

School-parent engagement through relational leadership practices of school principals in a multicultural setting

by

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

MAGISTER EDUCATIONIS IN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

in the

Department of Education Management, Law and Policy Studies

Faculty of Education

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

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November 2020



DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the full dissertation, which I hereby submit for the degree Magister Educationis in Educational Leadership at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution.

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DEGREE AND PROJECT

MEd

School-parent engagement through relational leadership practices of school principals in a multicultural setting

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This Ethics Clearance Certificate should be read in conjunction with the Integrated Declaration Form (D08) which specifies details regarding:

- Compliance with approved research protocol,
- No significant changes,
- Informed consent/assent,
- Adverse experience or undue risk,
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- Data storage requirements.



ETHICS STATEMENT

The author, whose name appears on the title page of this dissertation, has obtained, for the research described in this work, the applicable research ethics approval. The author declares that she has observed the ethical standards required in terms of the University of Pretoria's *Code of ethics for researchers and the Policy guidelines for responsible research*.



ABSTRACT

This study examines how school principals practice relational leadership for effective school-parental engagement in a multicultural setting. In South Africa, the post-apartheid education transformation created a situation in which schools are no longer allowed to discriminate against learners. As a result, a new multicultural setting has emerged in which schools are bound to accommodate learners from various cultural backgrounds. This shines the spotlight on school principals' leadership and how they develop a school vision based on common values and redesign the school in a way that reflects the post-apartheid setting. The leadership role of principals is crucial for school-parental engagement in multicultural school settings.

This is a qualitative study that used a case study design. The purposively selected sample consisted of 18 participants from six public schools in the Tshwane North and South. Data was collected using individual interviews. The theory of relational leadership was applied to examine how school principals can practice this leadership style to enhance parental engagement in multicultural school settings. Using thematic analysis, data was then grouped into themes in line with the research questions.

The study found that the relational leadership by principals for school-parent engagement in a multicultural setting is limited and ineffective owing to a lack of multicultural sensitivity among most principals. The findings of the study also revealed that though many principals have tried practising different styles, such as instructional, distributive, collaborative and transformational leadership, to enhance parental engagement, these practices are seen as a limited solution. Therefore, the study suggests the need for principals to adopt a new leadership approach that creates a strong relationship between the principal and parents, taking into account the cultural context in which the school operates.

The study recommends principals practice relational leadership for effective parental engagement in multicultural school settings.

Keywords: multicultural schools, relational leadership, parental engagement, leadership style, leadership theories



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To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is to confirm that the research proposal *School-Parent Engagement Through Relational Leadership Practices of School Principals in a Multicultural Setting* by Sandice Naicker was edited by a professional language practitioner.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'KH' or similar initials.

Karien Hurter



DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my father *Govindasamy Naicker*, my mother *Inba Naicker* and brother *Nevendren Naicker* as I am eternally grateful to each of them for believing in my dreams more than I did. Their continuous support, motivation, unconditional love and prayers is what got me to where I am today.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank the Goddess of Education, Mother Saraswathi, for giving me the strength, ability, and knowledge to pursue this research study.

My father, *Govindasamy Naicker*, where do I begin Dad? I will never have enough words to thank you for everything you have done and continue to do for me in my life but I can say I will forever be indebted to you for turning every one of my dreams into a reality. Throughout my life you have inspired me and taught me that through hard work, perseverance and determination you can become an accomplished person like yourself. You stood firmly by my side from the very beginning of my academic journey, you spurred me on this mountainous journey, you became my strength when I wanted to give up, and you believed in me when I doubted my own abilities. I am truly blessed to have you as a father, a best friend, mentor, editor and the many other roles you play in my life. I am who I am because of you. Dad, you are a remarkable man and I hope you are proud of me as this is for YOU!

To my mother, *Inba Naicker*, thank you for listening patiently and tirelessly to my endless frustrations, complaints and concerns. You walked this journey with me, and you became my biggest fan and truest supporter. You believed in me all the way. Thank you for the unrelenting support and motivation you provided that helped me soldier on throughout this mountainous journey to the point where my dream became a reality. You moulded me into the woman I am today and inadvertently taught me to never give up. You are by far the greatest woman in my life!

To my brother, *Nevendren Naicker*, you are my God-given best friend. Thank you for always motivating and encouraging me when I doubted whether my dreams would become a reality. Despite being far away from me, you were always there for me when I needed someone throughout this journey.

To my supervisor, *Prof R.N. Marishane*, a heartfelt thanks and appreciation for bringing my vision to light. Your support, guidance, and time throughout this study meant a lot to me. Thank you for your constructive criticism throughout this study.

To every participant in this study, thank you for taking the time to participate in my research.



LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CAPS	Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements
DBE	Department of Basic Education
HoD	Head of Department
PTA	Parents Teachers Association
SGB	School Governing Body
RSA	Republic of South Africa



LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Participant codes.....	56
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION.....	i
RESEARCH ETHICS CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	ii
ETHICS STATEMENT	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
LANGUAGE EDITORS CERTIFICATE	v
DEDICATION	vi
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	viii
LIST OF TABLES.....	ix
TABLE OF CONTENTS	x
CHAPTER 1 GENERAL ORIENTATION AND BACKGROUND	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Statement of the Problem.....	3
1.3 Research Problem	4
1.4 Research Questions.....	5
1.4.1 Primary research question.....	5
1.4.2 Secondary research questions	5
1.5 Rationale.....	5
1.6 Preliminary Literature Review	6
1.6.1 Perspectives on parental involvement and parental engagement	6
1.6.2 Principals' leadership role in school-parent engagement	7
1.6.3 Importance of context to school-parent engagement.....	8
1.7 Theoretical Framework	8
1.8 Research Methodology	9
1.8.1 Research design.....	9
1.8.2 Study population.....	10
1.8.3 Sampling.....	10
1.8.4 Data collection	11
1.8.5 Data analysis	11



1.9	Delimitations of the Study.....	11
1.10	Limitations of the Study.....	12
1.11	Ethical Considerations	12
1.12	Political Considerations.....	12
1.13	Significance of the Study	13
1.14	Summary	13
1.14.1	Overview of the chapters.....	14
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW.....		16
2.1	Introduction	16
2.2	The Theoretical Framework	17
2.3	Leadership Practices of Successful Principals	21
2.4	Rationale for Parental Engagement in Multicultural School Settings.....	23
2.4.1	Learners' academic achievement and performance	23
2.4.2	Learners' aspiration	24
2.4.3	Improved learners' self-esteem and motivation	25
2.5	Benefits of Parental Engagement for Different Stakeholders	25
2.5.1	Benefits for parents	26
2.5.2	Benefits for learners	26
2.5.3	Benefits for teachers.....	27
2.6	Conditions Constraining Parental Engagement in Multicultural School Settings.....	28
2.6.1	Teachers' attitude	28
2.6.2	Cultural barriers and traditional beliefs	28
2.6.3	Communication and language barriers	29
2.6.4	Socio-economic status and poverty	30
2.6.5	Parents' self-perception and level of education	30
2.6.6	Job dynamics and time	31
2.7	School-Parent Engagement in Developed Countries	32
2.7.1	The United States of America.....	32
2.7.2	United Kingdom	33
2.8	School-Parent Engagement in Developing Countries	34
2.8.1	Kenya	34



2.8.2	Botswana.....	35
2.9	School-Parent Engagement in the South African Context.....	36
2.9.1	Parental engagement prior to 1994	36
2.9.2	The situation after 1994	37
2.10	Methods principals use to engage with parents in multicultural school settings	38
2.11	Strategies that principals can use to overcome challenges with school-parent engagement in multicultural school settings.....	39
2.12	Summary.....	39
CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY		41
3.1	Introduction	41
3.2	Research Design.....	41
3.2.1	Advantages of a case study design	42
3.2.2	Disadvantages of a case study design	43
3.3	Research Methodology	43
3.3.1	Qualitative research.....	44
3.4	Research Paradigm	44
3.5	Ontological and Epistemological Assumptions.....	45
3.5.1	Ontological assumptions.....	45
3.5.2	Epistemological assumptions	46
3.6	Sampling	47
3.6.1	Purposive sampling	47
3.7	Selection of Study Participants.....	48
3.8	Selection of Research Sites	48
3.9	Data Collection Techniques	49
3.9.1	Interview schedules	49
3.9.2	Preparing for the interview process	49
3.9.3	Semi-structured telephonic interviews	50
3.9.4	Note taking	53
3.9.5	Digital audio-tape recordings.....	54
3.10	Debriefing	55
3.11	Data Analysis	55
3.12	Credibility and Authenticity of Data	56



3.12.1	Trustworthiness	56
3.12.2	Credibility	56
3.12.3	Transferability.....	57
3.12.4	Dependability.....	57
3.12.5	Confirmability.....	57
3.13	Ethical Considerations During Data Collection	57
3.14	Political Considerations During Data Collection	58
3.15	Summary	58
CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS AND INTREPRETATION OF RESULTS.....		59
4.1	Introduction	59
4.2	Theme 1: Relational Leadership Practised by Principals for Effective School-Parent Engagement.....	59
4.2.1	Data presentation	59
4.2.2	Support from literature	61
4.2.3	Analysis and interpretation of findings	62
4.3	Theme 2: Principals' Understanding of School-Parent Engagement.....	63
4.3.1	Data presentation	63
4.3.2	Support from literature	63
4.3.3	Analysis and interpretation of findings	64
4.4	Theme 3: Methods Principals Use to Engage With Parents in Multicultural Schools.....	65
4.4.1	Data presentation	65
4.4.2	Support from literature	67
4.4.3	Analysis and interpretation of findings	68
4.5	Theme 4: Challenges Principals Experience With Engaging Parents in a Multicultural School Setting.....	69
4.5.1	Working conditions and time constraints faced by parents.....	69
4.5.2	Single Parents	71
4.5.3	Absent parents	73
4.5.4	Attitude of parents	75
4.5.5	Transport.....	78
4.5.6	Communication and language.....	79

4.6	Theme 5: Strategies for Principals to Use to Overcome Parental-Engagement Challenges	82
4.6.1	Accommodate and respect diverse cultures	83
4.6.2	Improve communication and openness	84
4.6.3	Build a relationship with parents and provide encouragement.....	86
4.7	Summary.....	87
CHAPTER 5 SUMMARIES, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....		89
5.1	Introduction	89
5.2	Summaries of the Chapters.....	89
5.2.1	Chapter 1.....	89
5.2.2	Chapter 2.....	90
5.2.3	Chapter 3.....	90
5.2.4	Chapter 4.....	91
5.2.5	Chapter 5.....	92
5.3	Summary of the Findings	92
5.3.1	Relational leadership practised by principals for effective school parent engagement.....	92
5.3.2	Principals' understanding of school-parent engagement	93
5.3.3	Methods principals use to engage with parents in multicultural schools.....	93
5.3.4	Challenges principals experience with engaging parents in a multicultural school setting.....	94
5.3.5	Strategies for principals to use to overcome parental-engagement challenges	96
5.4	Conclusions.....	97
5.5	Significance of the Study.....	98
5.6	Limitations of the Study	99
5.6.1	Limited access to schools.....	99
5.6.2	Limited number of schools.....	99
5.6.3	Exclusion of independent schools	99
5.7	Recommendations	99
5.7.1	Emphasising principals' professional development to build relationships with parents	100



5.7.2	Enhancing parents' self-efficacy	100
5.8	Recommendations for Further Research	101
	REFERENCES.....	102
	ANNEXURE A: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH FROM GAUTENG DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION	117
	ANNEXURE B: GAUTENG DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION APPROVAL LETTER	119
	ANNEXURE C: REQUEST TO PRINCIPAL TO CONDUCT RESEARCH	121
	ANNEXURE D: INVITATION AND CONSENT FORM FOR PRINCIPALS	124
	ANNEXURE E: INVITATION AND CONSENT FORM FOR HEAD OF DEPARTMENT	127
	ANNEXURE F: INVITATION AND CONSENT FORM FOR PARENT.....	130
	ANNEXURE G: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR PRINCIPALS	132
	ANNEXURE H: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR HEAD OF DEPARTMENTS (HoD'S)	133
	ANNEXURE I: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR PARENTS.....	134



CHAPTER 1

GENERAL ORIENTATION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

For decades researchers have been paying attention to parental involvement in schools to explain its significance for children and the school. However, Goodall and Montgomery (2014) state that there is a change in perspective from parental involvement to parental engagement because parental involvement has been found to be an inconsistently defined term in the literature. Parental involvement has been described as the representation of various parent behaviours, the practices of parents, parental communication with their children, and their participation in school activities (Nokali, Bachman, & Votruba-Drzal, 2010). This range of definitions means that parental involvement is multifaceted because it subsumes a wide variety of parental behavioural patterns and practices. On the other hand, Goodall and Montgomery (2014) posits parental engagement as active and meaningful involvement in a child's learning process. Such learning occurs in various settings, such as childcare, the home and the community. Therefore, parental engagement exemplifies more responsibility than parental involvement within an educational setting.

Parental engagement is imperative in children's education, progression and achievement at school and in life. For many years, research on family involvement has consistently upheld the idea that when parents involve themselves in their children's lives, children have a better possibility of progressing into a responsible, well-informed and considerate adults. It is for this reason that parental engagement remains a strong predictor of academic achievement (Patrikakou, 2008). In addition, Sapungan and Sapungan (2014) postulates that when parents are occupied with their children's lives, they will generally have better outcomes and more confidence and will be motivated to do well in school.

Olsen and Fuller (2010) concurs with Sapungan (2014) by stating that when parents are engaged in their children's learning process, the children have opportunities for efficacious improvement. However, despite its importance for schools in South Africa, parental engagement did not feature prominently in the education agenda before 1994

(Michael, Wolhuter, & Van Wyk, 2012). This suggests that these issues have not received sufficient attention.

The post-apartheid education transformation in South Africa has brought about a situation in which schools are no longer allowed to discriminate against learners. As a result, a new multicultural setting has emerged in which schools are legally bound to accommodate learners from different cultural backgrounds. According to Kassimeris and Vryonides (2013), a multicultural setting means the existence of diverse cultures in one setting, and this gives rise to the emergence of a multicultural society. A multicultural society refers to a society in which diverse cultures exist side by side and work together in one setting. While a setting here may refer to a school context, the multiculturalism may be defined in terms of the diversity of culture, identity, religion, language, traditions and ethnicity in a given society (Grant & Portera, 2011; Triandafyllidou, 2011; Vassallo, 2018). Given these definitions, schools have become microcosms of society represented by learners, parents and teachers. Despite their diverse backgrounds, parents are important stakeholders in the contemporary South African school setting and are expected to share common values and vision, as highlighted in the South African Constitution (Republic of South Africa [RSA], 1996a), and to engage with their children's education, as the South African Schools Act (RSA, 1996b) provides. In addition, the *Education White Paper 6* endorses the rights and duties of parents as they are seen as important contributors of assistance (Department of Basic Education [DBE], 2001). Notwithstanding the enactment, the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) accentuates the critical job that parents play in the school educational plan (DBE, 2011). The aforementioned legal archives all suggest that it is of vital importance for parents to engage in their children's educational life. These legislative archives make it legitimately official to provide parents with the chance to engage in their children's educational life (Naicker, 2013). However, it is important to consider whether the contemporary reality and practice of parental engagement aligns with the legislation and policies.

According to Okeke (2014), most parents are still not engaged in their children's educational progression. This shines the spotlight on school principals, who are not only expected to show direction by developing a school vision based on common

values, but should also develop people, focus on teaching and learning, and redesign the school in such a way that it reflects the new setting.

From an international perspective, in England and Wales, for example, the Council of Chief State School Officers of 2006 (Gorard, See, & Davies, 2012) views parental engagement as encompassing parents' commitment to their children's school. For this reason, parents are encouraged to actively engage in matters within the school. International policies and legislation emphasise the importance of schools developing specific methods to engage parents in their children's education, for example, the No Child Left Behind Act 2001 in the USA (Mickelson, Giersch, Stearns, & Moller, 2013). However, current international policies do not specify how school leaders should lead school-parental engagement in a multicultural setting (Erol & Turhan, 2018).

Educational reformers have long claimed that the leadership role of principals is crucial for parental engagement. Khalifa, Gooden, and Davis (2016) state that effective leaders must be capable of promoting and sustaining an environment stable enough to accommodate the diversity of needs in a setting. However, principals' leadership role for school-parental engagement in a multicultural setting has been found to be ineffective (Michael et al., 2012). This ineffectiveness is often due to a lack of multicultural sensitivity among principals (Erol & Turhan, 2018). According to Mleczko and Kington (2013), many principals have tried practising different leadership styles such as instructional, distributive and transformational leadership to enhance parental engagement, but these practices have only resulted in limited solutions. It has been suggested that no relationships are being created between the school and parents, despite principals sharing power, delegating tasks and including parents in decision-making (Michael et al., 2012). This points to the lack of strong leadership for school-parental engagement in multicultural settings (Mleczko & Kington, 2013). Therefore, principals must adopt a new leadership approach that creates a strong relationship between the principal and parents while considering the cultural nature of the setting in which the school operates.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The setting in which principals lead schools in South Africa changed in 1994. Previously, schools were racially segregated and principals were professionally

trained to lead their schools in homogenous settings where school-parent engagement involved working with parents and learners from the same cultural background (Evans & Cleghorn, 2014). However, with the advent of democracy after 1994, schools became inclusive and now have to accommodate all learners, regardless of factors influencing their backgrounds such as culture, beliefs, socio-economic status. For example, a study by Michael et al. (2012) proves that the new socio-economic dynamics and setting of the country demand from schools to engage parents from the broader community. While there is a consistent agreement in the research that leadership influences learning (Jones & Harris, 2014) and that this influence is facilitated through a network of relationships with all stakeholders (Moos & Johansson, 2009), many South African school principals have not been professionally developed for leading school-parent engagement in a multicultural setting. The problem is acknowledged in the *Policy on the South African Standard for Principalship* (DBE, 2015), which presents parental engagement as one of the standards against which a school principal's competency should be measured. It is in view of this problem that this study seeks to examine how principals practise relational leadership for parental engagement in a multicultural setting.

Although there are many studies conducted on parental engagement, there is no literature focusing on school-parent engagement in a multicultural setting in terms of leadership. Given this gap in the literature and against the backdrop of new socio-cultural dynamics and settings in multicultural schools (Michael et al., 2012), this research becomes relevant.

1.3 Research Problem

Against the backdrop of the abovementioned problem statement, the purpose of this study was to examine how principals practise relational leadership in a multicultural setting.

1.4 Research Questions

1.4.1 *Primary research question*

How do principals practise relational leadership for effective school-parent engagement in a multicultural setting?

1.4.2 *Secondary research questions*

- a. What do principals understand by school-parent engagement?
- b. How do principals engage parents in a multicultural school setting?
- c. What challenges do principals experience in engaging parents from multicultural backgrounds?
- d. What strategies can be suggested for school principals to overcome the identified challenges?

1.5 Rationale

The conceptualisation of this study derived from my own experiences as a teacher. I have seen how some principals experienced challenges when working with parents from diverse cultural backgrounds. Among these challenges is the inability to establish positive relationships with parents. In addition, many parents appeared to lack an understanding of their roles and their capacity to fulfil their roles and demonstrate accountability. This results in parents not working as the Department of Basic Education (DBE) expects. Some parents did not engage with the schools that their children attended (Okeke, 2014). These experiences aroused my interest to conduct this study.

In South Africa, many school principals fail to understand and acknowledge that the setting in which schools now operate in has changed drastically and that all schools must accommodate all learners, regardless of their differences (Campbell, 2011). The ineffective leadership of many school principals is ascribed to their attitude not changing to accommodate the needs emerging from the multicultural setting of their schools as well as their failure to share power with teachers to enable school-parent collaboration to occur (Mestry, 2017). The initiatives used by most principals, such as sending letters home and having parent evenings and open days to engage parents,

quite often result in failure (Campbell, 2011). The reason why their attempts to collaborate with parents fail is because of the multicultural context of their schools and the fact that many of them have not been trained to lead in such contexts (Michael et al., 2012). In these contexts, issues such as language barriers, particularly in schools where English is used for communication, arise to complicate matters. In addition, parents feel intimidated because they are not familiar with the curriculum and working parents are too tired to even consider engaging within their children's educational life (Mestry, 2017). Thus, the leadership must change to accommodate all parents, irrespective of their circumstances (Michael et al., 2012).

