of the participants will be protected at all times. Participation of participants will be purely voluntary and consensual. Participants will be informed of their rights to withdraw from the research at any time.

HOW WILL THE INFORMATION BE STORED AND ULTIMATELY DESTROYED?

Hard copies of your answers will be stored by the researcher for a period of five years in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet in my home for future research or academic purposes; electronic information will be stored on a password protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subjected to further Research Ethics Review and approval. I will make a point that a reputable company is hired to destroy the hard copies and electronic data. This step will ensure that the remanence of such data is totally disposed of. By disposing of the electronic data through recycling or deleting may result in the remanence of such a file being illegally retained. I will advise the participants that everyone's opinions with respect to the research topic are invaluable and his or hers, and have nothing to do with their personalities. No opinion is right or wrong. Medical assistance will be sought from reputable medical authorities.

WILL I RECEIVE PAYMENT OR ANY INCENTIVES FOR PARTICPATING IN THIS STUDY?

Participants will not be paid to participate in the research. If, in exceptional cases, a participant needs a financial assistance to reach the venue of the research, or some refreshments to sustain the duration of the interviews or so, I will gladly foot the bills as this research is not sponsored.

HOW WILL THE PARTICIPANT BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS / RESULTS OF THE STUDY?

To be informed of the final research findings, please contact Mr. Lehlohonolo Samuel Mlangeni on 0827421199 or fax number :0862196870 or email address: mlangenils@gmail.com. The findings are accessible for 01 January 2023. Should you require any further information or want to contact the researcher about any aspect of this study, please contact Mr. Mlangeni on 0827421199, mlangenils@gmail.com, and fax number: 0862196870.Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact Dr. Gcelu on 0723773177, including email address: GceluN@ufs.ac.za, tel: 0514012909. In the nutshell of this study, the date of the dissemination of the research findings is a proposed one, pending to the success and completion of the whole study. The study's successful and timeous completion depends on the availability of the research participants. Some participants may be skeptical of the contribution of other participants. I will inform the culprits of their invaluable contribution to the study by emphasising that there is correct or wrong response in a research. I will summon the medical assistance from the health department.

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

Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX B4: CONSENT LETTER FOR RECORDING SPECIFIC DATA GENERATION METHOD

ENQ: MLANGENI L.S.
CELL: 082 742 1199

35 PRINSLO STREET
FAUNA
BLOEMFONTEIN
9301

CONSENT LETTER FOR RECORDING OF SPECIFIC DATA GENERATION METHOD

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

The research will be conducted from 01 September 2022 to 28 September 2022, and outside teaching-learning time. The commencement of a research is subjected to an approval from the university's Ethical Committee and the Free State Provincial Department of Education.

I, _____ (participant name), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable). I am aware that the findings of this study will be anonymously processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings.

I agree to the recording of the *insert specific data collection method*.

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Signature of Participant: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Researcher: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX B 6: CONSENT LETTER FOR THE SENIOR EDUCATION SPECIALIST

RESEARCH STUDY INFORMATION LEAFLET AND CONSENT FORM

CONSENT LETTER TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

DATE

01 September 2022-28 September 2022

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

Exploring guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in Free State secondary schools.

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

Mr Lehlohonolo Samuel Mlangeni 2003095326 0827421199

FACULTY AND DEPARTMENT:

Name of Faculty: Education

Name of Department: Education management and leadership

STUDY LEADER(S) NAME AND CONTACT NUMBER:

Name of Study Leader (UFS staff member): Dr. Ntombizandile Gcelu

Contact number: 0723773177 / 0710444316/ 0514012909

WHAT IS THE AIM / PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

The research project seeks to explore guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in Free State secondary schools. This will assist in a creation and provision of sustainable quality education.

WHO IS DOING THE RESEARCH?

I am Mr Lehlohonolo Samuel Mlangeni. I have enrolled for a Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Education with the University of the Free State.

HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICAL APPROVAL?

This study has received approval from the Research Ethics Committee of UFS. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher.

Approval number: *Insert approval number*

WHY ARE YOU INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT?

The participant is best suited because she is overseeing the whole-school evaluation at the district level. The circuit manager assisted with the contact numbers. She is the most senior personnel in the department that oversees the quality assurance at district and school levels. There will be a total of fifteen (15) participants all in all. This sample size is suitable for this qualitative research project.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?

Collaboration of participants to share lived experiences, beliefs and opinions pertinent to the objectives of the study.