Auerbach (2009) states that ample literature exists on parental involvement and leadership that emphasises that school principals must create policies, allocate resources and model practices to promote collaboration among stakeholders in a multicultural setting, but few studies suggested how can happen. Many school principals delegate tasks such as planning and organising parental events to teachers, but leadership for meaningfully engaging parents in such situations remains absent (Auerbach, 2009). Currently, there is low level or, in some schools, no engagement between the school and parents because of many principals' lack of sensitivity to the nature of parents' unique cultural settings (Michael et al., 2012). Even though there is a growing body of literature on leadership for parental involvement, studies have nonetheless shown that leadership for school-parent engagement still appears to be limited (Okeke, 2014).

1.6 Preliminary Literature Review

1.6.1 Perspectives on parental involvement and parental engagement

For decades researchers have been defining parental involvement and parental engagement differently. Parental involvement means parents taking an interest in school exercises using their children's school setting to their advantage (Goodall & Montgomery, 2013). Parental involvement can be understood as parents being committed to their children's education and partaking in school exercises when the school invites parents for meetings, sport functions and so on. Stefanski, Valli, and Jacobson (2016:138) define parental involvement as "demonstrable actions" such as

attending school events or reading to one's children as well as participating in the required activities that schools organise. This means that parents wait for the school to involve them; parental involvement occurs on the school's terms (Goodall & Montgomery, 2013). In other words, parents only involve themselves in school matters when they are invited to do so, with no obligation and accountability attached.

Parental engagement means that parents actively engage themselves with the school for the benefit of their children and do not wait on the school to send out an invitation for them to get involved. Goodall and Montgomery (2013) state that parental engagement includes more than just participating in activities. It provides parents with a sense of ownership of decisions, which is a greater feeling than just simple involvement. This means that parental engagement extends beyond involvement to a commitment by parents, culminating in the school viewing parents as equal partners with whom they can collaborate to support children's education. Ferlazzo (2011) expanded on this view by stating that parental engagement entails engaging families to ensure that schools and parents become partners and that schools listen to parents and take their suggestions regarding their children's education into consideration.

1.6.2 Principals' leadership role in school-parent engagement

For any school to attain its goals, the school principal must be an effective leader. Among other things, the school principal plays a pivotal role in ensuring that parental engagement occurs within a school for learners to achieve success. Effective leadership by school principals is viewed as a necessary part in the process of ensuring active parental engagement, particularly in multicultural settings where the school accommodates learners from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Therefore, Johnson (2015) portrays principals as leaders who possess the personality, insight, knowledge and skills needed to lead teachers and parents towards shared objectives. This suggests that principals must be innovative to take their organisation forward. Other researchers shared this opinion. For instance, Mleczo and Kington (2013) agree that principals play a central role in ensuring that parental engagement occurs through their communication skills, leadership practices, expectations and their attitude. They asserted that the level of parental engagement within schools will most likely intensify when principals create a school environment that appreciates parents.

Similarly, Auerbach (2009) argues that principals must work closely with stakeholders to determine the goals of parental engagement programmes. They suggested that principals should develop written policies and establish structures tasked with organising parental engagement activities within the school. This suggests that the success of school-parent engagement is a collective effort. It is, therefore, fundamental for principals to share responsibilities, to empower teachers to assume responsibility for specific exercises and, above all, to motivate stakeholders by initiating and building relationships with parents. However, facilitating parental engagement is a challenge for school principals (Michael et al., 2012). This is because school principals must change their mind-set and begin perceiving parents as equal partners in the education of their children. This departs from the traditional view of parental involvement in school matters as an unwelcome intrusion into a professional realm for which they are not trained.

1.6.3 Importance of context to school-parent engagement

Marishane (2016) states that a school, like its leadership, is bound to the setting in which it functions. This means that a school principal and the school are in an interconnected relationship with their setting. A setting is a multifaceted mixture of internal factors, such as climate and culture; external factors, such as policies, technology, and political and socio-economic circumstances; as well as human factors, which comprises intra-personal and interpersonal factors that jointly influence student learning and achievement (Marishane, 2016). Therefore, an effective leader must gain knowledge of the setting in which they work and its dynamics. This suggests that an effective school leader must understand parents' backgrounds in order to engage them successfully.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

Hollander's (1964) relational theory of leadership was used as a frame of reference to underpin this study. According to Hollander, leadership is a reciprocal influence and a social trade connection among leaders and followers. Smit and Scherman (2016:2) assert that relational leadership can be defined as "a social process of influence, through which emergent coordination (such as evolving social order) and change, are

constructed and produced”. This infers that the relational leadership theory is a pragmatic response to the changes that take place in schools (Sklaveniti, 2016). This theory is useful in this study as it aims to prove that principals and parents forming a relationship with each other and having a relationship that is empowering and trusting will lead to principals providing strong leadership to engage parents in multicultural settings (Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 2013). In this study, the choice of the relational leadership theory is grounded on the view that more than one individual can lead in a school, including parents, teachers and other stakeholders because they have “the agency to lead, change and to guide organisational development and improvement” (Harris, 2009, p. 20). Relational leadership is justified because of its representational power (Komives et al., 2013) and its heading towards democratic ideals to accommodate diverse needs. With regards to multicultural school settings, South African schools need leadership that unfolds the potential of everyone in a school to deal with the numerous challenges and complexities that are consistently experienced.

1.8 Research Methodology

A qualitative research methodology was followed in this study to understand how principals can practice relational leadership for school-parent engagement in a multicultural setting. According to Smit (2010), qualitative research methodology includes documenting real events, observing specific behaviours, recording what participants say, and taking their body gestures and tone into consideration. Qualitative research evokes research participants’ records of implications, encounters or discernments (Smit, 2010), and it aims to explain and explore the phenomena from the perception of those who are studied.

1.8.1 Research design

A case study design was used in this study. Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2009) defines a case study as a research design that is moulded within restricted boundaries. A case study design uses a small sample of study participants to investigate a phenomena.

1.8.2 Study population

The population chosen for this study contained schools and study participants. The schools that formed part of the study were located in the Tshwane North and South District of Gauteng Province and the study participants comprised principals, HoDs and parents.

1.8.3 Sampling

Sampling is a strategy for choosing a particular portion of the population for a study (Maree, 2011). Purposive sampling was chosen to select study participants and schools for this study. One principal, one head of department (HoD) and one parent from each school were sampled, resulting in three study participants per school. The rationale for this choice of study participants was that it included both male and female study participants from different race groups and diverse cultural backgrounds. Therefore, these study participants who came from different positions and cultural backgrounds were most likely to be experienced about the phenomena I was exploring.

Purposive sampling was also used to choose the schools to conduct research. Three primary schools and three secondary schools were sampled on the basis that they are all multicultural public schools. I selected these schools by getting information from the district office about the cultural differences in each school to ensure that the chosen schools were multicultural. I also chose these schools because they are in the Pretoria East area where I reside, and that saved me the time and cost for travelling, which made it convenient and easy.

The rationale for using a purposive sampling approach is that it enabled me to choose specific study participants whom I believed held information that I needed to answer the research questions (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). Furthermore, purposive sampling enabled me to select a diverse range of study participants that were not in leadership positions to provide me with in-depth information about leadership for school-parent engagement in a multicultural setting.

1.8.4 Data collection

Semi-structured telephonic interviews were used in this study with the sampled study participants. According to Creswell (2013), interviews are communication between two people to exchange information and thoughts through questioning and responding. This means that I asked the study participants questions to gather data and to learn about their principles and sentiments, which resulted in the interviews being two-way communication. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with one principal, one HoD and one parent per a school. This resulted in three semi-structured telephonic interviews per school. Eighteen semi-structured telephonic interviews were done for this study as there were six participating schools. These study participants had diverse cultural backgrounds and comprised of both genders.

I used semi-structured telephonic interviews because it is flexible and easy to change (Maree, 2016). In addition, it enabled me to use probe questions where clarity was needed. These interviews also helped me view the world through the eyes of the study participants (Maree, 2016). The study participants could make their own contributions and remarks on the research questions and could provide additional data to answer the research questions. I used pre-determined questions to acquire data to answer the research questions. Furthermore, I took into consideration any other questions that arose from the research process and was connected to the data needed to answer the research questions.

1.8.5 Data analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data in this study. King and Horrocks (2010) state that with thematic analysis the findings are identified, grouped and summarised. The data in this study was transcribed, coded, and thereafter, I searched for themes in the coded data.

1.9 Delimitations of the Study

The research was delimited to only two school districts, namely, the Tshwane North and South Districts of the Gauteng Provincial Department of Education. In my opinion the subsequent analysis of data acquired from the three primary and three secondary

schools that formed part of the study were sufficient to provide an understanding of how school-parent engagement occurs in similar multicultural school settings.

1.10 Limitations of the Study

This study used a multiple case studies and only a small number of study participants, which means the findings cannot be generalised to a larger population. This study was limited to multicultural school settings and did not cover all schools. In addition, communication during interviews with parents whose language was not English was a challenge. To mitigate this challenge, there was a translator present to translate between English and the participants' medium of communication.

1.11 Ethical Considerations

Ethics are characterised as the ethical quality of human conduct according to social examination (Miller, Birch, Mauthner, & Jessop, 2012). Therefore, ethics refers to the researcher's choice, accountability and moral deliberation while conducting research. I applied the required ethical criteria by first getting permission from the Ethical Clearance Committee of the University of Pretoria. Thereafter, I sought permission from the DBE, the participating schools and the study participants. All study participants received consent forms before I conducted the research. I informed all study participants through verbal and written communication that their participation in this study would be entirely voluntary. They were also informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time, and their right to security was respected at all times. In addition, I assured the study participants that their confidentiality and anonymity will be protected, their identities will not be revealed and I would use pseudonyms to protect their identity. I also explained the purpose of this study. The measures that were followed throughout the research process and the reasons why I chose these participants will be explained in the following chapters.

1.12 Political Considerations

My political views were not brought into this study and study participants' political interests were not discussed. I refrained from getting involved in political issues within

the communities around the sampled schools. The results of this study will not be used to further my political interests.

1.13 Significance of the Study

This study will be useful to school principals who want to enhance parental engagement in a multicultural school setting. This study provides a basis for school principals to learn about how their leadership practices influence the culture of a diverse learning environment. This is significant because there is limited literature on school leadership that address how school principals function in a multicultural setting (Michael et al., 2012). Therefore, this study fills an important gap in the literature and practice in the broader area of principal leadership in general. This study may also be beneficial to novice principals as they will be able to learn about the challenges experienced by principals in engaging with parents from multicultural backgrounds. Novice principals will also learn about possible solutions to overcome these challenges. In addition, this study will help parents understand how important their engagement is their children's education. Subsequently, this study can be a useful resource to address the challenges associated with principals and parental engagement in a multicultural school setting. The analysis and conclusions drawn from this study may provide useful information to help policy makers design new policies on professional development based around diverse leadership styles, which cultivate and influence school climate and cultural sensitivity.

1.14 Summary

After the post-apartheid transformation in South Africa, schools now have to accommodate learners from different cultural backgrounds. This means schools must also accommodate parents from diverse backgrounds. The plethora of literature accessible on the advantages of parental engagement in children's live provides a clear indication that parental engagement must be managed effectively to meet the present challenges that face this new democratic society (Mleczo, 2018). Principals' leadership is a crucial component for parental engagement. Principal can be seen as effective leaders when they can promote and sustain an environment that accommodates the diversity of needs in a multicultural setting (Michael et al., 2012).

However, many principals are grappling with understanding the dynamics of intercultural relations (Rajab, 2002). The leadership styles practised by principals for school-parent engagement in multicultural settings are ineffective because many principals lack multicultural sensitivity (Michael et al., 2012). Therefore, there is a need for principals to practice a new leadership style to fulfil their responsibility to orchestrate and promote parental engagement in a multicultural setting. Thus, this study examines how principals can practice relational leadership for school-parent engagement in a multicultural setting.

1.14.1 Overview of the chapters

Chapter 1

This chapter introduces the research topic. The problem statement, research questions, and rationale behind the study are outlined in this chapter. The literature that provides the necessary information for this study is reviewed, and the theoretical framework is revealed. The research methodology, research design and data analysis method are also discussed. The ethical and political issues that affect the study are explained, and the significance of the study to academia and other interested parties is outlined.

Chapter 2

Relevant sources including publications, articles, policy documents, books as well as other resources related to this topic are reviewed in this chapter. The historical background pertaining to the issue in this study and the aims of the research are also investigated.

Chapter 3

A qualitative research design and methodology are discussed in this chapter, and it explains why the case study design was selected. The research paradigm, interpretivism, is explained and the ontological and epistemological assumptions are presented. This chapter also explains why purposive sampling strategies were used and why data was collected using semi-structured telephonic interviews. The limitations of this collection method are also discussed. The reasons for choosing thematic analysis as the method to analyse the data are explained, and the credibility

and authenticity of collected data are acknowledged. The ethical considerations observed during the data collection are explained.

Chapter 4

The collected data are presented in this chapter in the created themes. The reviewed literature is presented and the results from findings are deciphered, and the findings are presented.

Chapter 5

This chapter gives an outline of the information introduced and deciphered in Chapter 4, trailed by the discussion of the discoveries and suggestions. The closing passage summarises the topic and gives proposals for future research on comparative topics.



CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Chapter 1 introduced the research topic and described the research problem. It also stated the research questions, outlined the rationale for this study, briefly reviewed the literature necessary for the study, revealed the theoretical framework. Furthermore, it briefly conferred the research methodology used in the study and the ethical and political aspects.

This chapter focuses on discussing the literature related to school-parent engagement in a multicultural school setting. The key issues that this literature review focusses on are the leadership practices of successful principals; the rationale for parental engagement in multicultural school settings; the benefits of parental engagement for different stakeholders; the conditions constraining parental engagement in multicultural school settings; and school-parent engagement in developed and developing countries, including South Africa. This chapter also discusses the theoretical framework used in this study.

A theoretical framework acts as a guide and provides an introduction and description of the theory that elucidates why the research problem for the study is present. Grant and Osanloo (2014) state that this framework is based on an existing theory in a field of inquiry related to the study and reflects the hypothesis. Therefore, a theoretical framework serves as the foundation upon which a research is constructed. This study used Hollander's (1964) relational theory of leadership as the theoretical framework. This theoretical framework emphasises that one of the responsibilities of schools in all contexts is to ensure parents are engaged in their children's education. The need for such engagement is highlighted by the literature (Michael et al., 2012) that proves there exists a positive relationship between children's academic success and parental engagement. This is understandable because parents are the primary educators of their children. As primary educators, they support teachers by acting in what Cuenca (2010) calls *loco paedagogus* (in the place of a teacher) at home to support the school in teaching their children. It is critical that parental engagement is acknowledged as one of the key areas of school-leadership practice (DBE, 2016). This means that

effective school-parent engagement needs effective school leaders. However, research (Brownlee, 2015) shows that many school leaders have not been professionally trained on how to comprehend and develop prolific relationships with multicultural families in their schools. In other words, these leaders do not understand how to work with diverse parents and how to engage them in the education of their children. This is particularly evident in multicultural school settings where parents from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds have to work together to collectively support their children (Okeke, 2014). The cultural diversity that shapes contemporary South African school contexts gives currency to approaching the study on school-parent engagement from a multicultural perspective and is in fact of paramount importance.

The following section focuses on the theoretical framework selected for the study and discusses the proponents of the theory, and its assumptions and principles. This is followed by sections that explain successful principals leadership practices, look at the rationale for parental engagement in a multicultural school setting, and discuss the benefits of parental engagement for different stakeholders. Then the chapter focusses on the crux of the matter, the conditions constraining parental engagement in multicultural school settings. Finally, parental engagement in developed and developing countries are discussed along with parental engagement in South Africa.

2.2 The Theoretical Framework

The relational theory of leadership by Hollander (1964) was used as a frame of reference in this study. Hollander believed that leadership is a reciprocal influence and a relationship build on a social exchange process among stakeholders. Smit and Scherman (2016) assert that relational leadership can be defined as a shared process of influence that enables the development of collaboration and change. This development focuses on suggesting diverse approaches, acceptance of different ideologies and behaviours as well as creating new values. This implies that leadership is not restricted in terms of hierarchical positions but that it happens in relational dynamics in an organisation. The quality of relationships that stakeholders have with each other is a critical factor in the relational leadership theory. Crevani (2015) argues that relational leadership includes a component of leadership research that emphasises the importance of relations in leadership processes. Emphasis is placed

on social processes instead of on leaders' behaviour and actions. These social processes incorporate openness, negotiation and are rational as it is concerned with relating to others in the larger social system. Therefore, relational leadership is about providing a sense of direction rather than executing power and control (Denis, Langley, & Sergi, 2012). This means that leadership is seen as a shared responsibility among all stakeholders in schools. According to Komives et al. (2013) the relational theory of leadership is framed around five main principles, namely inclusion, empowerment, purposefulness, ethical compliance and process orientation. These principles are discussed next.

Inclusion: The first principle of relational leadership is the inclusion of people and their diverse points of view. According to Komives et al. (2013), inclusion requires each stakeholder to believe in the extreme value of each person's differences, fairness and equality as well as the importance of each person being included and valued. This means being able to understand, value and actively engage in other people's views, approaches, styles and aspects of individuality, such as gender or culture, which in turn adds multiple perspectives to activities conducted in groups by stakeholders. It further entails acknowledging how different individuals might approach different aspects with diverse viewpoints while maintaining attitudes that can respect other individual's differences, value equity and engagement. Denis et al. (2012) state that the principle of inclusion means being able to listen with empathy and communicate with civility, which are communication skills that facilitate the inclusions of others. Besides this, inclusion breeds a new form of leadership that is aimed at creating a cycle of positivity that sustains all stakeholders. Komives et al. (2013) assert that the inclusion of people and diverse points of view results in developing the strengths of all stakeholders to enable them to contribute to the school's collective goals. In addition, to be inclusive of others, leaders have to enhance the learning of others, help them develop their own initiatives, strengthen them to use their own judgement and enable them to grow. Crevani (2015) posits that through the leader enabling other stakeholders to develop individually, they become better contributors to the school. This suggests that these leaders fulfil the role of mentor to the stakeholders.

Empowerment: The second principle is the empowerment of those involved, which means that all stakeholders acknowledge that each of them has something to offer

and understand that personal growth is of vital importance. Decisions are made collectively and stakeholders empower each other to become self-led (Komives et al., 2013). This suggests that leaders are willing to share power and authority. Stakeholders must be willing to assume more responsibility in order to work together to attain collective goals. When individuals feel empowered, they see themselves as capable individuals and can work with others. Denis et al. (2012) state that to empower those involved entails eliminating fear or humiliation and ensuring trust and inclusivity. When those involved do not feel empowered, they might assess the setting to see if it is encouraging or controlling. Therefore, when a leader acts congruently in sharing authority and responsibility with other stakeholders and trust is formed, tasks are then shared, which is empowering and enhances the empowerment of all stakeholders (Crevani, 2015). This implies that empowerment is achieved through enabling the engagement of everyone and conveying faith in them.

Purposefulness: The third principle is purposefulness, which focuses on building commitment towards a common goal. Komives et al. (2013) explain that the theory of relational leadership creates an environment where all stakeholders are committed to a common goal as they share a common vision and mission. All stakeholders and the school collaborate with each other by forming relationships to attain the common goal and to work towards positive change. In addition, purposefulness entails all stakeholders working together to resolve any differences and finding a common direction. Denis et al. (2012) assert that it is essential for all stakeholders to articulate a common purpose and use it as a driving force to uplift and benefit the school. This suggests that relational leadership is about being together in the world with wisdom and intersubjectivity.

Ethical compliance: The fourth principle of the relational leadership theory is ethical compliance, which is characterised by each stakeholder and the school understanding what is morally right. Stakeholders and the school have a relationship based on trust and act responsibly to make ethical decisions for the betterment of the school and learners (Komives et al., 2013). Ethical compliance therefore means conforming to the standards set out. Principles of ethical compliance include values, standards and morals, which provides direction to all stakeholders. According to Crevani (2015), all stakeholders act with a sense of shared values—the desire and commitment for

mutual purpose of the school and learners. This suggests that the actions of all stakeholders emanate from a set of common values that are congruent and shared.

Process orientation: The last principle of the relational leadership theory is process-oriented and focuses on stakeholders interacting with each other to accomplish tasks. According to Denis et al. (2012), when an individual is process-oriented they are conscious of the changes among other stakeholders. This means that emphasis is placed on how stakeholders make decisions together that is related to their decided mission and vision. This process creates energy, synergy and momentum among all stakeholders. Crevani (2015) asserts that all those involved are conscious of their process, resulting in all stakeholders being reflective and collaborative.

These principles make the relational leadership theory a pragmatic response to the changes that takes place in schools. Sklaveniti (2016) states it is a solution to the unsatisfactory leadership styles practised by many principals because it allows principals to share leadership among stakeholders within a school once relationships are formed. In addition, it ensures that each person's differences are respected, allowing parents and other stakeholders from different cultural backgrounds to feel worthy and included, which further enables them to engage within the school. Komives et al. (2013) state that principals who practise relational leadership can form teams with the school with a shared mission to share their perspective on something. This means that they can work together as a team for a common goal or to find a solution to a problem.

Therefore, this theory is useful to this study as it aims to prove that when principals form relationships with parents and other stakeholders in schools based on empowerment and trust, it will lead to principals providing strong leadership to engage in a multicultural setting. Cunliffe and Eriksen (2011) posits that relationships with parents are reciprocal with shared ideas and feedback that gives parents equal weight and importance. This suggests that parents and other stakeholders feel connected to the school through their children's education, which creates the opportunity to focus on a goal that is meaningful and important to both the school and parents. In addition, in this study relational leadership is premised on the view that more than one individual can lead in a school, including parents, teachers and other stakeholders. Harris (2009)

corroborates this by asserting that all stakeholders have the potential to lead change and to guide an organisations development and improvement. This theory is validated because of its mimetic supremacy and its support for the accommodation of diverse ideas.

In the context of multicultural school settings, South African schools would benefit from a form of leadership that unfolds the potential of everyone in a school to deal with the numerous challenges and complexities that are experienced on a daily basis, thus enhancing the relevance of the theory for this study. Relational leadership practices of school principals are of utmost importance for South African schools to develop inclusive cultures that are democratic and that seeks out inclusive and empowering leadership (Smit & Scherman, 2016). Thus, relational leadership will ultimately be beneficial to all stakeholders in South Africans schools.

2.3 Leadership Practices of Successful Principals

School leadership is considered a vital component of efficient schools and has captivated the attention of researchers worldwide. There is a prevalent belief that leadership is imperative, influences the effectiveness of schools as well as has a central role in developing schools (Vassallo, 2018). However, understanding of what effective leadership means for school-parent engagement differs globally.

A study conducted in Vietnam revealed that principals must practise an autocratic leadership style to demonstrate effective leadership (Truong & Hallinger, 2015). Autocratic leadership focuses on individualised power, and the decision-making power is held entirely by the principals as there is no delegation of power to other stakeholders. According to Truong (2013), principals will make decisions based on their own opinion, judgement and knowledge and will rarely take advice from others. This means that other stakeholders' voices are not heard in an autocratic environment. The vision and the goals are not practically shared by all the stakeholders because the principals decide everything on their own. Moreover, such leaders have complete power and followers have to "do as I say" (Amanchukwu, Stanley & Ololube, 2015: 10). Thus, creativity and innovation are not welcomed by these kinds of leaders. In addition, principals' use of power over others with the intention of achieving obedience, compliance and control is deemed as practising successful leadership. Truong (2013)

states that stakeholders support the practice of principals using hierarchical power not only to influence staff but also to enforce their perspectives onto others to shift everyone in a specific direction. Stakeholders believe that autocratic leadership is essential to preserve harmony and to guarantee obedience to higher authorities, which results in schools running smoothly.

In Indonesia, principals are regarded as successful when they align their leadership practices with the ruling cultural and Islamic religious principles and virtues. Marishane (2016) supports this style and states that their relationships with parents are underpinned by enunciating these principles as well as their capacity to examine the setting, develop visions and collaborate with parents. This means that principals are regarded as successful if they take into consideration the cultural beliefs and religious principles of the stakeholders while fulfilling their other responsibilities. In addition, principals in Indonesia who show managerial qualities are regarded as efficacious. Suratno (2012) asserts that principals have numerous responsibilities such as planning, budgeting, organising and arranging staff, and handling and solving problems, and they are regarded as successful when these responsibilities are fulfilled. This suggests that the leadership style practised is autocratic. Suryani, Vijver, Poortinga and Setiadi (2012) concur that the leadership style practised by Indonesian principals are autocratic, resulting in assuming complete power, control and authority over others. Parents and other stakeholders support this leadership style as they believe it creates order in schools.

In other countries like Sweden, the USA and Australia, principals are successful when they can meet the numerous challenges and demands that exist within a particular setting, such as standards of accountability, constructing collaborative relationships and ensuring inclusivity of school communities (Drysdale & Gurr, 2017). In these countries, stakeholders favour principals who are portrayed as formal leaders. Suratno (2012) asserts that formal leaders are required to expand schools' visions and missions and can articulate and communicate these in ways that motivate stakeholders. This suggests that principals who are regarded as leaders must understand the various strengths and weakness that exist in a setting and find solutions to overcome those weaknesses. The leadership style practised in these countries is change-centred leadership. Anderson and Hansson (2010) posit that this

leadership style focuses on leaders who have the ability to acknowledge new ideas, encourage cooperation, and form a clear vision for stakeholders. This means that these principals adapt to changes to accommodate various needs.

This discussion shows that successful principals' leadership styles vary across the world. In order for principals to ensure school-parent engagement occurs in schools, they have to respond to the diverse needs of everyone in the school community. My contention is that each context is different and effective leaders must know what practice works best in a particular context. Successful principals respond in different ways because school settings vary globally.

2.4 Rationale for Parental Engagement in Multicultural School Settings

Parental engagement is crucial for the development, progression, and success of children in life and at school. Decades of research about parental engagement has time and again supported the simple fact that children of engaged parents have a much greater chance to develop into healthy, knowledgeable, responsible and caring adults (Brownlee, 2015). Therefore, parental engagement in the education of their children has multi-dimensional benefits. The following subsections discuss the rationale for parental engagement in multicultural school settings.

2.4.1 Learners' academic achievement and performance

Parental engagement is crucial to ensure learners become efficacious in school and in life. According to Van Wyk (2010), the relationship between parents and learners' academic achievement is very positive; therefore learners' academic performance progresses when parents are engaged in their education.

Parental engagement is a positive contributor to learners' performance and accomplishments, irrespective of their socio-economic background, cultural differences and parents' level of education. Learners' academic achievement and performance are attributed to completing homework, assessments, and studying for examinations (Graves & Wright, 2011). Through parental engagement, children are provided with parental supervision and the parents ensure that their children spend enough time completing all their tasks and homework. Parents contribute significantly

to learners' achievements by helping them complete their tasks, helping them devise study programmes, and discussing school-related matters. This is supported by Tapor, Keane, Shelton, and Calkins (2011), who state that this results in an overall improvement in learners' achievement. Thus, the support learners receive from their parents is as important as their intelligence, work ethics and genetics, which all work together to accomplish their goals in life. Parents are also most likely to practice routine skills with their children and to ensure they learn skills such as reading, writing, spelling and mathematical calculations so that their knowledge is improved (Marshall, 2017). This leads to an improvement in learners' grades and an improvement in their skills. Ultimately, the positive effects parental engagement has on learners' academic achievement and performance go over and above a child's intelligence.

2.4.2 Learners' aspiration

There is a connection between parental engagement and expectancies as children have the tendency to adopt their parents' beliefs about their own capabilities. According to Fan and Williams (2010), when parents have high but realistic expectancies and are engaged, children will probably work towards meeting those expectancies. This suggests that learners develop high expectancies for their future if their parents have high expectancies and are interested in their school (Brownlee, 2015). When learners are inspired, they tend to work harder, concentrate in school and are engrossed in their education. Nichols, Kotchick, McNamara, and Haskins (2010) agree with this and assert that when parents adopt a positive attitude towards education and demonstrate constant engagement with their school work, learners feel motivated to work towards achieving their life goals. Therefore, meeting learners' expectations is a collective effort and shared responsibility between parents, learners and the school. Brownlee (2015) states that when learners are aware of what is expected from them, they are eager to work towards it and they understand that performing well in school builds the foundation for their future. Therefore, learners' aspirations are increased through parental engagement. This may be even evident in poor families where the education of children may be seen as a way to improve their poor quality of life. Nichols et al. (2010) state that learners are inspired to work harder in school to become successful in life and to escape poverty through education.

2.4.3 Improved learners' self-esteem and motivation

When parents are engaged in their children's lives from birth, it is most likely that those children will grow up having a positive self-esteem. Gadsden, Ford, and Breiner (2014) postulate that learners who receive attention from their parents from birth are later able to work independently and develop a positive self-esteem. This suggests that fully engaged parents contribute vastly towards the development of children's self-esteems. Parents provide children with encouragement, create awareness of their significance and remind them of the importance of education in their lives. When parents are engaged it sends out the message that their wellbeing is important, which makes children aware that they are cherished (Erturgut & Erturgut, 2010). This positively influences learners' self-esteem and increases their sense of security and emotional stability. Parents have the responsibility to continuously encourage their children to reach their full potential as this is likely to enhance their self-esteem, which impacts their behaviour. Gadsden et al. (2014) state that when learners have a positive self-esteem, they are considered capable of dealing with any academic demands and challenges. A positive self-esteem enables learners to view academic demands as challenges to be overcome. This implies that harmonious relationships between parents and children provide reinforcement and confidence in their children to face any challenges and problems that might emerge in their lives.

Like self-esteem, learners' motivation is increased when parents illustrate curiosity in their children's learning and engage with school-related activities. Niu (2016) postulate that parents' engagement with schools is positively related to motivation. For example, when parents engage in activities such as writing, learners ultimately become motivated to read. Learners also tend to enjoy school more and are inspired to learn. That is why Fan and Williams (2010) state that learners are inspired to learn when educational activities are performed with their parents. This suggests that learners are encouraged to perform and do their best to make their parents proud.

2.5 Benefits of Parental Engagement for Different Stakeholders

It is critical for school principals to understand that parental engagement benefits everyone in the school community, including parents, teachers and learners. This

happens particularly when there is school-parent collaboration. To stress this point, Sapungan and Sapungan (2014:14) went as far as saying that strong collaboration between the school and parents unleashes what they called a “tsunami of improvements” in both the physical and academic performance of the school. It must, however, be pointed out that although parental engagement is beneficial to everyone, it benefits different stakeholders in different ways as the discussion in the following sections shows.

2.5.1 Benefits for parents

Parents benefit from their engagement with the school in several ways. Firstly, they become confident in their decision-making skills and their parenting abilities (Xiao et al., 2011). Parents can partake in the decision-making process when requested by schools and there is an increase in parents’ capacity to learn with their children. Secondly, parents acquire more knowledge about their children’s academic development and the school curriculum. According to Durisic and Bunijevac (2017), once parents understand the school curriculum, their perceptions change of what learners need and they provide additional assistance, thus forming a better relationship with their children. This implies that parents can develop a stronger commitment to their children’s education. Thirdly, parents can establish supportive networks, foster optimistic relationships among school staff members and comprehend school norms. Fox and Olsen (2014) explains this succinctly by stating that parents develop self-efficacy beliefs and acquire positive experiences when they work with teachers and the school, and this leads to improved communication, which is important for effective parent participation in school matters. Lastly, parents tend to have a changed perception and stronger commitment to their children’s school, resulting in parents feeling a sense of appreciation because of the relationship between the school and themselves.

2.5.2 Benefits for learners

Learners can achieve more, regardless of their socio-economic status, cultural background, or parents’ educational levels when there is parental engagement. According to Ankrum (2016), parental engagement helps learners achieve more

holistically, improve their behaviour, develop a positive self-esteem, complete tasks and obtain better academic results. This implies that the most precise predictor of learners' accomplishments and overall success in school is not household income, social status, or cultural background but the extent to which a learners' parents are able to establish a home environment that promotes learning. In addition, learners from diverse cultural backgrounds can also progress when their parents are actively engaged in their educational life. This is why Olsen and Fuller (2010) assert that through parental engagement, the school and parents collaborate to bridge the gap between the culture at home and the culture at school. Thus, differences are put aside and there is a mutual understanding to accommodate the diversity of learners' needs.

2.5.3 Benefits for teachers

Teachers' morale is high when schools have a high percentage of parents engaging in their children's education. According to Brownlee (2015), teachers receive support and gain respect from parents. This suggests that the active participation of the parents in the school reduces the traditional tendency to shift the blame onto teachers when children fail to achieve from teaching and learning. Communication is also improved between teachers and parents, leading to parents helping teachers to successfully use curriculum guides and to change their perceptions of children. Hence learners can spend more time doing their school work because their parents understand what is expected from them at school. Improved communication leads to collaboration between parents and teachers. In addition, parents acquire a better understanding of learners' families, cultural backgrounds and their diverse needs. Lin and Bates (2014) state that through parental engagement, teachers become aware about their heterogeneous learners and attempt to accommodate their needs. This implies that due to teachers having a better knowledge of their learners and their families' backgrounds, they are able to rekindle their own enthusiasm for teaching and are left feeling motivated.

2.6 Conditions Constraining Parental Engagement in Multicultural School Settings

There are many factors influencing school-parent engagement, including teachers' attitude and their lack of adequate training, cultural and traditional beliefs, communication and language barriers, socio-economic status and poverty, parents' self-perception and level of education, job dynamics and time, as well as the institutional organisation (Michael et al., 2012). The following sections discuss some of the reasons that affect parents' level of engagement in a multicultural school setting.

2.6.1 Teachers' attitude

Many teachers do not attempt to engage with parents because of certain beliefs. According to Hornby (2011), many teachers have the perception that parents are not concerned about their children's education. This implies that some teachers feel there is no use in putting in any effort to try to engage with parents as they have no interest in their children's academic performance. My contention is that teachers need to understand what actually prevents parents from engaging with schools instead of having preconceived beliefs. Many teachers fail to take the time to get to know the backgrounds and communities from which their learners come. Michael et al. (2012) posit that many teachers are oblivious to their learners' family structure, community practices and the issues that exist in learners' communities. This results in many teachers referring to learners' home environments as inadequate and deficient to enable them to attain success.

2.6.2 Cultural barriers and traditional beliefs

Cultural barriers and traditional beliefs in schools affect the level of parental engagement. Okeke (2014) postulates that most parents in multi-ethnic societies experience more obstacles, especially relating to language differences. Families whose home language is not the same as the language in the school face a barrier as they find it difficult to communicate with the school. Some families whose cultural norms and language are different from those of their children's school, find it extremely difficult to comprehend what their responsibilities are at school and are unable to

provide their children with assistance in learning activities (Okeke, 2014). Cultural barriers are an inhibiting component to gain the complete support of parents within multicultural schools (Durisic & Bunijevac, 2017). This implies that there are diverse needs in multicultural school settings due to the cultural differences. My contention is that schools must take responsibility to ensure that mandatory measures are taken to accommodate the diverse needs within their particular setting. Mleczo and Kington (2013) posit that schools should be held accountable for the lack of parental engagement because in their setting are their traditional methods, defined as restricted and auxiliary roles for parents. This means that many schools have not amended their traditional operations to make way to accommodate the diverse needs that now prevail in schools

2.6.3 Communication and language barriers

Through communication, information is shared between parents and the school. Communication is vital to ensure effective partnerships between the school and parents, as the literature shows (Makgopa & Mokhele, 2013; Mbokodi & Singh, 2011). This is one way for parents to be informed about their children's academic progression and for the school to be made aware of the family and community issues that affect children's development. However, lack of effective communication is a barrier for effective parental engagement. Shambare (2014) argues that when schools make no attempts to communicate with parents or vice versa, then school-parent engagement is not possible. Thus, for effective communication to prevail there has to be a joint partnerships and efforts to ensure that it is not one sided.

Schools see verbal communication as unsuccessful attempts to communicate. Bambaeroo and Shakrpour (2017) points out that verbal communication is often distorted while written documentation sometimes does not reach home or some parents are unable to read it. Parents' inability to read is closely related to language barriers, which become restraining barriers for parental engagement. Language is a factor that contributes to the intensity of communication between parents and schools (Parumbu & Necsoi, 2013). The language of communication aids parents and schools to comprehend how significant communication is for effective parent-school engagement. Reynolds, Crea, Medina, Degan, and Mc Roy (2015) point out that using

technology such as emails, text messages, and WhatsApp leads to some parents feeling frustrated as the platform of communication is not in their home language, making it challenging for many parents to communicate via technology. Other commonly used methods such as letters, notices, letters of invitation are also seen as ineffective methods of communication. Mbokodi and Singh (2011) highlight that parents cannot comprehend what message is being conveyed and they often rely on their children to communicate the message to them, which is often unreliable (Naicker, 2013). Therefore, schools end up without communication being accomplished.

2.6.4 Socio-economic status and poverty

The socio-economic status of parents is a major factor that contributes to the lack of parental engagement. Parental engagement differs vastly between rich and poor parents and is dependent on a family's socio-economic context (Motala & Lexumo, 2014). Lower socio-economic families tend to be mediocre when engaging in educational issues, while parents with a high socio-economic status are more engaged in the school and the education of their children (Vellymalay, 2012). The poorer a family is, the less capable they are to help their children at home with educational problems, and the wealthier a family, the more capable they are to provide for their children (Motala & Lexumo, 2014). Munje and Mncube (2018) agrees with this contention and argued that some parents from poor backgrounds place less emphasis on education compared to wealthier parents. Parents who earn a low income tend to view education and the academic achievement of their children as something of not high value.

2.6.5 Parents' self-perception and level of education

The self-perception of parents and their level of education play a significant role in their level of parental engagement. Some parents feel negatively about themselves, and this impedes their relationship with the school. Hornby and Lafaele (2011) postulate that some parents had bad experiences during their own school careers, which make them hesitant to engage with their children's school. This implies that some parents feel that they are not competent enough to engage with schools and their children's education because of their poor educational backgrounds. Many

parents feel they lack the necessary knowledge and cannot contribute towards the educational advancement of their children, which leads to them not engaging in school-related activities. Michael et al. (2012) highlight that these parents feel inferior and uncertain when communicating or making attempts to engage with the schools due to their lack/limited level of education. Thus, parents' ideologies hamper their level of engagement. In addition, some parents believe that because they pay school fees, the responsibility of their children's education lies entirely with the school. Vassallo (2018) assert that some parents have the mind-set that because teachers are qualified to teach their children, they are solely responsible for all the educational aspects of their children's lives. Thus, parents' excuses to shift their responsibilities onto teachers and schools lead to a failure in collaboration and school-parent engagement does not occur.

Parents' low level of education also contributes to their limited parental engagement. According to Mbokodi and Singh (2011), parents who are illiterate fear that they cannot make any valuable contributions to the school and cannot provide any assistance because of their inability to comprehend what various tasks entails. This implies that some parents use their low levels of education as a justification to not engage in their children's educational development. My contention is that some parents consider their low level of education as an appropriate cover-up to circumvent performing their parental duties. Vellymalay (2012) supports this contention and alluded that despite some parents abandoning their roles and responsibilities regarding their children's education because of their educational background, there are other parents with a low level of education who are actively engaged in their children's educational life and with the school. Therefore, there are some parents who are willing to engage in school-related activities and their children's education despite their level of education.

2.6.6 Job dynamics and time

Demographics are another factor that influences lack of parental engagement as some parents work in areas far away from their children's school. Michael et al. (2012) state that parents who work far from their children's school usually do not have accessible transport to engage with schools. Because parents work far from the school and their demanding work schedules, there is little parental engagement. Even some parents

who work closer to the school are stressed and overwhelmed by their work, and they find parental engagement overwhelming because of work demands. Sometimes parents' jobs hinder their engagement in their children's education (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). The occasional weekend shifts that some parents experience with their jobs result in restricted time available for them to check on their children's school progression and leave little time to engage with schools. Other working parents complain about the lack of time to engage with schools because of work commitments. Due to the amount of time some parents spend at work or travelling for work, their children are usually left with grandparents or domestic helpers (Okeke, 2014). They are unable to fulfil their basic parental responsibilities, such as taking care of their children. My contention is that if parents are unable to supervise their children because of work commitments, it is unlikely that they will be able to engage themselves within their children's school.