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL WITH A DISTRICT OFFICIAL: FOCUS GROUP

I. Opening

U. *(Establish Rapport) My name is Samuel Mlangeni and a registered Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Education student at the University of The Free State. I would like to conduct an interview with you on my research topic.*

V. *(Purpose)* *The title of my research is: Exploring guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in Free State secondary schools. Participatory Action Research (PAR) is adopted as a methodology for this research (**A description of PAR is outlined by a researcher to co-researchers)*

W. *I hope to use the data (information) collected from this interview to assist schools with an effective implementation of whole-school evaluation regarding an improvement of learner outcomes through effective teaching and learning.*

X. *(Time Line)* *The interview will last for 120 minutes (2Hrs).*

Y. *(Ethical considerations)* *Your names and those of your institutions will be disguised for the purpose of this research and your safety. This interview will be recorded with your consent. You are at liberty to withdraw at any stage of this research if you feel uncomfortable.*

Transition: *Our interactioins and discussions will be directed by the study's five objectives:*

II Body

K. *Objective 1: To justify the challenges for the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in schools.*

1.1 What are the challenges for the exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in schools?

Transition to the next objective.

L. *Objective 2: To demonstrate the components of an exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in schools.*

2.1 What are the components of an exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in schools?

Transition to the next objective.

P. *Objective 3: To discuss the conditions which are conducive for an exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation in schools.*

3.1 Which conditions are conducive for an exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in schools?

Transition to the next objective.

Q. *Objective 4: To highlight possible threats, weaknesses, strengths and opportunities of exploring guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in schools.*

4.1 What are the possible threats, weaknesses, strengths and opportunities of exploring guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in schools?

Transition to the next objective.

R. *Objective 5: To demonstrate the success of exploring guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation as informed by best practices.*

5.1 How can we demonstrate a success of an exploration of guidelines to improve the implementation of whole-school evaluation in schools as informed by best practices?

III Closing

J. *(Summarize) Let me briefly summarize the information that I have recorded during our interview.*
K. *(Main Rapport) Well it has been a pleasure to interview you. I appreciate the time you took for this interview. Do you think is there anything else that would be helpful for us to know before we close?*
L. *(Action to be taken) Would it be alright to call you any time if I have any more questions? Thanks again. I am looking forward to meet you again.*

CAN THE PARTICIPANT WITHDRAW FROM THE STUDY?

Statement that participation is voluntary and that there is no penalty or loss of benefit for non-participation. Being in this study is voluntary, and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. Although the participation in this research is voluntary and consensual, and you are also at liberty to withdraw at any time if you feel discomfort, it is expected of you to finish off your views, experiences and beliefs you shall have put forward in other to assist the success of the study.

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

The participation in this study is voluntary and such no benefits have been allocated for the participants. The participants assist the school and the community with the effective implementation of the whole-school evaluation regarding the provision of quality education and hence the improvement of quality life. Names of participants and the participating secondary school will be disguised as pseudonyms for assurance of anonymity. In order to ensure confidentiality, data will be safeguarded by the removal of any identifiers.

WHAT IS THE ANTICIPATED INCONVENIENCE OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

The presence of covid-19 pandemic. The use of non-pharmaceutical protocols like sanitation, mask-wearing and social distancing. I will advise the participants that everyone's opinions with respect to the research topic are invaluable and his or hers, and have nothing to do with their personalities. No opinion

is right or wrong. Medical assistance will be sought with the relevant medical professionals. I, as a principal researcher, will foot the bills of the medication assistance as the study is not sponsored.

WILL WHAT I SAY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

Participants will be assured of concealment of their credentials as maintenance of anonymity. Pseudonyms will be used in order to protect their names. All these steps will be thoroughly explained to the participants before they consent to take part in a research. Nevertheless the participants will be reminded of their rights to withdraw from the research if they feel their rights have been infringed on. In terms of data storage, a protocol will be communicated to the participants prior to data generation and analysis. All qualitative data in the form of transcripts, notes, and recorded audio-visual versions will be locked up in my home for prevention of any form of unauthorised access. Through your permission the study may avail your credentials to the third party to be used for other purposes, e.g. research report, journal articles, conference presentation, etc. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report. Focus groups are semi-structured interviews on the interaction among the group members to enhance the collection of deep, strongly held beliefs and perspectives. Focus group meetings are used to collect rich, detailed data. They occur between two or more people. Focus groups consist of open-ended questions. While every effort will be made by the researcher to ensure that you will be connected to the information that you share during the focus group, I can guarantee that other participants in the focus group will treat information confidentially. I shall encourage all participants to do maintain confidentiality. For this reason I advise you not to disclose personally sensitive information in the focus group. The rights of the participants will be protected at all times. Participation of participants will be purely voluntary and consensual. Participants will be informed of their rights to withdraw from the research at any time.

HOW WILL THE INFORMATION BE STORED AND ULTIMATELY DESTROYED?