2.7 School-Parent Engagement in Developed Countries

The importance of school-parent engagement is well acknowledged in developed countries. It has been accepted globally that parents are indispensable and significant in their children's educational development (Vassallo, 2018). Despite the significance placed on parental engagement it remains an issue. This section discusses school-parent engagement in two developed countries.

2.7.1 *The United States of America*

The US government acknowledged the role parents play as children's first and most fundamental teacher from birth and the importance of them engaging in their children's educational life. The government stipulated under *The Goals 2000: Educate America Act* that by the year 2000 all schools must have improved parental engagement for the all-inclusive advancement of the children (Olatoye & Agbatogun, 2009). This urged many schools to develop approaches to get parents to engage with the school and in their children's educational life. However, the level of parental engagement varies for different groups who live in America. European-American parents are more involved than other groups in volunteering in events as equated to other groups like Chinese

Americans, African Americans and Hispanics (Huntsinger & Jose, 2009). Some European-American parents engage in their children's education at school while others prefer to engage with their education at home with activities such as storytelling, reading and playing educational games (Graves & Wright, 2011). These parents have different preferences in how to engage with their children's education, however they are engaged. European-American parents' level of education is also attributed to their socio-economic status. Privileged parents are more engaged and have daily discussions about school, provide help with tasks, and engage in their children's extra mural activities. Underprivileged parents appear to be uninterested in their children's education (Cooper, Crosnoe, Suizzo, & Pituch, 2010).

Chinese-American parents are enthusiastic at home about their children's education. Most Chinese-American parents help their children with homework, monitor their home activities, and even go the extra mile to ensure their children's academic tasks are completed (Huntsinger & Jose, 2009). They therefore see education as important, irrespective of their socio-economic status and view their children's academic performance as a reflection of their family.

African-American parents engage more with school-related activities. Lareau and Muñoz (2012) postulate that these parents engage in school meetings and volunteering activities, meaning that these parents show greater concern and accountability for their children's education. These studies showed that the level of parental engagement differs among the ethnic groups across America.

2.7.2 United Kingdom

In the United Kingdom, parents' socio-economic status is not seen as barrier for parental engagement. Hartas (2011) states that privileged and underprivileged parents engage enthusiastically in the education of their children. Parents are engaged in educational activities at home such as learning how to read and write and learning the alphabet. However, school-parent engagement is not fully supported by most schools in the United Kingdom. There are certain schools that are not welcoming to parents from a divergent ethnic and cultural backgrounds (Wilson, 2011). Furthermore, Wilson (2011) asserts that parents, especially those of Bangladeshi and Pakistani origin, receive minimal information from the school. This implies that these parents are

marginalised on the basis of their cultural background and that the problem lies with the schools and not the parents. These schools do not attempt to monitor parents' attendance at school meetings or events nor do they encourage them to engage with the school because of their cultural differences. Hartas (2011) postulates that these schools only engage with these parents to discuss negative matters such as their children misbehaving in school. Thus, irrespective of the legislation implemented by the British government, schools are not successfully promoting school-parent engagement.

2.8 School-Parent Engagement in Developing Countries

Various countries have been implementing educational reforms to strengthen parental engagement. Parental engagement in some developing countries are increasing, but in others it is still a matter of concern (Ng, Wing & Lee, 2015). The following subsections discuss school-parent engagement in two developing countries.

2.8.1 Kenya

The perception among parents in Kenya has always been that education is the sole responsibility of the school and the teachers. Kipkorir (2014) asserts that parental engagement has been limited to financial contributions and teacher-parent meetings. School-parent engagement based on joint partnerships did not exist in Kenya's education system. However, with the introduction of the new curriculum in 2018, the role of parents became crucial for academic success as the new curriculum made provisions for parents to be involved in their children's education. Muigai (2018) states that parents are required to be involved in their children's learning. However, despite the Kenyan education policy advocating parental engagement, it is still limited. Only a small number of parents concern themselves with what happens in schools, while others are only concerned because they are part of the Parent Teachers Association or the Boards of Governors (Manasi, Ndiku, Sang & Ejakait, 2015). Manasi et al. (2015) state that The Basic Government of Kenya Education Act of 2013 require the school boards of management to assess the needs of the school with the full participation of parents. But some parents only visit schools when their children are participating in special events or when there are complaints about their children's

behaviour. Echaune, Ndiku, and Sang (2015) state that parental engagement is limited to financial contributions, the Parent-Teacher Association and Board of Governors. Thus, parental engagement to benefit learners and schools is limited in Kenyan schools.

Parents' level of education contributes significantly to their level of engagement in Kenya. Parents with high levels of education are more engaged with their children's school and education, have conversations about school with their children, and have higher educational expectations for their children than parents with lower levels of education (Kipkorir, 2014). This implies that parents who have a poor educational background lack awareness of their responsibilities and obligations towards their children's education. Many parents demonstrate a consistent lack of awareness of the full content of educational policies. Parents are aware that education is free and mandatory, but they remain unaware of the roles and responsibilities that the policies ascribe to them with regards to school-parent engagement (Republic of Kenya Education Act, 2013).

2.8.2 Botswana

There is minimal parental engagement in Botswana despite government efforts. The government of Botswana attempted to increase parental involvement through *The First Commission of Education of 1977* in its philosophical framework of self-sufficiency that contended that communities and parents must acknowledge their obligations for the education and training of their children (Republic of Botswana, 1977). The assurance for formal education and self-sufficiency was further supported when the commission emphasised that all adults must help nurture children. Therefore, attempts have been made for school-parent collaboration in which the school and parents work together in a mutual partnership for the betterment of learners and the school at large.

However, in Botswana many parents have negative attitudes towards engaging in their children's education and lack the necessary abilities to engage with their children's education and school. Makwinja (2017) asserts that many parents do not participate in sharing ideas to help with the progression of school results and do not voluntarily offer their services to help schools. This implies that most parents see the school as

the property of teachers where they have little room to help their children. In addition, social-economic status affects the levels of parental engagement. Pansiri and Bulawa (2013) postulate that parents from high income residential areas are literate, attend school activities in large numbers as a community and follow up on their children's academic performance. This means that wealthy families unite with their communities and engage with the schools. Parents from low income residential areas have low parental engagement. These parents do not have the time to engage with the school or their children's education as they are concerned with meeting their basic needs, which results in no attention being paid to children (Pansiri & Bulawa, 2013). Children from poor households suffer from neglect, spend too much time on the streets, and some are vendors after school (Pansiri & Bulawa, 2013). These children focus on helping their parents earn an income rather than their studies.

2.9 School-Parent Engagement in the South African Context

There is a noticeable difference in the level of parental engagement in the South African educational setting between the apartheid period before the 1994 and the democratic period following the first democratic elections in 1994 because of the perceptions of the residing governments during these crucial periods (Harden, 2014). After the 1994 elections, South Africa attained its freedom, and the South African government democratised the education system that had formerly been designed for racial division through legislation (Van Wyk, 2010). This resulted in a shift from an autocratic education system to a democracy supported by a new constitution with explicit commitment and accountability to democracy (Harden, 2014). The new constitution and education system attempted to include parents in the education system. Vasallo (1018) states that that one significant objective of the dissolution of the apartheid education system was to include parents in the education system and to ensure that they participate in their children's education and school. The following subsections explicitly explain school-parent engagement prior to 1994 and after 1994.

2.9.1 Parental engagement prior to 1994

Parental engagement prior to 1994 was restricted. According to Michael et al. (2012), school leadership in South Africa was instructional and authoritarian, meaning that

principals and teachers did not share power with other stakeholders. Parental engagement was represented as statutory parent bodies, which were usually referred to as statutory management councils and existed in most former white schools (Harden, 2014). These bodies had particular authorities given to them by law. According to Van Schalkwyk (1988), the members who served on these bodies were elected by parents. However, this measure to involve parents was unsuccessful.

Additional attempts were made by the apartheid government to engage parents in the education system. In 1953, the apartheid government established school communities as a means of educational provision for black schools (De Wet & Wolhuter, 2010). Four to six of the committee members were voted in by parents while the remaining members were of government appointees. Black communities did not approve of the implementation of school committees, and most schools decided to establish parent-teacher associations (Heystek & Paquette, 1999). However, these bodies did not have any power acknowledged by the country's legislation. This suggests that additional attempts to involve parents involvement were unsuccessful because the measures were too instructional. In addition, Van Wyk (2010) elucidates that parental involvement prior to 1994 in South African schools were focused on matters relating to school fees. Schools did not feel the need for parents to be a part of school-related activities or decision-making, therefore authority was not shared. Thus, principals and teachers had complete control over learners and educational matters.

2.9.2 The situation after 1994

Democracy in South Africa was meant to combat any form of unfair discrimination, intolerance, sexism as well as racism, and the DBE and the nine provincial departments of education had to execute it in schools. This meant that numerous efforts were made to demonstrate the management of education through decentralisation, which was trending globally (Van Wyk, 2010). Thus, the redistribution of functions, power, administration and responsibilities from national government to local levels was a massive accomplishment that displayed this transformation. As part of the transformation, the DBE issued the *Organisation, Government and Funding of Schools White Paper 2* (Department of Education, 1996) to promote participatory

democracy at school level by affording parents dynamic and accountable roles in joint decision-making (RSA, 1996b).

In addition, the South African government established a new act to involve parents. At the start of 1996, the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 was actualised and ordered parents to be partners in instruction and to practice their privileges to be engaged with the training of their children. It depicts the essential jobs and duties of parents, set related prerequisites for schools for parents' right to data and to accommodate parent and network portrayal in compulsory School Governing Bodies (SGBs). The South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 states that the post of a chairperson may only be held by a parent. This implies that SGB members are welcome to partake in different sub-committees initiated with the purpose of advancing the interest of learners by means of their expertise (RSA, 1996b). Despite the legislation implemented by the government to ensure parents engage in their children's educational life and school, most parents in South Africa are not actively engaged. The reason for this lack of engagement is due to family backgrounds, variables such as race, socio-economic level, ethnicity or marital status (Kipkorir, 2014). This has a negative effect on schools as they struggle to engage with uninvolved parents.

Although the implementation of the mandate for parents to serve on the SGBs may work in urban areas, in rural areas there are parents who have different socio-economic statuses, and due to their illiteracy, they are marginalised and find it hard to participate in SGBs. Michael et al. (2012) concurs that in some schools there are irregularities with SGBs as middle-class parents are more engaged than poorer parents. Thus, parents who reside in rural areas may be present at SGB elections but choose not to get themselves elected. Vasallo (2018) asserts that despite the decentralisation of schools, at the moment active parent participation does not always occur in South Africa.

2.10 Methods principals use to engage with parents in multicultural school settings

Principals engage with parents through mainly through two ways: verbal and written communication. According to Michael et al. (2012) principals engage with parents verbally by speaking to them at parent meetings, school functions and telephonically.

Shezi (2012) states that principals also set up appointments to meet with parents usually to discuss an issue that concerns their child or if an incident has occurred. In addition, principals engage with parents through written form of communication via emails and letters. Chowa et al. (2012) points out that principal's engagement with parents has transitioned to incorporate technology. Many principals now use social media platforms and applications such as Whatsapp and Facebook to engage with parents frequently.

2.11 Strategies that principals can use to overcome challenges with school-parent engagement in multicultural school settings

According to Vasallo (2018) principals need to be cognisant of the importance that parents have towards children's education and to the school itself. This suggests that principals as school leaders need to be sensitive towards parents' diverse needs and see their ability to be able to contribute positively to the school (Johnson, 2015). This can occur by principals creating a welcoming and warm atmosphere for parents. Michael et al. (2012) concurs with Vasallo (2018) and further indicates that by principals establishing a relationship with parents on the basis of trust and respect, parents need will be accommodated for. Principals need to take into account various communication strategies whilst considering the linguistic, prosodics and behaviours of all parents. In view of this strategy, Jappinen (2017) states that principals need to employ cultural translators and mediators. This means that principals are in a position to catalyse processes that will enable efficient school-parent engagement in multicultural school settings. Policies aimed at greater school-parent engagement in multicultural school settings need to be rewritten to reflect the diverse needs that prevails today (Kipkorir, 2014). The engagement of parents from diversified cultures into the construction, implementation and evaluation of newly crafted policies would set the pace for principals to overcome the challenges experienced with parents in multicultural school settings (Graves & Wright, 2011).

2.12 Summary

The global situation for effective parental engagement in multicultural schools clearly shows a dire need for a strong relationship between schools and parents. Parents are the first and most important teachers of children from birth, and their engagement

inexorably causes dramatic transformations in the governance of schools (Michael et al., 2012). My contention remains that without a mutual relationship between parents and schools the success of learners will be impaired. From the literature it is evident that there are numerous factors obstructing parents from vigorously engaging in the education of their children (Vassallo, 2018). However, it is imperative for schools to make an intensive effort to close the gaps so parents and the school collaborate to benefit learners and the school. In addition, it is time for parents to be recognised and acknowledged as a valuable resource by schools to help learners acquire the necessary skills for life. The management and leadership of parental engagement is essential in sustaining the participation of parents and the degree to which they engage with the school. Hollander (1964) views imply that stakeholders should form a united team and benefit each other. Furthermore, leadership provided by principals is imperative for successful school-parent engagement. Successful leadership is not an option in the turbulent accountability and standard driven didactic environment of the 21st century; it is critical to ensure parental engagement in multicultural schools (Vasallo, 2018). The decentralisation of schools and the expected rigorous standards put principals in a position where they are accountable for school-parent engagement. To lead, learning is a skill, and successful leaders understand the high expectations placed on them (Van Wyk, 2010).

This chapter gave an extensive literature review and the theoretical framework of the study. The theoretical framework used for this study is Hollander's (1964) relational theory of leadership. Literature related to the study was reviewed by explaining successful principals' leadership practices, the rationale for parental engagement in multicultural school settings, the benefits of parental engagement for different stakeholders, and the conditions constraining parental engagement in multicultural school settings. This chapter concluded by reviewing literature of parental engagement from different contexts: internationally, continentally and locally. The next chapter outlines the research methodology that was used in this study.



CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 focused on the literature review and the theoretical framework underpinning this study. This chapter focuses on the research design, the research methodology and the data collection strategies used in this study and outlines how the research process unfolded. Qualitative research was selected as the research method and the interpretivist paradigm was used. The research was conducted at multicultural public primary schools and secondary schools. I used semi-structured telephonic interviews to ask the study participants questions that probed their interpretations of the phenomenon being investigated in their own setting. This chapter also outlines the ontological and epistemological assumptions from which the study was approached. The purpose of this study was to examine how principals practice relational leadership in a multicultural setting. This chapter focuses on the methods I used to answer the research questions set out in section 1.4.

3.2 Research Design

A research design is a description of the measures guiding a study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). Ultimately, the research design specified the overall strategy that was used in this study. A multiple case study design was used in this study.

A case study is defined as a comprehensive inquiry into a single entity (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). The researcher can decide what to examine, recognising it as a case (Anderson, 2010). A case can be something actual, such as an individual or a group, or it can be something less concrete, like a programme or an occasion (Rose, 2015). The aim of case studies is to provide clarifications for human activities that occur in the actual world while taking into consideration the context in which it takes place (O'Hara, Carter, Dewis, Kay, & Wainwright, 2011). This implies that a case study is a logical investigation into an incident with the purpose of providing an explanation of the phenomenon of interest.

A multiple case study design was chosen for this study to understand one situation in great detail and to make sure that the evidence provided is resilient and trustworthy, (Gustaffson, 2017). When a case study is conducted, the researcher must first recognise the case as well as the exact type of case that will be used in the study (Gustaffson, 2017). The case I identified for this study is school-parent engagement. Anderson (2010) states that a multiple case study can be beneficial to the researcher as it enables them to evaluate the information for each situation and transversely different situations. The rationale behind using a multiple case study design is based on the supposition that more case studies in research study make it more likely that the data will be assertive and consistent in its representativeness. A case study design is valuable as it is used to elucidate the phenomenon of school-parent engagement as a case that warrants special attention. In addition, it allowed me to develop a holistic understanding of school-parent engagement (Anderson, 2010).

3.2.1 Advantages of a case study design

A case study design is advantageous because it is a flexible method of investigation, which is ideal for studying a specific phenomenon within its natural setting (Maree, 2016). The case study design enabled me to understand what participants experienced in relation to the leadership practised by principals for school-parent engagement in a multicultural setting. Case studies also provide thorough and detailed accounts of actual circumstances rather than presenting generalised findings (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014), and it provides an explanation of the processes from the beginning to the end of this study (Anderson, 2010). Furthermore, it helped me to elucidate the social phenomena and the understanding of behavioural circumstances from the study participants' viewpoint. Using a case study design allowed me to collect data using various strategies such as observations, and audio and video recording. It is beneficial to gather information using these strategies as it enhances the theory generating competencies of the case and strengthens the validity of the study (Maree, 2016).

In this study, interview schedules were designed to reassure study participants so that they shared their experiences of parental engagement in their schools. Their positive

responses allowed them to disclose extra information that helped me comprehend their perspectives in-depth.

3.2.2 *Disadvantages of a case study design*

The core disadvantage of a case study design is that it uses a small sample size that is not representative of a big community (Suri, 2011). Results from a small sample size cannot be used to generalise an incidence or behaviour (Maree, 2016). In addition, it may convince the researcher to become prejudiced, and this can influence the reporting of the results (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). However, in the present study, I remained unbiased and proficient throughout the research process by listening attentively and not engaging with their responses.

Case studies are also time consuming and difficult to conduct because they generate extensive documents and reports (Crowe et al., 2011). In addition, because study participants share their personal experiences, it may result in long reports, and it is possible that some information can be lost or not written down due to time constraints (Crowe et al., 2011). However, in this study, the use of digital audio-tape recordings allowed me to save the entire interview and replay it when the need arose without any loss of information.

3.3 Research Methodology

Methodology relates to what the researcher does to conduct research (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). Various research methodologies can be used in research, but a researcher must choose the one that maximises the possibility of attaining the most desirable results for a study. In this study, a qualitative research method was used because of the nature of the research questions the study intended to address. Anderson (2010) states that the qualitative research method is more exploratory in nature, and in this study, it had the potential to provide me with insight into how leadership is practised by principals for school-parent engagement in a multicultural setting.

3.3.1 Qualitative research

This study adopted the qualitative research method. According to Pacho (2015), qualitative research is a natural approach that intends to study the phenomena being investigated in its natural setting. This implies that the research is conducted in real life situations. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) concur that qualitative research focuses on discovering the natural flow of events and how study participants would view them by making use of data generation strategies that are non-infering. In addition, qualitative research is used to comprehend study participants' perceptions and experiences of a particular situation (Johnson & Christensen, 2010). The purpose of qualitative researchers is to pursue an enhanced understanding of multifaceted circumstances. This results in qualitative researchers taking into consideration study participants' attitudes, behaviours, experiences and beliefs.

The rationale for using the qualitative research method in this study is firstly that I wanted to gain an understanding and provide a description of the phenomena being investigated from the study participants' perspective. Secondly, the qualitative research method was useful as I used it to provide responses about the multifaceted nature of the phenomena under investigation. Thirdly, it enabled me to form a holistic picture, provide an analysis in words, and report the comprehensive views of the study participants and their demeanour in a natural setting. In addition, it gave the participants the chance to voice their sentiments and assert their feelings about the phenomena.

3.4 Research Paradigm

Stephen, Antwi, and Kasim (2015) defines a research paradigm as an approach used to conduct research. Every research uses a research paradigm as a guide to develop the research method and implement the research in an appropriate and valid manner (Stephen et al., 2015). This study employed the interpretivist paradigm. Interpretivism is about understanding the world based on individuals' experiences (Anderson, 2010). O'Hara et al. (2011) postulate that the human perspective is sought in interpretivism. People are different and their perspectives of the world vary, and therefore, interpretivists emphasises the viewpoints of people and groups of individuals. There

is no fixed structure in an interpretivist society (Bartlett & Burton, 2012), but the social world is created through the interactions that takes place between individuals. Interpretivism aims to demonstrate how decisions are made by study participants in societal circumstances (O'Hara et al., 2011).

I used the interpretivist paradigm in this study because it enabled me to explore and understand different perspectives regarding the leadership practised by principals for parental engagement in multicultural schools, which further enabled me to make recommendations in the final chapter of this study. The interpretivist paradigm makes provision for the qualitative research approach that is aimed at acquiring rich data from the study participants (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). I chose the interpretivist paradigm because it allowed me to take into account the importance of how study participants created meaning out of their setting. Interpretivists assume that all human action is meaningful and must be interpreted within the setting of social practices.

I wanted to acknowledge the meanings that the study participants allocated to the topic being investigated, and therefore, I interacted with them and created knowledge that is transactional and personal in nature. In other words, as an interpretivist researcher, I sought a mutual understanding with the study participants about parental engagement. In search of this mutual understanding, I was aware that history and cultural and social forces might sway my own and the participants' viewpoint and interpretation.

3.5 Ontological and Epistemological Assumptions

This study was guided by carefully considered ontological and epistemological assumptions. These assumptions provided the perspectives from which the research proceeded.

3.5.1 *Ontological assumptions*

Ontology concerns the nature of reality and existence in a study as well as what constitutes reality (Scotland, 2012). The reality of this study is that in South Africa the education system has changed because of the shift from apartheid to democracy, and schools now have to accommodate all learners from various cultural backgrounds

(Erol & Turhan, 2018). I believe that the leadership of many principals now require a new approach to accommodate the diverse needs of parents, learners and other stakeholders. Principals must think about how to get parents to engage within schools and how to include parents from different cultures. Naicker and Mestry (2011) state that principals' leadership practices determine the level of engagement by stakeholders.

While conducting research, I understood the reality of the study participants from what they shared with me. All the study participants provided a depiction of their personal experiences of the subject at hand, and their accounts were of what appeared realistic to them. As they voiced their sentiments and gave insight into their experiences, I became involved by listening attentively to their experiences, and that created multiple realities for me.

3.5.2 *Epistemological assumptions*

Epistemology is the study and forms of knowledge (Scotland, 2012). The knowledge provided in this study is that South African schools are currently lacking effective leadership to engage parents in multicultural settings (Williams, 2011). All stakeholders in a school have differences, and in order for principals to accommodate these differences there must be a new approach to leadership. Principals have to make way for more vital aspects that relate to the nature of the school as a democratic community. According to Erol and Turhan (2018), principals must serve as intellectual leaders, honourable practitioners and agents of transformation; thus the principal ultimately becomes a model of the reconceptualised vision of what an educational leader ought to be.

The epistemological assumption of this study appeared when the study participants were required to answer questions that enabled them to express how they felt about the leadership practised by their principals for parental engagement in a multicultural school setting. I could detect their intuition, reliance and principles from their answers, and I discovered that it was clouded in hesitation and fear. Many study participants regarded their opinions as facts; therefore, their feelings and principles affected the way they viewed the leadership practised by principals for parental engagement. The social interactions between the study participants and myself became personal, which

led to them feel a sense of mistrust towards me. However, it was imperative for me to remain unbiased and focused during the interview process.

3.6 Sampling

According to Maree (2011), sampling is the method of selecting a certain percent of the population for a study. There are probability and non-probability sampling methods. Probability sampling includes systematic sampling, cluster sampling, simple random sampling and stratified sampling. Non-probability sampling includes purposive sampling, quota sampling, snowball sampling and convenience sampling. This study employed non-probability sampling. Non-probability sampling is the selection of a preselected population that was to be studied. Lavraskas (2013) concurs that it is a subjective method to choose which component is incorporated in the sample. From the non-probability sampling methods, I chose to use the purposive sampling technique.

3.6.1 Purposive sampling

I used purpose sampling to choose the study participants and research sites for this study. Gerrish and Lacey (2010) define purposive sampling as a sample that is preselected on purpose from the specific study population. McMillan and Schumacher (2014) state that purposive sampling allows choosing small groups or individuals who are likely to be knowledgeable and informative about the phenomenon of interest and selecting cases without needing to generalise to all cases. Purposive sampling allowed me to choose a sample that consisted of cases that are rich in information, where all pertinent stakeholders of the research are included, and that has sufficient diversity (Maree, 2016).

3.6.1.1 Advantages of purposive sampling

Using a purposive sampling approach enabled me to choose specific study participants who I believed were the fundamental holders of the information I needed to answer the research questions (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). Furthermore, it enabled me to select a diverse range of study participants that were not all in leadership positions to provide me with in-depth information regarding leadership for

school-parent engagement in a multicultural setting. Purposive sampling was convenient and cost effective as the research sites were sampled close to my area of residence. In addition, this approach was less time consuming as only appropriate study participants and research sites were sampled (Sharma, 2017).

3.6.1.2 *Disadvantages of purposive sampling*

Purposive sampling can lead to the researcher being biased (Sharma, 2017). It is not a good defence when the idea of a purposive sample has been generated based on the researcher's judgement as this increases the possibility of the researcher being bias. In addition, using purposive sampling makes it hard to ensure the sample is representative of the population (Gerrish & Lacey, 2010), making it difficult to convince the reader that the judgement used by the researcher to select specific study participants and research sites was appropriate for the study. Furthermore, it becomes even more difficult to convince the reader that research using a purposive sampling achieved logical and analytical generalisation (Sharma, 2017).

3.7 Selection of Study Participants

Austin and Sutton (2015) state that it is imperative to explain the method used to select study participants as it enables readers to understand why a particular group of study participants were selected. In this study, all participants were purposively selected with the help of the district officer based on their availability and eagerness to participate in the study. One principal, one HoD and one parent from each school were sampled, which resulted in three participants per school. These participants included both male and female participants from different racial and cultural backgrounds. Therefore, the participants who came from different positions and cultural backgrounds were able to provide valuable information about the phenomena I was exploring.

3.8 Selection of Research Sites

The research was conducted in the Pretoria East, the Tshwane North and South district in the province of Gauteng. Three primary and three secondary schools were sampled on the basis that all six schools were public schools and multicultural in nature. When selecting the schools, I got information from the district office about the

cultural differences in each school to ensure that the chosen schools were multicultural. I chose these schools as research sites because they are situated in Pretoria East, where I live, and this saved me time and travelling costs, which made it convenient and easy. The selection of the six schools that participated in this study depended on the consent received from the Gauteng Department of Education (Annexure A & B), the Ethics Committee at the University of Pretoria (page ii), and permission from the study participants (Annexure C–F).

3.9 Data Collection Techniques

The techniques chosen to conduct research are as important as the research process (Yin, 2011). Data collection techniques are the methods used to collect information from study participants through which the data will be obtained for analysis and recording. Semi-structured telephonic interviews were conducted using prepared interview schedules. All data received was saved using digital audio-tape recordings.

3.9.1 Interview schedules

I designed different interview schedules for the different types of study participants such as the principals, HoDs and parents (Annexures G, H and I). The interviews were scheduled to take approximately 20 minutes with each study participant. The questions on the interview schedules were designed to obtain relevant information about the phenomenon (Adams, 2015). The interview schedules contained open ended questions that started with ‘why’, ‘where’, ‘when’ and ‘how’ (Weller et al., 2018). There were also ‘What’ questions on the interview schedules to enable study participants to express themselves, and close-ended questions were asked to confirm answers and responses (Weller et al., 2018).

3.9.2 Preparing for the interview process

The preparation phase of the interview process was imperative. A researcher must plan in advance for the interviews to achieve maximum success (Adams, 2015). I took the following steps to plan for successful interviews:

- I learned the interview questions thoroughly and understood the purpose of each question.
- I asked each study participant when they would be available to take my call to conduct the interview. This was done to ensure there were no interruptions.
- I planned to have a casual approach that was pleasant, neutral and professional at all times.
- Study participants were given an explanation of the reasons for the interviews and were informed about the purpose of this study.
- I assured the study participants that they would remain anonymous. They were also assured that pseudonyms and codes would be used to record their responses and these answers would be grouped into themes to be analysed and reported.
- I also assured the study participants that the information they provided would be kept confidential and that only people interested in academics would read the findings.
- I explained the entire interview process to all the study participants. They were also informed that I would be taking notes during the interviews and that the entire interview would be recorded using a digital audio-tape recorder as the telephone call would be done on the speaker phone. I obtained permission from the study participants to have the speaker phone on loud and to use a digital audio-tape recorder before conducting the interviews.
- Even though the duration of the interviews were indicated on the consent letters, the study participants were reminded that the interview would last approximately 20–40 minutes.
- After briefing the study participants on the interview process, they were asked if they had any questions and if I needed to clarify any part of the interview process.

3.9.3 *Semi-structured telephonic interviews*

Initially, I planned to use semi-structured face-to-face interviews, but the Covid-19 pandemic forced me to change my research method. This disease is caused by a severe acute respiratory syndrome and is transmitted through droplets from a person

who is infected. Suppawittaya, Yiemphat, and Yasri (2020) state that medical experts believed that social distancing was the best way to contain the spread of the virus. The South African government implemented a country-wide lockdown on midnight of Thursday 26 March 2020 to ensure that the spreading of the virus was contained and to slow the rate of infection (Bizcommunity, 2020). The nationwide lockdown entailed the closure of schools, which meant I was unable to conduct the research at the selected research sites. When lockdown eased and the country moved to lockdown level 3, the DBE permitted a gradual reopening of schools, which was described as a 'phasing-in-approach' (Nkanjeni, 2020). The DBE passed a new rule that no school visitors were allowed onto the school premises to adhere to the social distancing rules and to prevent the spread of the Covid-19 virus (Nkanjeni, 2020). This further resulted in me being unable to go onto the research sites, and the Gauteng Department of Education requested a new application to conduct research via the telephone. Therefore, this study used semi-structured telephonic interviews with the sampled study participants.

According to Farooq and de Villiers (2017), telephonic interviews are a means of communicating between two people to exchange information and thoughts through questioning and responding, which results in communication and a combined consultation of understanding the discussed topic. Thus, I asked the study participants questions to gather information and to acquire knowledge regarding the principles as well as the sentiments of the study participants, which resulted in the interviews being a two-way communication. In addition, the semi-structured telephonic interviews were conducted to gain an understanding about the leadership provided for school-parent engagement in a multicultural setting. I conducted semi-structured telephonic interviews with one principal, one HoD and one parent per a school, resulting in three interviews per school. Eighteen semi-structured telephonic interviews were conducted for this study as six schools were sampled. The participants had diverse cultural backgrounds and comprised of both male and females.

3.9.3.1 *Advantages of semi-structured telephonic interviews*

Semi-structured telephonic interviews were advantageous because they were flexible and easy to change (Maree, 2016). In addition, it enabled me to use probe questions

where clarity was needed. I used telephonic interviews to help me view matters from the perspective of the study participants (Maree, 2016). The study participants could make their own contributions and remarks on the research questions and provided additional data I needed to answer the research questions. I used pre-determined questions to attain the data to answer the research questions. In addition, any other questions that arose from the research process that was connected to the data needed to answer the research questions were taken into consideration. Semi-structured telephonic interviews were further advantageous as I prepared the questions ahead of time, which enabled me to be prepared and appear competent during the interview process (Maree, 2016).

3.9.3.2 *Disadvantages of semi-structured telephonic interviews*

Semi-structured telephonic interviews must be carefully planned otherwise the questions will appear prescriptive. Semi-structured telephonic interviews lack access to the participants' natural environment. Furthermore, Naicker (2013) states that some study participants may not want to reveal certain information. In order to address these disadvantages, I ensured that my participants felt comfortable speaking to me by constantly asking them if they were okay and I frequently reminded them of their identity remaining anonymous. This led to them revealing sacred information and providing me with details of their natural environment.

3.9.3.3 *Limitations during the interview process*

- Interviews had to be rescheduled or postponed due to other duties the study participants needed to attend to.
- Conflict arose between some members of the SGB and principals as some of them felt excluded when they were not chosen to participate in the study.
- Some study participants felt uncomfortable with the research topic and feared being victimised at the school for sharing their sentiments.
- I had to reschedule a number of appointments because of my work commitments.
- I experienced difficulties with network connections and had to call back study participants when I had better reception.

3.9.4 Note taking

According to Phillippi and Lauderdale (2017), note taking means writing notes during the interview process. It is a frequently used technique because of its simplicity. Phillippi and Lauderdale (2017) state that note taking is highly recommended in qualitative research as means of documenting relevant contextual information.

3.9.4.1 Advantages of note taking

It was essential to tell the study participants on the telephone that I was taking notes and what I wrote in the notes as it allowed them to understand what I was doing. They realised that their input was significant enough to be documented, and this led them to focus and provide me with valuable information. I only wrote key words and phrases as notes (Tessier, 2012). These notes allowed me to confirm key points and to reaffirm my understanding (Tessier, 2012). The notes helped me when I needed to confirm facts and gave the study participants some flexibility where they could rethink their answers and change their responses (Adedayo, 2010).

3.9.4.2 Disadvantages of note taking

If note taking is not well managed during the interview, it can lead to too much time being spent on writing notes, which can lead to loss of focus for both study participants and the researcher (Tessier, 2012). While I wrote the notes, I would be silent, which could create the impression that I was absent. I was cautious not to spend too much time writing notes as the study participants would have lost interest in the research process. In addition, it was very time consuming to collate and make sense of the notes after the interviews (Adedayo, 2010). Furthermore, notes cannot be replayed and is too simple to verify the information, and notes are often incomplete or biased (Tessier, 2012). Notes can also allow for the interpretation of the information received to surface from the researcher's perspective, leading to study participants' perspectives being under represented (Tessier, 2012). In order to address these concerns, I firstly only wrote down key points to avoid losing focus and still being able to speak to my participants whilst note taking. After every note taken, I collated the

information as I was able to recall important information. To prevent biasness, my participants were able to verify my notes.

3.9.5 Digital audio-tape recordings

Audio-tape recordings was the preferred method of saving data during the interviews (Tessier, 2012).

3.9.5.1 Advantages of using digital audio-tape recordings

Digital audio-tape recordings played a significant role in recalling the conversations I had with study participants. They captured study participants' tone of voices and emotional outbursts (Tessier, 2012). Audio-tape recordings served as a credibility and authenticity tool for me because it provided proof that the interviews were always conducted in an ethical manner and that the results were not fabricated (Yin, 2011). Digital audio-tape recordings were saved on flash drives and then transferred and saved on my laptop, which meant the data was available for a long time. I made the audio-tape recordings available to my supervisor, Dr R.N. Marishane, as required.

During the analysis and reporting of results, the data could be rewritten by replaying and listening to the audio-tape recordings (Tessier, 2012). The recordings enabled me to re-listen to the conversations that were not heard clearly and needed to be interpreted again. This helped me to create themes and group the data according to the differences and commonalities.

3.9.5.2 Disadvantages of using digital audio-tape recordings

Some conversations recorded during the interview process was irrelevant to the study and could not be cut out of the recording. It was time consuming to listen and transcribe the information from the recordings.

I experienced the following challenges while using the audio-tape recorder:

- The digital audio-tape recorder was new and I struggled to learn how to use all the different features.
- I had to recharge the batteries after every interview.
- Because the digital audio-tape recorder is very small, I frequently misplaced it.

- The maximum volume was insufficient during some interviews as there was a lot of noise in these interviews.

In order to rectify these disadvantages, I did the following:

- I watched YouTube videos to learn how to use all the features.
- I purchased extra batteries in case I forgot to recharge the batteries after an interview.
- I kept the audio-tape in a specific compartment in my laptop bag to avoid it being misplaced and I kept replaying the interviews that had a lot of noise to verify my information.

3.10 Debriefing

According to Krogh, Bearman, and Nestel (2016) debriefing is a process during which study participants are reassured of the value their participation had in the research process. Researchers always have to bear in mind that some study participants may feel guilty and intimidated for sharing information with them. A way of reassuring study participants that their participation was valuable is to say ‘thank you’ at the end of every interview.

3.11 Data Analysis

Maree (2016) postulates that the aim of analysing qualitative data is to summarise what the researcher has seen, heard or observed in relation common words, themes, patterns or phrases that help the researcher understand and interpret the developing data. This study employed thematic data analysis. Maguire and Delahunt (2017) define thematic analysis as a method for recognising themes or patterns within qualitative data. I used Clarke and Braun’s (2013) six-step process for the thematic analysis. First, I first familiarised myself with the recorded data and transcribed it, and then I read and re-read the data. Thereafter, I jotted down central ideas. As King and Horrocks (2010) put it, transcribing data is a procedure of converting recorder material into text. The second step involved coding. According to Maree (2016), coding entails identifying patterns in the information, classifying them with a code, and then organising the information relevant to each code. I carefully studied the patterns in the

data and created codes for each pattern. After the data was coded and organised, I reorganised the list of codes. The third step was to search for themes in the organised codes and for information for each pertinent theme that would be combined. According to Harper and Thompson (2011:209), “a theme is a specific pattern of meaning found in the data”. In the fourth step, I reviewed the themes by examining whether the themes worked in relation to the coded excerpt and information set as some themes fell into each other while other themes did not. In the fifth step, I named the themes, demarcated them by classifying the core idea of what each theme is about, and then distinguished the theme by defining what feature each theme captured. The last step was to produce the collated report of the findings.

Below is a table reflecting the codes used to identify the participants in this study.

Table 1: Participant codes

Public School A	Public School B	Public School C	Public School D	Public School E	Public School F
Principal A	Principal B	Principal C	Principal D	Principal E	Principal F
HoD A	HoD B	HoD C	HoD D	HoD E	HoD F
Parent A	Parent B	Parent C	Parent D	Parent E	Parent F

3.12 Credibility and Authenticity of Data

3.12.1 Trustworthiness

In the pursuit of trustworthiness in qualitative research, the research must ensure that certain requirements are met. These requirements, according to Mqulwana (2010:210), are “credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability”.

3.12.2 Credibility

Major and Savin-Baden (2010) state that credibility refers to the findings being trustworthy and authentic as well as ensuring that the findings describe reality. I ensured the credibility of this study by using member checking to confirm the accuracy of the collected data with the study participants. This strategy enabled me to go back to the study participants and make sure my interpretation of the information was credible (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014).

3.12.3 Transferability

According to Mqulwana (2010), transferability is the degree to which other researchers can apply the findings of the research to similar situations in order to deliver comparable results. I ensured transferability by describing the context of the research, providing detailed accounts of the study participants, and highlighting the suppositions fundamental to the study (Mqulwana, 2010).

3.12.4 Dependability

McMillan and Schumacher (2014) state that dependability refers to the quality of the process between the data collection and data analysis methods, and ultimately, the theory generated from it. Dependability emphasises the necessity for the researcher to provide justification for the ever-changing setting within which a study takes place. I ensured the dependability of this study by documenting all the findings and changes.

3.12.5 Confirmability

According to Anney (2014), confirmability means the extent to which the results can be validated by others to support the findings and interpretation of the researcher. I enhanced confirmability by documenting the procedures I took to enable me to check and recheck the data throughout the study. After the study, I did a data audit to scrutinise the collected data and analysis processes (Mqulwana, 2010).

3.13 Ethical Considerations During Data Collection

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2014), ethics are concerned with certain beliefs based on what is essentially right or wrong from a moral viewpoint. Therefore, ethics relate to matters of morality on a personal level, but the insinuation of ethics reaches further than the individual. It was therefore essential that I adhere to all ethical principles and professional standards deemed necessary for successful research practice. Before conducting this study, I obtained approval from the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria (page ii). In addition, I received formal permission from the Gauteng DBE (Annexure A & B) and the management of the sampled schools (Annexure C).

The ethical considerations of this study were firstly the informed consent from the study participants. I provided the study participants with an explanation of what this study is about, the research procedures as well as the purpose of the research. Thereafter, I provided them with a consent form to voluntarily sign that stated that they understand what the research is about and give permission to participate and for the recording of the interviews (Annexure D–F). The study participants were informed of their right to terminate their participation at any time.

I assured the study participants that the principles of anonymity and confidentiality will be adhered to. To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, I made sure that the study participants' identity and that of their schools remained unidentified throughout the study by using pseudonyms to represent study participants.

3.14 Political Considerations During Data Collection

The political interest and affiliations of myself and the study participants were not discussed or disclosed during the research process. Some study participants mentioned political suppositions but I did not entertain it at all.

3.15 Summary

This chapter presented a detailed explanation of how the qualitative research methodology was applied in this study, which enabled data to be collected within its natural setting. In addition, I explained the case study design and interpretive paradigm. Through the use of the ontological assumptions, study participants learned how to deal with the reality of the situation in which they found themselves, while the epistemological assumptions provided an indication of how their principles influenced the way they dealt with the situations within their environment.