Hard copies of your answers will be stored by the researcher for a period of five years in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet in my home for future research or academic purposes; electronic information will be stored on a password protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subjected to further Research Ethics Review and approval. I will make a point that a reputable company is hired to destroy the hard copies and electronic data. This step will ensure that the remanence of such data is totally disposed of. By disposing of the electronic data through recycling or deleting may result in the remanence of such a file being illegally retained. I will advise the participants that everyone's opinions

with respect to the research topic are invaluable and his or hers, and have nothing to do with their personalities. No opinion is right or wrong. Medical assistance will be sought from reputable medical authorities.

WILL I RECEIVE PAYMENT OR ANY INCENTIVES FOR PARTICPATING IN THIS STUDY?

Participants will not be paid to participate in the research. If, in exceptional cases, a participant needs a financial assistance to reach the venue of the research, or some refreshments to sustain the duration of the interviews or so, I will gladly foot the bills

HOW WILL THE PARTICIPANT BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS / RESULTS OF THE STUDY?

To be informed of the final research findings, please contact Mr. Lehlohonolo Samuel Mlangeni on 0827421199 or fax number :0862196870 or email address: mlangenils@gmail.com. The findings are accessible for 01 January 2023. Should you require any further information or want to contact the researcher about any aspect of this study, please contact Mr. Mlangeni on 0827421199, mlangenils@gmail.com, and fax number: 0862196870.Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact Dr. Gcelu on 0723773177, including email address: GceluN@ufs.ac.za, tel: 0514012909. In the nutshell of this study, the date of the dissemination of the research findings is a proposed one, pending to the success and completion of the whole study. The study's successful and timeous completion depends on the availability of the research participants. Some participants may be skeptical of the contribution of other participants. I will inform the culprits of their invaluable contribution to the study by emphasising that there is correct or wrong response in a research. I will summon the medical assistance from the health department.

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

Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX C1: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

education
Department of Education
FREE STATE PROVINCE

Enquiries: M.Z Thango
Ref: Notification of research: L.S. Mangeni
Tel. 051 404 8808
Email: MZ.Thango@fseducation.gov.za

District Director
Motheo District
Lejweleputswa District

Dear Mr. Moloi and Ms. Zonke

NOTIFICATION OF RESEARCH: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH PROJECT IN MOTHEO AND LEJWELEPUTSWA DISTRICTS

This letter serves to inform you that Mr. L.S. Mangeni has been granted permission to conduct research in the Motheo and Lejweleputswa Districts under the auspices of the University of the Free State. The details in relation to the research project are as follows:

Topic: Exploring guidelines to improve implementation of whole-school evaluation in Free State secondary schools.

1. **List of schools involved:** Akademia High School, Kagisano Secondary School, Kopanong Secondary School, Naledi Ya Botjhabela Secondary School and Tsoseletso Secondary School.

2. **Target Population:** One District official (SES: Quality Assurance), one school principal, one deputy principal, five Departmental Heads and five teachers teaching grades 8-12 at the selected schools.

3. **Period of research:** From the date of signature of this letter until 30 September 2022. Please note the department does not allow any research to be conducted during the fourth term (quarter) of the academic year nor during normal school hours. The researcher is expected to request permission from the school principals to conduct research at schools.

4. **Research benefits:** Teachers will acquire new skills and aptitudes that consequently become experiential knowledge. The principal will be assisted to implement WSE policies and guidelines to the fullest in order to achieve success on teacher development and the school as whole. It will empower parents since education is a societal issue. It will assist the Free State department of education to review and revamp policies on WSE in order to eliminate negativity associated with WSE in schools.

5. Strategic Planning, Policy and Research Directorate will make the necessary arrangements for the researchers to present the findings and recommendations to the relevant officials in the Department.

Yours Sincerely,

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

DATE: 10/03/2022

APPENDIX C2: LETTER FROM LANGUAGE EDITOR

Declaration

24 August 2023

PO Box 4
Otjiwarongo
Namibia
+264 813359120
hettie.human@gmail.com

Thesis: Exploring guidelines to improve the implementation of whole school evaluation in Free State secondary schools

Student: Lehlohonolo Samuel Mlangeni

I confirm that I edited the thesis, checked the references, and recommended changes to the text.

MA Language Practice

Hettie Human
WRITER | EDITOR | TRANSLATOR | INTERPRETER
+264 813 359 120 | hettie.human@gmail.com

APPENDIX C3: TURN IT IN REPORT

EXPLORING GUIDELINES TO IMPROVE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF WHOLE SCHOOL EVALUATION IN FREE STATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS

ORIGINALITY REPORT

3%	2%	1%	0%
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

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