Study participants and research sites were purposively sampled. The data collection method used in this study was semi-structured telephonic interviews, which were recorded using a digital audio-tape recorder. I also used note taking as a data collection method. I also gave a detailed account of the challenges experienced during the data collection. Credibility and authenticity during data collection was recognised, and ethical considerations were described.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND INTREPRETATION OF RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

Chapter 3 discussed the research methodology followed by data collection and data analysis strategies used in this study. Chapter 4 presents the results obtained from the data collection process. The data is presented using themes and categories created from the individual telephonic interviews. I used direct quotations to present the collected data to make sure the voices of all the study participants remain intact. The reviewed literature was applied as a point of reference. I used the participants' codes (Table 1) to identify them when I used direct quotes from the interviews.

The themes were created in relation to the research questions, as follows:

4.1.1 How do principals practise relational leadership for effective school-parent engagement in a multicultural setting?

4.1.2 What do principals understand by school-parent engagement?

4.1.3 How do principals engage parents in a multicultural school setting?

4.1.4 What challenges do principals experience in engaging parents from multicultural backgrounds?

4.1.5 What strategies can be suggested for school principals to overcome the identified challenges?

4.2 Theme 1: Relational Leadership Practised by Principals for Effective School-Parent Engagement

4.2.1 *Data presentation*

Only six participants in this study were able to name leadership styles; the other participants just stated characteristics of particular leadership styles. Principal A and Principal E indicated that they practice a collaborative leadership style. Principal A expressed: "... *sometimes it's collaborative. I love to be collaborative and I seldom make any decisions on my own because it can always come back to bite you*". Principal E exclaimed, "*I think collaborative management. If you collaborate with parents or your invitation style is also tolerant, one is tolerant of opposite opinions.*

You can't have a multicultural school and then not tolerate different opinions". However, Principal B indicated that she practices a democratic leadership style and stated that "... *it is very much a democratic type of leadership. I am willing to listen to parents to engage ...*". The other principals participating in this study could not name a leadership style but they gave characteristics of their respective leadership style. These principals claimed that they practice openness. Principal C remarked that "... *to be open and make sure that parents feel free ...*", while Principal F shared similar sentiments and said, "*I practice an open-door policy in which I encourage parents to raise any concerns ...*".

HoDs were questioned as to what leadership style their principal practised. HoD E said that her principal practised a democratic leadership style and described it "... *like a democratic leadership style that invites input from other people ...*". All the other HoDs simply mentioned the characteristics of leadership styles and were unable to classify the specific leadership style. HoD A and HoD B had almost an identical response and stated the following characteristic as a leadership style: "... *an open leadership style*" (HoD A); and "... *an open leadership style ... be very open with the parents and honest with them and patient with them and understanding*" (HoD B). HoD C said that their principal "... *lead by example and be respectful*". All the characteristics are of a democratic leadership style.

The parents were also asked what leadership style the principal of their children's school practised. Parent E was able to say that her son's principal practised a collaborative leadership style: "*I think he is collaborative; hence I said the feedback really assists, and I think even in the meetings that I attended where he would say a word with you*". Other parents just listed the following characteristics of the principals' leadership style:

She is pleasurable and approachable. (Parent A)

She is open. (Parent B)

He is engaged and welcoming. (Parent C)

She is open. (Parent D)

Ahh ... I don't know. (Parent F)

4.2.2 Support from literature

4.2.2.1 Collaborative leadership

Principals have many obligations but it is still imperative for them to include effectual leadership approaches (Heifetz, Linsky, & Grashow, 2009). Vitale (2017) states that collaborative leadership makes all partners of the school community part of all decision-making processes. The Leadership Development National Excellence Collaborative (2015) defines collaborative leadership as a process that helps individuals with diverse opinions and perceptions collaborate, set their egocentricities apart, and confer problems amenably as a means to find ways to help each other solve bigger obstacles or accomplish extensive goals. This leadership style therefore incorporates being open and honest and includes purposeful actions by principals to augment the instruction of every stakeholder. This means that practising this type of leadership style builds collective efficiency to deepen stakeholder's capability to work together. Jappinen (2017) postulates that it is an effective leadership style for open communication and empowerment within a school.

4.2.2.2 Democratic leadership

Abu-Hussain (2014) postulates that the leadership styles principals practice today is considered one of the most vital and significant variables in the functioning of schools. Different principals practice different leadership styles, but one common leadership style practised by many South African principals is the democratic leadership style (Ziduli, Buka, Molepo, & Jadezweni, 2018). According to Delgado (2014), democratic leadership embraces all stakeholders to work together as a team. All stakeholders are part of the decision-making process. A democratic leader provides guidance and encouragement. According to McClain, Ylimaki, and Ford (2010), democratic leadership enables principals and other stakeholders to grow and attain their human potential. Gale and Densmore (2010) agree with this and further stated that democratic leadership is based on a supportive environment where everyone imparts viewpoints and morals comprising of sincerity and kindness.

4.2.3 Analysis and interpretation of findings

The study's findings show that not a single principal practised relational leadership for effective school-parent engagement in a multicultural school setting. Participants who were able to identify a leadership style mentioned collaborative and democratic leadership. Principal A pointed out that "*I seldom make any decisions on my own ...*", which is a principle of collaborative leadership; while Principal B stated that "*I am willing to listen to parents to engage*", which is a principle of democratic leadership. These leadership styles resonate with the principles of relational leadership, which is framed around principals acknowledging that all stakeholders have something to offer and understanding that personal growth is important. In relational leadership, decisions are made collectively and stakeholders empower each other to become self-led. This implies that principals are seen as effective leaders when they practice a leadership style such as relational leadership as it entails sharing responsibilities among stakeholders and is not focused on hierarchical authority. Most HoDs could not identify a leadership style and instead mentioned the leadership characteristics, which all related to a democratic leadership style. For example, HoD A described it as "*... an open leadership style*" and HoD C as "*... lead by example and be respectful*". However, some participating parents were not even able to identify a leadership characteristic such as Parent F who said "*Ahh ... I don't know*". Surprisingly, although HoDs are also referred to as educational leaders, they appear not to understand their role as leaders, which was proven by their inability to identify leadership styles. In addition, their responses indicated a lot of uncertainty, and this shows that the main contributor to ineffective school-parent engagement in multicultural schools is the lack of strong leadership exercised by school leaders. It is critical that school principals are also leaders who use the best, efficient leadership approaches to make sure their school is going in the correct direction, while creating a positive, encouraging and comfortable relationship between all stakeholders. According to Vitale (2017), leadership within schools must have a robust understanding of the necessity to generate a culture based on respectfulness, open communication, and honesty in order to facilitate effective school-parent engagement. Strong parental engagement is linked to strong leadership; the absence of which is a cause for concern in multicultural schools.

4.3 Theme 2: Principals' Understanding of School-Parent Engagement

4.3.1 Data presentation

The principals had varied understandings of the concept 'school-parent engagement'. Most principals emphasised that school-parent engagement is based on parents engaging in school activities. The following responses from Principal A, Principal B and Principal C corroborated each other:

School-parent engagement involves engaging in activities such as parent meetings and helping children with homework. (Principal A)

Parents are effectively engaged in communication with the school ... a practical example it would mean from day one when parents are available to attend those sessions and participate in those meetings ... supporting all the PTA [Parent-Teacher Association] ethics with regards to fundraising. (Principal B)

School-parent engagement means for me as a principal to get the parents involved in all the activities that the school is practising. (Principal C)

The explanation provided by Principal E showed that he considered school-parent engagement as the help and support parents provide to their children. On the other hand, Principal F had a completely different view and she stated that "*school-parent engagement is a relationship between the school and the parent/guardian of the children*".

4.3.2 Support from literature

School-parent engagement is multifaced and challenging to define. There has been much debate on the concept of school-parent engagement and several definitions exist in literature. Lemmer (2009) contends that the definitions of school-parent engagement differ greatly and all stakeholders occasionally share the same perceptions. According to Ferlazzo (2011), school-parent engagement is when parents and all stakeholders within a school collaborate to improve and support the growth of children. In addition, Ferlazzo (2011) defines school-parent engagement as a term that is used to explain various activities that occur between the school and parents, such as meetings, parents' efforts to become the teachers of their own

children, rigorous efforts such as serving on the governing body of their children's school, and making decisions with other stakeholders. Okeke (2014) concurs with Ferlazzo (2011) and conceives school-parent engagement activities as the written or verbal communication between parents and the school. On the other hand, Goodall and Montgomery (2014) views school-parent engagement as a working relationship that is marked by a sense of willingness and purpose to negotiate among stakeholders. According to LaRocque, Kleiman and Darling (2011), school-parent engagement is derived from the level of power and engagement in decision-making between the school and parents. With these varied definitions it is clear that the concept 'school-parent engagement' embodies an extensive array of activities carried out between the school and parents, both at home and in schools. School-parent engagement incorporates more than just engagement in activities and includes parents, teachers, HoDs and the principal conveying their own skills, values, knowledge and attitudes to children while exhibiting and promoting acceptable behaviour, providing guidance for their activities and giving them direct instructions.

4.3.3 Analysis and interpretation of findings

The principals' definitions of the concept school-parent engagement differed greatly in this study. School-parent engagement is a multi-dimensional notion and this is evident from the various responses of the principals. The findings reveal that most principals view 'school-parent engagement' as parents engaging with school activities; for example, Principal A said "*school-parent engagement involves engaging in activities such as parent meetings and helping children with homework*" and Principal C shared similar sentiments, remarking that "*school-parent means for me as a principal to get the parents involved in all activities that the school is practising*". Although these mentioned activities are important, these comments show that the principals who did not mention any school-parent engagement activities in their responses may not know that these activities constitute parental involvement and not engagement. School-parent engagement is more than just involving parents in school activities. It entails all stakeholders working together as a team to help and support children to develop and reach their full capabilities. The principals in this study failed to recognise parents as the prime teachers of their children from birth. This is due to many principals having a

preconceived ideology that the role of parents is merely to send their children to school to be educated by qualified teaching staff. However, parents have valuable information about the delivery, development and milestones conquered by the child from birth to school (LaRocque et al., 2011). This creates a gap between principals and parents as they are unable to work together because no relationship exists between them. Some principals had difficulty explaining what they understand by the concept school-parent engagement, while others focused less on their understanding and more on the aspects of communication between the school and parents; for example, Principal B said “*parents are effectively in communication with the school*”. This suggests that these principals lack adequate knowledge what school-parent engagement means and entails, resulting in them not having a specific plan to improve it. Thus, the findings indicate that all principals in this study have a limited understanding of what school-parent engagement means and entails.

4.4 Theme 3: Methods Principals Use to Engage With Parents in Multicultural Schools

4.4.1 Data presentation

It is evident from the gathered data that the principals engage with parents using two methods namely, written and verbal communication.

4.4.1.1 Written communication

The participants revealed that engagement between principals and parents through communication mainly happened through written communication such as emails, newsletters, D6 communicator, SMSs and WhatsApp. Principal D explained how they engaged with parents as follows:

Engagement takes place through an email as a communication system ... we also use SMS to communicate with parents and for parents to communicate with us, all the info is given on the whole of the D6 system. ... We engage with parents with information letters ... email that is the fastest way for us to get engaged.

Principal E and Principal F had almost identical views as Principal D. Principal E explained that his engagement with parents occurs firstly through electronic

communication using emails and newsletters. Principal F said that “*we have emails, we have a WhatsApp group, D6 ...*”, he also explained that they used social media: “*I’m very active on our social media, our Facebook, our website*”. He added that written communication for engagement takes place through “*sending an SMS, we send a letter to them*”.

HoDs also indicated that written communication was a common method to engage with parents on a regular basis. For example, HoD B said, “*we have lots of WhatsApp groups ... The other option is to email us ... we communicate with D6 communicator*”.

Most parents’ responses about methods of engagement with principals pointed to written communication on a regular basis. Parent C expressed the following: “*We engage with him regularly through letters with which we communicate*”. Parent E confirmed Parent C’s statement and said, “*we engage through the newsletters*”.

4.4.1.2 Verbal communication

In all the participating schools, verbal communication for parental engagement occurred through telephone conversations and face-to-face meetings. The following responses from the principals support this:

We engage via telephonically. (Principal B)

We also have operating PABX (Private Automatic Branch Exchange) access system, which we can use telephone system that we can take any calls.
(Principal D)

[Communicate] with parents through telephone conversations. (Principal F)

The above viewpoints from the different principals was ratified by HoD E who said, “*it is better to phone them and talk to them. That works better than personal interactions, I find*”. Parent C also indicated that their principal used verbal communication via telephone conversations to engage with parents, remarking that “*the principal contacted mainly when your child is not performing well or if they are crisis at school or if your child is engaged in illegal activities. That is when the principal normally calls you immediately*”.

The findings also show that verbal communication as a means of engaging with parents occurs through face-to-face meetings, as can be seen from the following statements:

Every single morning before school there are parent meetings. (Principal A)

When there are children who need support, we phone them and they come to school on a specific day in a time slot that suits them ... that's how I engage with my parents. (Principal B)

All the HoDs and parent participants also indicated that engagement occurs through parent meetings and school events.

4.4.2 Support from literature

Parents' willingness and ability for positive school-parent engagement can be impacted by the communication strategies used by the school for parental engagement (Shezi, 2012). Good communication strategies have the power to engage parents with matters related to the school and their children. Written communication is used as a way to engage with parents (Michael et al., 2012), and the common written communication tools are newsletters, emails and applications such as WhatsApp and the D6 communicator. Parents can use written communication to explain anything they are uncertain about or to easily get information about their children's progress; it is convenient and saves time (Chowa et al., 2012).

Verbal communication happens mainly through telephone conversations and face-to-face meetings, which are used to interrelate and collaborate with parents. Kraft (2017) postulates that principals can use verbal communication to provide parents with detailed information of their children's educational development or to express their concerns about their children's behaviour. In turn, parents can provide new insights into the specific circumstances and the learning needs of their children. According to Michael et al. (2012), verbal communication enables principals to get a better understanding of parents' culture, needs and so forth. Therefore, verbal and written communication are effective methods that HoDs and principals can use to engage with parents as it enables two-way communication and allows principals and parents to collaborate with each other (Shezi, 2012).

4.4.3 Analysis and interpretation of findings

The findings suggest that parental engagement in all participating schools occur through written and verbal communication. Written communication occurs more regularly in all schools. However, this study found that most principals turn a blind eye towards addressing the challenges of engaging parents through written communication, such as language barriers. This indicates that these principals lack knowledge and unwillingness to change. In addition, it points out to a lack of relational leadership practices by principals as these principals fail to embrace change. Not a single participating principal translates any written communication into another language. This was confirmed by Principal F who said *“I only communicate in English. It is an English school and I advanced to communicate in English”*. Principal C shared similar sentiments, saying *“only in English, because it’s an English medium school”*. This suggests that most principals have a negative attitude to improving their parental engagement methods. The HoDs also confirmed that in English medium schools there is no need to translate any communication, even though they acknowledged that it has a detrimental impact on parental engagement. This was pointed out by HoD A, who said, *“it’s an English medium school; therefore, parents should know how to communicate in English”*. The parents expressed that written communication is difficult to understand because their medium of communication is not English and they have low levels of education. This was pointed out by Parent F, who said *“English isn’t my home language and communication is hard”*. This implies that there is currently a lack of relationship between the schools and parents due to the current leadership being unable to accommodate the diverse needs of stakeholders.

The principals also stated that they used verbal communication to engage with parents. Verbal communication is not used often, but there is an opportunity once a term, although attendance is poor. The HoDs indicated that verbal communication is not a successful method to engage parents. For example, HoD D said *“verbal communication is not good as parents don’t answer their phones and they don’t attend meetings”*. The parents revealed that verbal communication was ineffective as it was too time consuming. All participants agreed that verbal communication usually occurs under negative circumstances and that it is too time consuming. This is a result of the

principals not working with all stakeholders to instil practical wisdom and intersubjectivity to ensure all needs are met. The participating principals clearly lack effective relational leadership skills.

4.5 Theme 4: Challenges Principals Experience With Engaging Parents in a Multicultural School Setting

The following challenges were identified and classified into categories from the findings:

- Working conditions and time constraints faced by parents
- Single parents
- Absent parents
- Attitude of parents
- Transport
- Language and communication

4.5.1 Working conditions and time constraints faced by parents.

4.5.1.1 Data presentation

The following are some of the sentiments echoed by principals indicating that parents' work conditions impedes school-parent engagement

Another barrier may be people's work situation. I think that parents who are not on managerial level in their occupations find it difficult to take off and attend school functions if they are during work time. (Principal E)

I think that it is that parents are a part of the workforce and that makes it very difficult for them to participate in stuff we do. (Principal C)

One of the major barriers would be that our parents are working and that they are not always available when we need them to be available. (Principal B)

Many parents experience time constraints that affect their level of parental engagement. The following statements gives a good indication of how some principals view time constraints as a barrier:

They cannot quite make time.... (Principal B)

The fact that parents are involved in their lives and as such don't see the need to get directly involved in the school. (Principal F)

The barriers, I would say, it's more of a time constraint. (Principal C)

HoD C ratified the principal's comments by stating that "... *like timing-wise, some parents can only come after a certain a time because they have work*". On the other hand, parents described the time constraints as follows:

Some parents they maybe feel that they are too busy. They do not have time to come to school. (Parent A)

My work hours are too long. (Parent D)

I do not have time because of work and I work two jobs. (Parent F)

4.5.1.2 Support from literature

Work commitments and time are factors working against parental engagement. According to Ryan, Casas, Kelly-Vance, Ryalls, and Nero (2010), the work schedules of most parents are not flexible and does not allow them to take time off from work. This results in parents' poor engagement in their children's education and school (Ryan et al., 2010). In addition, Vasallo (2018) states that some bosses do not give consent to parents to attend school functions and meetings. In South Africa, most working-class parents have difficult work situations that means they do not have time to attend school functions and meetings (Naicker, 2013). There are also parents who work long hours because of their form of employment. Furthermore, a lot of parents work more than one job, which results in them having even less time available to engage within their children's education and school (Mestry & Grobler, 2011). Parents work extra jobs because of monetary needs. According to Marshall (2017), parents have to work in order to earn a living, and if they are not present at work because they need to go to their children's school, they most likely will not get paid for that time off work. This means that some parents cannot take time off from work as they cannot afford not to get paid.

4.5.1.3 *Analysis and interpretation of findings*

Many participants in this study indicated that time and their type of employment prevented their engagement in the school. Principals and HoDs revealed that in their schools, parents' work obligations and time was the main reasons for non-effective parental engagement. This was revealed by Principal C who elaborated that "*I think that it is that parents are a part of the workforce and that makes it very difficult for them to participate in stuff we do*". Principal B expressed the following: "*One of the major barriers would be that our parents are working and that they are not always available when we need them to be available*". Therefore, it is evident that work and time constraints results in parents having less time to devote to parental engagement, preventing them from engaging with their children's school. The parents indicated that they were unable to attend meetings or functions at their children's school because of their work obligations and not having sufficient time. The findings also revealed that a lot of parents have more than one job, which results in them having less time for their children. Parent D's response made this clear: "*My work hours are too long*". However, it is worth noting that none of the participating principals have made attempts to find out from parents how they can accommodate their availability to ensure that school-parent engagement can occur. This reveals that these principals' leadership styles are unsatisfactory as parents' needs are not taken into consideration. Findings further reveal that the principles of relational leadership are not practiced. Principals and all stakeholders need to collaborate with each other by forming relationships to attain common goals and work towards positive change, which is what the relational leadership theory focuses on.

4.5.2 **Single Parents**

4.5.2.1 *Data presentation*

Participants in this study revealed that there are many single parents in multicultural schools, which poses a challenge for effective school-parent engagement. The following statements make it clear that parental engagement with single parents is extremely difficult:

“Then if we go to single parents, we have a lot of different learners in our school with single parents only, and then it is even more difficult for that parent to become involved because they must work. They must be at home attending to learners and the children, and then obviously it is challenging for them to be involved where they come to support extra-curricular activities or attend the meetings and so forth because lots of them have more than one child and it is not the only child they have to attend to.” (Principal D)

“Single parents do not engage with us.” (Hod E)

“Parent engagement does not happen with single parents because they are too busy.” (HoD F)

“I have too much to do because I am a single parent.” (Parent F)

4.5.2.2 Support from literature

Many single parents in South Africa experience great difficulties that prevent them from engaging with their children’s school because they have more responsibilities than married parents that they need to take care of. According to Hornby (2011), being a single parent is a factor that forestalls ideal parental engagement in education. Many single parents experience significant financial constraints. Sottie (2011) confirms this by stating that single parent houses generally have a lower income than two working parent houses, and therefore, most single parents focus on finances, which leaves less time to engage with their children’s education and school. Some single parents cannot attend meetings or school events since there are no other adults at home to take care of their other children and it is difficult to find someone to look after their other children (Hornby, 2011).

4.5.2.3 Analysis and interpretation of findings

The principals and HoDs in this study expressed that parental engagement from single parents are actually almost rare. This was revealed by HoD E’s statement: *“Single parents do not engage with us”*. They stated that single parents have more responsibilities, experience more stress because they have to deal with all the responsibilities on their own, and are also busy with work commitments. It was also

found that many single parents in the participating schools work more than one job because of financial constraints. This makes it challenging for principals to engage with single parents. However, it is harder because there is a lack of relationships between principals and parents, which means they are unable to work together to find solutions. Furthermore, participating principals cannot provide guidance and support to single parents because the principals do not practise a leadership style that focuses on providing all stakeholders with help to ensure school-parent engagement occurs. The participants also revealed that single parents cannot attend school meetings and functions because they have to look after their other children at home and they have financial constraints in terms of needing money to pay for public transport. Single parents in this study pointed out that they want to be engaged with their children's school and their education; however, it is difficult because of their situation. This was revealed by Parent F who said, "*I have too much to do because I am a single parent*". The findings show that there is no school-parent engagement with single parents, and the principals acknowledged that this is a challenge but have made no attempts to find a solution. These findings point out that principles of relational leadership do not coincide with the practices of many principals in multicultural school settings.

4.5.3 Absent parents

4.5.3.1 Data presentation

Absent parents are prevalent in many South African schools and participants identified this as a constraint to parental engagement in the following statements:

Some learners live with their grandparents and it is challenging. (Principal B)

A lot of people that I deal with they do not have any parent involvement whatsoever. So it is all because their parents are deceased and it is challenging for parent engagement ... then maybe they stay with guardians or we have learners in our school that are also part of exco youth home where they are taken care of by a church or organisation with just a legal guardian. And then we also have some learners in a children's home where the social worker comes to the school as a legal guardian, so that is the one part where it is really challenging.
(Principal D)

Some children do not live with their parents. It is impossible for them to come to another province to come and see us. (HoD C)

4.5.3.2 *Support from literature*

The absence of parents from home is another factor that prevents parental engagement. Makgopa and Mokhele (2013) state that parents are absent for two reasons: They do not live with their child because of work obligations or they are deceased. Therefore, extended family such as grandparents, or in some cases, social workers are left with the obligation to take care of these children. According to Lemmer (2009), in improvised communities children are left with their grandparents because both parents are absent.

4.5.3.3 *Analysis and interpretation of findings*

The responses from the participants indicated that in some cases both parents of children are absent, either because they are not living with the children or because they are deceased. In the absence of parents, children's legal guardians are grandparents or social workers. Principals and HoDs expressed that working with grandparents and social workers are immensely challenging. Principal B expressed it as follows: "*Some learners live with their grandparents and it is challenging*". In addition, they explained that with most grandparents there are language barriers, low educational levels and low parental engagement because their focus is keeping their family together and attending to daily responsibilities. This was revealed by Principal F who said "*many grandparents are unable to understand what is being said because they have a poor educational background*". However, it is worth noting that the participating principals have not made any attempts to resolve these issues. A major factor contributing to this challenge is that the principals and guardians do not have a relationship build on trust and collaboration, which results in poor communication and a lack of openness. This implies that the leadership practised by the principals is unsatisfactory as they do not work together with the stakeholders as a team to reach mutual agreements. A fundamental principle of relational leadership is forming relationships based on trust and collaboration which is currently lacking by these principals.

The findings also indicate that most grandparents do not respond to any communication nor do they attend any meetings or school events. The principals stated that they are referred to as absent parents because there is no engagement at all. In situations where children have social workers as legal guardians, the HoDs expressed that it was even more difficult to have parental engagement as they take too long to respond to any written communication and they do not attend any events. HoD E said that “*social workers are just doing their job and take very long to respond to us*”. The principals’ responses made it clear that meetings with social workers are subject to their availability and that they only come to the school once in a while. Social workers do not engage in any additional parental activities as it is not part of their job description. Therefore, when parents are absent, principals rarely experience any parental engagement from their legal guardians. However, it is clear that these principals lack practicing relational leadership to address these prevailing issues.

4.5.4 Attitude of parents

4.5.4.1 Data presentation

The attitudes of parents have an influence on their level of parental engagement. The following statement by the participants show that most parents have a negative attitude.

Some parents do not have confidence themselves ... some parents feel overwhelmed ... they are fearful. (Principal A)

Parents believe that dropping their children off at school is all that is really required of them as parents. (Principal E)

They are not very interested at all. (HoD B)

Not a lot of parents are interested in engaging with their children’s education at the moment. (HoD C)

I find that because there are active parents; some parents who feel that they are there to just sit back and enjoy the ride. (Parent A)

I do not think they actually need to bother the parents unnecessarily. (Parent D)

Principals and teachers are professionals to handle children. (Parent F)

4.5.4.2 *Support from literature*

The negative attitude of parents contributes to their lack of engagement at schools (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Many parents have negative feelings about themselves because they feel uncertain about their own capabilities, and this hinders their interactions with their children's school. Furthermore, some parents remember the bad experiences they had while they were in school or previous bad experiences they had at their children's school, which results in them feeling fearful, which ultimately results in their reluctance to engage with the school (Bayat, Louw, & Rena, 2014). Mbokodi and Singh (2011) elucidate that because some parents have a poor educational background, they are left feeling self-doubt, which hinders their engagement with their children's school. Many parents believe that they lack the expertise needed to contribute towards their children's educational development. Furthermore, they feel inferior when they have to communicate with the school due to educational jargon (Wherry, 2009). Hornby and Lafaele (2011) concur and further state that these parents are also not confident in their intellectual skills; therefore, they believe that they should not interfere with the school. A lot of parents in South Africa also have the perception that principals and teachers are qualified enough to deal with all aspects of their children (Wherry, 2009). This suggests that they do not consider the education of their children their duty. Parents believe their obligation as parents is to ensure their children attend school, which indicates that they are apathetic (Michael et al., 2012). Naicker (2013) states some parents believe that once their children reach high school, they can manage their own school work. One of the reasons parents do not attend school events and meetings is because they believe there is no need for them to do so (Mbokodi & Singh, 2011). This suggests that parents are ignorant of their responsibilities as parents and are not interested in engaging with their children's school. Bayat et al. (2014) postulate that most parents lack interest in school-parent engagement.

4.5.4.3 *Analysis and interpretation of findings*

The principals and HoDs listed disobliging parents as a reason for the lack of active parental engagement in multicultural schools. They said that many parents lack confidence and feel overwhelmed with their daily responsibilities. This was confirmed

by Principal A who said, “*some parents do not have confidence themselves ... some parents feel overwhelmed ... they are fearful*”. They also revealed that certain parents are simply uninterested in engaging in their children’s schoolwork and the school, as HoD B indicated, “*they are not very interested at all*”. Some parents believe that they meet their responsibilities by sending their children to school, as Principal E explained, “*parents believe that dropping their children off at school is all that is really required of them as parents*”. The finding indicates that the parents themselves acknowledge that they are not keen to engage with their children’s school. Thus, parents’ negative attitudes impede parental engagement, and it is a challenge that principals experience on a daily basis.

This negative attitude is a result of parents not being empowered by principals, which is an indication of the not practicing relational leadership. As leaders, principals have the responsibility to ensure parents feel empowered, worthy, valued and included in the school. When parents are empowered, they come to see themselves as capable individuals; this eliminates their fear and humiliation, and it operates on trust and inclusivity which the relational theory is focused on. Parent’s negative attitudes are a result of principals not practising relational leadership, which is premised on the principle of empowerment and entails all stakeholders being empowered to reach their capabilities and to attain collective goals.

It was also revealed that parents feel stressed when they have to engage with the school principal, and that parents feel intimidated and threatened by the school. This results in them feeling discouraged, and therefore, they leave the educational concerns of their children in the hands of the school as they believe that teachers are qualified to look after their children. This indicates that principals and parents do not have an open relationship that enables parents to understand their role as important stakeholders in the school.

4.5.5 Transport

4.5.5.1 Data presentation

The school leaders in this study pointed out that for some parents in their school accessing transport to come to school was difficult. They shared the following opinions:

Parents have transport difficulties. (Principal A)

A barrier that would mean some sort of obstacle that prevents parents from becoming involved, and one may be transport. There are some parents who are unable to get a taxi to come to school meetings in the evening. (Principal E)

Transport is a big thing. Some parents are just unwilling to meet us halfway. (HoD C)

It is hard to get transport in the afternoon and it's dangerous to walk. (Parent E)

It is expensive to get transport to go to school. (Parent F)

4.5.5.2 Support from literature

Parents without accessible transport find it challenging to attend parent meetings and other school functions, which becomes another challenge principals experience when trying to ensure effective school-parent engagement in multicultural school settings (Wessels, Lester, & Ford, 2016). There is a considerable number of parents who live far away from their children's school and have trouble accessing transport (Michael et al., 2012). It is particularly difficult for these parents to attend gathering in the evening because there is no public transport at those times (Naicker, 2013). Some parents also do not have money to pay for public and private transport and they do not get reimbursed for their transport costs (Wessels et al., 2016). In some cases, parents who choose to walk to school have safety concerns, health problems and it can be too far. During winter, parents who walk to school or walk a substantial distance to get to public transport are deterred by bad weather conditions and are unable to go to school for meetings or events (Naicker, 2013).

4.5.5.3 *Analysis and interpretation of findings*

The participants in this study said that transport is a challenge for parental engagement. It was discovered that many parents in the participating schools relied on public transport to get to their children's school. For some parents public transport is not a problem when they are asked to go to the school during the day; however, it is a problem in the evenings because public transport is not easily accessible then. The principals and HoDs stated that many parents could not engage with the school because of transport and that some parents cannot access public transport because they live in informal settlements. This was pointed out by Parent E who said, "*it is hard to get transport in the afternoon*". It was also discovered that they lived too far to walk to their children's school. Some parents revealed that they were careful with their money in their household and using money to pay for transport to go to their children's school is not seen as a necessity. Parent F remarked that "*it is expensive to get transport to go to school*". The research also revealed that parents who do not have transport but can walk to their children's school was scared for their safety and that sometimes the weather prevented them from walking. Parent E said, "*it's dangerous to walk*".

The principals acknowledged that transport is a serious barrier, however, not a single principal had a solution for this challenge. This indicates that there is a lack of relational leadership practices from principals as they are unable to accommodate parents' needs to enable successful school-parent engagement. The HoDs also expressed that the lack of parental engagement was due to transport but that there is nothing they can do about it.

4.5.6 *Communication and language*

4.5.6.1 *Data presentation*

In the interviews, there was a lot of focus on communication and language being a serious barrier for school-parent engagement in multicultural schools. The following statements give a good indication of how principals feel:

I think it is more difficult to communicate because I communicate in English ... in terms of parents who come to school, they are not able to cope. (Principal E)

Language and communication is a barrier ... all the communication with this school via me is done in English because that is the language I have advanced for. (Principal F)

The fact that some learners in my school are raised and cared for by grandparents, then I mean they definitely ain't on a level where they can communicate clearly towards a principal. (Principal D)

The HoDs in this study also emphasised that communication and language impede successful school-parent engagement in multicultural schools. They made the following statements:

Communication say we have the wrong email or telephone number or any of that sort of stuff, which makes it really hard to communicate. (HoD B)

Language barriers are quite a big thing in this school because not all the parents understand English, and it is very hard to explain to them what is wrong. (HoD D)

Some parents do not speak the language, so we can't communicate with them properly. (HoD C)

For me there definitely are language barriers when parents communicate that it's not always clear exactly what the problem is. (HoD E)

The parents made the following comments about the language barriers:

English is hard and not my home language. I don't like making mistakes. (Parent C)

If the principal changes the language, I will understand. (Parent F)

4.5.6.2 Support from literature

The goal of principals is to bridge any gap between the school and parents using efficient communication. Communication between the school and parents is necessary for effective parental engagement (Makgopa & Mokhele, 2013; Mbokodi &

Singh, 2011), and the poor communication between principals and parents is a serious challenge for effective school-parent engagement. Using technology, such as messaging services or emails, are simple, user-friendly and cost-effective ways for principals to communicate with parents (Shambare, 2014). However, Mbokodi and Singh (2011) state that most the time, there is only one-way communication from principals to parents, and hardly any communication from parents to the school, unless there was an issue. Principals send out letters of notice, invitations for parent meetings and so on, but parents rarely respond (Shambare, 2014). Bojuwoye and Narain (2013) concur and further state that parents are less engaged in school-home communication. The main reason for communication issues is language barriers. According to Hornby and Lafaele (2011), communication between home and school is ineffective when the language of instruction is not the parents' home language. This results in parents being less engaged. Parents avoid the school because they do not understand what is being said by the principal, which ultimately leaves the parent feeling embarrassed (Naicker, 2013). Parents who cannot understand the language of communication insists that the school communicate in their home language, which results in conflict (Vasallo, 2018). Therefore, most principals face communication and language barrier challenges.

4.5.6.3 *Analysis and interpretation of findings*

The responses from the participants uncovered that there is a lack of communication between principals and parents in most schools. The main reason for the absence of effective communication is language issues. The findings show that principals identified language as the reason for a lack of communication, as indicated by Principal F who stated that "*language and communication is a barrier*". It was also discovered that these principals do not make any effort to personally try and learn other parents' language of communication, and instead, some principals revealed that they ask multilingual staff members to translate what they say into the parent's medium of communication. This was pointed out by Principal D who said, "*my multicultural staff translates into the home language of the parent, so we can communicate*". However, according to Michael et al. (2012), this is an unreliable method because, for instance, the tone of the translated message may not be what the principal intended, which can

result in miscommunication. Furthermore, the findings reveal that in all the schools all written communication is in English, despite the principals acknowledging that there is a language barrier with the use of English and that they are aware that some parents will not understand what is being communicated. It is worth noting that in all the principals believe that because their school is English medium, the parents should understand English. Principal F confirmed this by stating that *“language and communication is a barrier ... All the communication with this school via me is done in English because that is the language I have advanced for”*. Some principals revealed that it is too time consuming to accommodate other languages. This suggests that the principals lack sensitivity towards the accommodation of multicultural needs, and this is strengthening the argument that relational leadership is not practiced. An effective leader must ensure that identified challenges are resolved and not ignored. Hence, principals need to practice a leadership style that accommodates the language differences with empathy in order to improve communication. This implies that relational leadership will be a highly beneficial leadership style as it is framed around accommodating the diverse needs that exist within a multicultural school setting. The parents revealed that they felt scared and inferior because they do not understand English. The findings show that parents hoped the principals would consider their communication challenges, and some even stated that it would help if the written communication could be translated into a common language for the parents

4.6 Theme 5: Strategies for Principals to Use to Overcome Parental-Engagement Challenges

The participants mentioned the following strategies to use to overcome the identified challenges of parental engagement in multicultural schools:

- Accommodate and respect diverse cultures
- Improve communication and openness
- Build a relationship with parents and provide encouragement

4.6.1 Accommodate and respect diverse cultures

4.6.1.1 Data presentation

The findings from the participants' responses suggest that there is a need for school leaders to accommodate every individual's culture and to respect their diversity. The following are some of the participants' sentiments:

Understand the diverse cultures in your school. (Principal B)

Respecting who they are and where they come from. (Principal F)

One must understand multicultural, and one must respect that. (Principal D)

Understand the parents and the cultures and religions that they come and to respect them. (HoD B)

I think they need to be diverse with everyone's language. (Parent E)

4.6.1.2 Support from literature

Schools must be adaptive to ensure they accommodate the needs of parents from diverse cultural backgrounds (Shava & Tlou, 2018). School principals play a significant role in keeping cultural groups together through equal empowerment and providing a platform for them to educate one another on their culture (Mestry, 2017). In doing so, these parents gain cultural and religious tolerance because they feel accepted. Inviting parents to attend various cultural occasions at school encourages the promotion of diversity by inviting parents to enthusiastically share their cultural perspectives (Vitale, 2017).

It is essential for principals to be aware of making parents from different cultures feel comfortable when they come to the school. When parents' cultural differences are respected and accommodated, they begin to collaborate with the school, which leads to increased parental engagement (Shava & Tlou, 2018).

4.6.1.3 Analysis and interpretation of findings

The participants in this study revealed that frequently what is believed to be a lack of parental engagement is actually the effect of cultural expectations. This means that

working towards being respectful and accepting of parents' differences must be emphasised. Principal D confirmed this by saying, "*one must understand multicultural and one must respect that*". This suggests that the leadership practised by principals must ensure inclusion occurs by accepting, understanding and engaging all parents' viewpoints as well as accommodating various aspects of individualism such as accepting different cultures. This encompasses practising relational leadership as it is framed around the accommodation and respect of diverse cultures. Furthermore, the principals and HoDs said that they must build cultural competency to ensure all parents feel welcome and included in all engagement opportunities. HoD B said that they must "*understand the parents and the cultures and religions that they come and to respect them*". This implies that as leaders it is their duty to form respectful relationships with parents to make them aware that they are worthy and included in the school despite their cultural background.

The parents in this study said that in order to improve parental engagement, the school can ease cultural dissonance by acknowledging their cultural differences, making provisions to accommodate their diverse needs and showing respect, as Parent E exclaimed, "*I think they need to be diverse with everyone's language*". Therefore, for South African schools to develop inclusive cultures that are democratic, principals must ensure their leadership style is inclusive of everyone's differences.

4.6.2 Improve communication and openness

4.6.2.1 Data presentation

The participants strongly emphasised improving communication between principals and parents as a means to overcome the challenges of inefficient school-parent engagement. The participants also suggested that there is need for openness from both sides. The following statements give a good indication of how the participants felt about this component:

Improve communication and take their inputs into consideration. (Principal A)

... to be open and make sure that parents feel free. (Principal C)

You must be very clear, effective and frequent in your communication ... the strategy will always be a two-way communication clearly for both. (Principal D)

Communication in more than one language. (HoD E)

Principals must have workshops to help us. (Parent F)

4.6.2.2 *Support from literature*

According to Hanover Research (2016), parental engagement can be enhanced when schools use diverse strategies to ensure frequent communication occurs with parents. Principals can ensure efficient communication occurs between parents who's medium of communication is not English by obtaining a proficient translator to communicate with parents in their home language during meetings and in written communication (Mestry, 2017). When parents can understand what is being communicated, they are bound to engage with the school as they will have a greater understanding of what is needed and required of them. Parents will also feel respected and worthy that their cultural differences are accommodated for, which results in them feeling appreciative towards the principal as a school leader (Hanover Research, 2016). Thus, this will result in a better relationship between principals and parents.

4.6.2.3 *Analysis and interpretation of findings*

The principals and HoDs noted that in order to resolve the challenges experienced with communication, they need to translate written communication into other common languages used by parents in their schools. Principal C said, *"I think it's fair to communicate in parents' home language and translate for them"*. This implies that effective leaders must take into account parents' diverse needs, which correlates with the relational leadership theory's principle of inclusion. The principle of inclusion emphasises acknowledging the needs that exist in an environment and ensuring that all needs are met. This suggests that a principal can provide effective leadership by believing in the extreme value of each person's differences and ensuring that they are accommodated for in order for them to feel valued and included. The principals also emphasised taking time to learn other languages as it would enable them to communicate proficiently as leaders, and they also suggested that it will be beneficial

to hire a person who can translate written and verbal communications into parents' medium of communication. This indicates that principals are willing to try to improve their current leadership practices to accommodate the various needs of multicultural schools. On the other hand, the parents suggested that principals should have workshops to provide parents with training on how to use technology for communication. It is very important in this regard that it is the responsibility of the principals to provide for training and workshops as it will enable parents needs to be met and as significant stakeholders their learning will be enhanced, parents gain help to develop their own initiatives and ultimately grow. Therefore, it is valuable to take note that all participants in this study suggested that there must be openness for communication to be improved. When all stakeholders are open and honest with each other, stronger relationships can be formed, resulting in increased parent-school communication. This also coincides with the theory of relational leadership, which is premised on the idea of a leader and stakeholders building their relationship on transparency and honesty.

4.6.3 Build a relationship with parents and provide encouragement

4.6.3.1 Data presentation

It became abundantly clear through the participants' responses that building relationships with parents can lead to successful school-parent engagement. The following statements show the participants' views on this:

... make time for parents of the school to have relationships with them.
(Principal D)

Building a relationship where we have more direct one-on-one contact.
(Principal F)

... be calm and understanding to create relationships. (HoD B)

... encourage parents to participate. (Parent A)

It is to encourage the parents to be involved particularly with all the activities in the school. (Parent C)

4.6.3.2 *Support from literature*

Building a relationship with parents helps to create trust and a positive bond, which is required to sustain effective school-parent engagement (Jacques & Villegas, 2018). Relationships based on social processes are open, contested, and negotiated. When relationships are created and parents are encouraged, they have a sense of direction, it becomes beneficial to principals, and parents are eager to take responsibility (Jaiswal, 2017). Parents need to be encouraged in order for them to be motivated (Jacques & Villegas, 2018).

4.6.3.3 *Analysis and interpretation of findings*

The participants' statements made it clear that there is a need for principals to establish relationships with parents. The HoDs also indicated that it is imperative that relationships be formed between all stakeholders to enhance parental engagement. HoD B exclaimed that they had to "... *be calm and understanding to create relationships*". This indicates that a principal who creates relationships among stakeholders can communicate more efficiently, work together with stakeholders to attain common goals as well as work with stakeholders to ensure children attain their maximum capacity. This resonates with the principles of the relational leadership theory, which encompasses principals building relationships with parents on the basis on trust and empowerment. When relationships are established between all stakeholders, parents can become better contributors to the school, and thus, the principal provides efficient leadership by fulfilling their role as mentor to the parents.

4.7 Summary

This chapter presented the results obtained from the interviews, the findings from literature and the interpretations of the results. When the themes rising from the data were analysed, it was found that parental engagement in the participating six multicultural schools differed from school to school. None of the participating principals practised relational leadership. The principals from all six schools had a limited understanding of what school-parent engagement means and entails. The methods most principals use to engage with parents are seen as unsuccessful because the

principals take no initiative to attempt to resolve the challenges they experience with the methods they use for engagement. The study participants' replies make it clear that many principals lack the necessary skills to provide strong leadership for parental engagement and that there are many challenging factors, as discussed in this chapter, that contributes to the lack of parental engagement. In addition, the strategies suggested by the participants to help overcome the challenges with school-parent engagement in multicultural schools are not ideal solutions to resolve all the identified challenges.

The next and final chapter concludes this study by summarising the main aspects of each chapter and discussing the findings according to each theme. The significance and limitations of the study are detailed, followed by the conclusion and recommendations.



CHAPTER 5

SUMMARIES, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter dealt with the presentation of data, corroboration of the findings from the literature, and the interpretation of results. This is the concluding chapter of the study and a summary of the results found from the themes in the previous chapter are presented. It begins with a summary of the preceding chapters to ensure that it presents a comprehensive, all-inclusive view of the research undertaken for this study. I then give a synopsis of the main findings and recommendations for how principals can practice relational leadership for school-parent engagement in multicultural school settings. This chapter concludes with the significance and limitations of the study.

5.2 Summaries of the Chapters

Each chapter is summarised to highlight the key issues discussed in this study. This is done to enhance understanding of the rationale for the research and to articulate the steps and the process followed to obtain the final results.

5.2.1 Chapter 1

This chapter introduced the problem statement concerning the lack of effective leadership practices by principals for school-parent engagement in multicultural school settings. This was supported by the rationale, where I used my experience as a teacher to observe ineffective school-parent engagement because of principals' lack of adequate leadership skills. The purpose of the research was to examine how principals practice relational leadership in multicultural school settings. The research questions were framed in terms of examining issues relating to school-parent engagement, such as principals' understanding of the term 'school-parent engagement', the ways principals engage parents in a multicultural school setting, challenges experienced by principals in engaging parents from a multicultural backgrounds, and approaches that can be used to conquer the identified challenges. The relational leadership theory that advocates that principals should form a relationship with stakeholders based on empowerment and trust and emphasises that

more than one individual can lead was selected for this study. The relational leadership theory was chosen because the study focused on how principals can practice relational leadership to enhance school-parent engagement in multicultural school settings. The research methodology and research design applied in the study were introduced. The criteria for selecting the study population were presented. Data collection techniques, sampling strategies and sample size were outlined. The data analysis techniques were revealed and issues around protecting the credibility and authenticity of the study were discussed. The delimitations of the study were predicted and the ethical and political considerations of the research were outlined. The significance of the research was proposed, followed by a chapter summary.

5.2.2 Chapter 2

This chapter reviewed both local and international literature that deals with the types of leadership practised by principals for school-parent engagement in multicultural school settings. The literature on the theory of relational leadership was studied to find out what principles this leadership style is framed around in order to determine if it could be practised by principals as a pragmatic response to addressing the cultural challenges experienced in schools. The relational leadership theory is framed around five main principles, which covers the issues of inclusion, empowerment, ethical compliance and process orientation. The literature on leadership practices of successful principals, the rationale for parental engagement in multicultural school settings, and conditions constraining parental engagement in multicultural school settings were reviewed. In addition, literature on school-parent engagement in developed countries and in South Africa were reviewed.

5.2.3 Chapter 3

This chapter discussed the research methodology and data collection techniques employed in this study. The case study design was chosen as the research design. The interpretivist research paradigm was adopted, and the ontological and epistemological assumptions were discussed. Qualitative research and case studies were applied to obtain responses from a purposively selected sample of participants. The research sites were purposively selected for principals, HoDs and parents in

multicultural schools and the willingness of participants to participate in this study was sought. The participants were interviewed using telephonic interview tools that were structured in such a way that the participants' responses would provide rich feedback to the research questions. The limitations of the interview process were disclosed and the credibility and authenticity of the data were confirmed. Collected data was stored on digital audio-tape recordings. The research participants and sites were then coded and those codes were used to create themes through which the findings could be reported, analysed and documented. Using thematic analysis, the findings were made, recorded and analysed. Ethical factors to be considered and adhered to during data collection were presented and noted.

5.2.4 Chapter 4

The results obtained from the interviews with the participants were discussed in this chapter. The results were initially grouped into themes in line with the participants' responses to the research questions. The following themes were created:

- Theme 1: Relational leadership practised by principals for effective school-parent engagement
- Theme 2: Principals' understanding of school-parent engagement
- Theme 3: Methods principals use to engage parents in multicultural schools
- Theme 4: Challenges principals experience with engaging parents in a multicultural school setting
- Theme 5: Strategies for principals to use to overcome parental engagement challenges

In each theme, the data provided by participants were recorded. The literature that provided researched information on that specific theme was reviewed. In accordance with the findings from literature and the responses from participants, each theme was analysed. Thereafter, the findings were made and reported.

5.2.5 Chapter 5

From the summaries of the previous chapters, this chapter discusses the results obtained from the findings. The significance of the research, its limitations and recommendations for future research are discussed.

5.3 Summary of the Findings

5.3.1 Relational leadership practised by principals for effective school parent engagement

None of the participating principals in this study practised relational leadership. However, the findings revealed that some of the participating principals practised collaborative and democratic leadership styles. The principles of these leadership styles resonate with the principles of the relational leadership theory. Collaborative leadership is a practice of empowering all partners to partake in decision-making processes and acknowledges everybody's perspectives. On the other hand, democratic leadership entails all stakeholders working together as a team, and a democratic leader is a leader who helps others to attain personal growth. One of the principles of the relational leadership theory is empowerment, which emphasises the importance of empowering others, understanding that personal growth is important and acknowledging that every individual has something to offer; thus this principle corroborates with collaborative leadership. The democratic leadership style relates to the principle of process orientation from the relational leadership theory, which focuses on how all stakeholders can make decisions together to ultimately create a positive energy, synergy and momentum among everyone. The participating principals demonstrated an absence of satisfactory information on the essential leadership capacities needed to accommodate the diversity of needs that exist within a multicultural school setting. There is also a lack of harmonious relationships between principals and parents in the study area, which is an essential element of the relational leadership theory. Principals need to create positive, collaborative relationships in order to form strong links with parents to ensure that the principals demonstrate an effective leadership style. It is critical that principals are also educational leaders who use the most effective leadership strategies to keep their school moving in a positive

direction. However, the interviewed principals demonstrated a general inability to show direction by practising relational leadership to accommodate the diverse needs that exists in all South Africa schools.

5.3.2 Principals' understanding of school-parent engagement

All the principals interviewed in this study had an entirely different definition of the concept 'school-parent engagement'. Despite their different definitions of the concept, they all emphasised parental involvement in school functions and attending meetings. The findings revealed that there is a prevalent misunderstanding of the concepts 'parental involvement' and 'parent engagement'. The principals failed to acknowledge that parental engagement involves something beyond helping with school activities. In addition, a failure to acknowledge parents as learners' first teachers from birth prevailed in this study. Some principals were unable to explain their understanding of the concept 'school-parent engagement' and instead focused on discussing the communication issues that exist between them and the parents. Therefore, it became evident that all participating principals lacked an adequate understanding of what school-parent engagement entails.

5.3.3 Methods principals use to engage with parents in multicultural schools

The principals used two methods to engage with parents, namely written and verbal communication. Both these methods were deemed ineffective for school-parent engagement in multicultural schools due to the challenges of language barriers. Written communication is ineffective because it is not translated into different languages and many parents' medium of communication is not English. This means that they cannot understand what is being communicated. Verbal communication is also challenging and inefficient because of language difficulties and time constraints due to parents' work schedules. The findings also showed that although principals are aware of the challenges, they have no measures in place to rectify the identified challenges. This indicates that some school principals demonstrate weakness in confronting challenges that inhibit parental engagement.

5.3.4 Challenges principals experience with engaging parents in a multicultural school setting

This study uncovered a variety of difficulties that school principals experienced in the course of engaging parents in their schools. These challenges include working conditions and time constraints, single parenting, absent parents, negative attitudes, limited access to transport, and communication and language issues. These challenges are discussed in the following subsections.

5.3.4.1 Working conditions and time constraints faced by parents

Parents' working conditions and time constraints inhibit effective school-parent engagement. Many parents work long hours, which results in limited time available to attend school functions or engage with their children's education, which include homework supervision. In addition, due to financial constraints, some parents have more than one job to meet their financial needs. This is a further impediment for school-parent engagement due to their busy work schedule. The findings showed that some employers do not give their employees time off from work to attend school functions or meetings. In addition, most parents' work schedules do not align with the times set for school functions and meetings, resulting in ineffective school-parent engagement.

5.3.4.2 Single parents

Single parents face more responsibilities because they play the role of both parents in the household. The findings showed that single parents experience significant stress trying to meet all their responsibilities. Besides focusing on their responsibilities at home, they also have to fulfil their work responsibilities. In addition, many single parents work more than one job to make enough money, further reducing their available time. They also find it incredibly hard to attend school functions or meetings because they do not have childcare for their other children at home. Furthermore, the findings revealed that single parents who make use of public transport have greater difficulty engaging with the school because they feel the money they have to spend on public transport can be used elsewhere.

5.3.4.3 *Absent parents*

Parents are absent for two main reasons: they do not work close to the school or they are deceased. Therefore, family members, usually grandparents, or in some cases social workers take care of these children. It is a challenge when other family members become children's legal guardians as they often have a low level of education, have language barriers, or do not regard education as important, which result in no school-parent engagement. When social workers are in charge of children who have no parents or guardians, it impedes school-parent engagement because their job is to occasionally find out how the children are doing and they are not obliged to perform additional duties such as attend meetings or school functions. They set up appointments with principals and teachers according to their schedule.

5.3.4.4 *Negative attitudes*

Some parents indicated that they have a low self-esteem and are not confident in their abilities, and therefore, they avoid school-parent engagement. Some parents also have no enthusiasm for their children's education or engaging with the school as they strongly feel that they meet their obligations by sending their children to school. It was also revealed that some parents feel the school principal and teachers are qualified enough to take responsibility for their children, while other parents said their daily responsibilities made them feel overwhelmed and unable to fulfil their responsibilities towards their children's education.

5.3.4.5 *Transport*

Many parents rely on public transport, which is not always easily accessible in the evenings, especially in informal areas. The cost of public transport is another concern as some households have to be careful with every cent. Walking to their children's school is not always possible because it may not be safe or the weather may not permit walking. These factors restrict efficient school-parent engagement.

5.3.4.6 *Communication and language*

There is poor communication between principals and parents due to language barriers. The only medium of communication was English in all the participating schools because the schools are English medium schools. However, many parents' medium of communication is not English, and this results in a lack of efficient communication. All written communication is also in English, despite the principals acknowledging that there is language barrier preventing effective communication. The principals use multilingual teachers to translate during meetings. However, this is not very effective because it often results in miscommunication and the message being delivered in a different tone from what the principal intended. This creates conflict and leads parents feeling inferior and reluctant to further communicate with the school.

5.3.5 *Strategies for principals to use to overcome parental-engagement challenges*

This study found strategies that school principals can use to enhance school-parent engagement in multicultural school settings. These strategies include the accommodating and respecting diverse cultures, improving communication and openness, and building a relationship with parents to provide encouragement. These strategies are discussed in the following subsections.

5.3.5.1 *Accommodate and respect diverse cultures*

Poor school-parent engagement in multicultural schools is a result of not accommodating diverse cultural needs. Principals, together with other stakeholders, must build cultural competency as a means of respecting and accepting parents' cultural differences to ensure that they feel welcomed and valued. When parents' cultural needs are respected, a relationship is built on the unity and trust between parents and principals. A strong, successful leader displays cultural acceptance.

5.3.5.2 *Improve communication and openness*

South Africa has many different languages, and communicating in only one language is unfair and inconsiderate. Written communication must be translated into other

languages to accommodate the diverse needs of parents. Hiring a professional translator would also be beneficial. The participants in this study also expressed the importance of learning other languages to improve their communication skills. In addition, because schools now use technological platforms to communicate with parents, it is advised that they provide training for parents to learn how to use these platforms. The importance of being open with parents to ensure a relationship built on trust and openness was also emphasised.

5.3.5.3 Build a relationship with parents and provide encouragement

A positive relationship must be established and maintained between the principal and parents to improve school-parent engagement. When such a relationship is created, communication is improved and parents work together with the school to attain common goals to ensure student success is achieved. Many parents also need encouragement because they doubt their own abilities to engage with their children's school. When parents are encouraged, their self-esteem is improved. An efficient leader motivates and encourages others to believe in themselves and reach their full potential.

5.4 Conclusions

Despite the poor relational leadership practices by the principals who took part in this research, there are intermittent bright rays of hope in the seemingly bleak educational landscape of South African leadership in schools. This study showed that these rays of hope are the principals who are willing to practise relational leadership, which orchestrates inclusivity of all cultural differences to acquire and sustain school-parent engagement in multicultural school settings. The aim of this study was to investigate how principals can practice relational leadership in multicultural school settings since they are now leaders in multicultural environments. The findings emphasise that principals must practice innovative leadership to enhance school-parent engagement. The current research found that there is a lack of relational leadership practices by many principals. Although there are many different leadership styles, many principals have a negative attitude and provide leadership on the basis of what they believe is

correct. However, this revealed a lack of sensitivity towards cultural differences, which results in poor school-parent engagement in multicultural schools.

In the final analysis, principals who are open to practising relational leadership will have the ability to accommodate the variety of needs that now prevail in South African schools. This research highlighted the importance of principals being able to practice a leadership style that promotes school-parent engagement. The recommendations confirm the need for the DBE to intervene and provide training for current and future principals in basic leadership practices and to find prospective principal candidates who have the ability and knowledge to execute relational leadership, which is the leadership style identified in this study.

A necessary pre-requisite for becoming a principal must be implemented in the form of minimum qualifications that enables prospective principals to use the leadership practices recommended in this research to encourage school-parent engagement in multicultural schools. It is predicted that this study will attract an extensive interest and promote awareness among policy makers and practitioners concerning the significance of leadership practices for effective school-parent engagement.

5.5 Significance of the Study

This research proves that principals in multicultural school settings need to practice a new leadership style in order to embrace the complex challenges that now prevails in a diverse environment. The relational leadership style is the ideal leadership style to help South African schools develop an inclusive culture that is accommodating and democratic because it is characterised by unfolding the potential of all partners in a school to cooperate as a group to address the daily complexities. Thus, successful principals practice a leadership style that enables them to exude passion and build relationships with stakeholders to help move the school across dynamic new frontiers to enhance holistic growth and development. This study clearly shows that principals who are visionary leaders and build relationships and collaborate with their stakeholders can enhance school-parent engagement in multicultural schools. By practising relational leadership, principals acknowledge the importance of motivating parents and other stakeholders by giving them the opportunity and resources for development. In this situation parents are continually empowered by principals.

The relational leadership style allows principals to break down the hierarchy, to engender harmonious relationships that are characterised by collaboration, cooperation and open communication, and to encourage everyone to be a decision maker. Every parent is valued by the principal, despite their cultural differences, and principals act immediately to solve challenges that parents may experience by providing the necessary support. Trust and transparency characterise the relationship between principals and parents. Principals unleash the potential that lies dormant in parents by engaging them in planned and informed leadership distribution.

5.6 Limitations of the Study

The three limitations of this study are outlined in the following subsections.

5.6.1 Limited access to schools

The schools that I first selected to take part in the study withdrew from the study for undisclosed reasons. This meant I had limited access to multicultural schools within the Tshwane North and South districts.

5.6.2 Limited number of schools

The study was conducted in only three primary schools and three secondary schools. This was because of the difficulty of acquiring multicultural schools in the Tshwane North and South districts.

5.6.3 Exclusion of independent schools

The study only focused on public schools and did not extend to independent schools. I think that if the study covered independent schools, different results could possibly have emerged.

5.7 Recommendations

Effective leadership by principals for school-parent engagement in multicultural school settings is a challenge that is facing many countries globally. There is still limited research on this subject, both nationally and internationally, and much still needs to be done to address the specific challenges these principals face to engage parents

from diverse backgrounds. The following subsections discuss recommendations that emerged from this study.

5.7.1 Emphasising principals' professional development to build relationships with parents

The Department of Education should make sure that in-service principals are sensitised to parental engagement in multicultural school settings. This can be achieved through compulsory workshops for principals that focus on how to develop relationships with parents. The emphasis must be on leadership styles and being sensitive to multicultural needs. Principals must also learn what the term 'multicultural' means and not confuse it with 'racial differences'. Learning how to accommodate the diverse cultural differences in multicultural schools are crucial for South African principals as it is an essential characteristic of a successful leader. Policy makers should also take into consideration the diverse settings in which South Africans live. All settings are different, and therefore, a universal policy cannot be applied and created for all principals; policies should be created to suit their setting.

5.7.2 Enhancing parents' self-efficacy

An effective leader must create opportunities for parents to advance their own abilities and knowledge (Johnson, 2015). Workshops and training sessions should be offered to parents to help them with aspects they are struggling with (Jappinen, 2017). When principals acknowledge and try to address the problems parents experience, it shows that they are caring leaders, and this leads to the development of relationships between parents and principals. Principals should provide many opportunities for families to engage through a variety of activities at school. These can range from open days, family fun days, to sports days and will facilitate relationship building between parents and the school. Principals should ensure school-parent conferences are productive and include goal sharing, and they should maintain relationships with parents through regular communication to promote school-parent engagement. Principals should also create opportunities for parents to contribute and lead and should solicit regular parent input and feedback on decisions. Finally, they should give

parents with leadership abilities the opportunity to become representatives on parent bodies.

5.8 Recommendations for Further Research

A future study can be conducted with more participants and include teachers in order to get teachers' viewpoints of principals' leadership practices for school-parent engagement in multicultural schools. Teachers are important stakeholders in the school environment and regularly engage with parents, and their engagement with parents depends on the leadership provided by principals.

This study only explored urban schools for principals' leadership practices for school-parent engagement in multicultural schools. Therefore, a study that includes rural schools is required to get a clearer and better perception of principals' leadership practices for school-parent engagement in different contexts.

Further research could include independent schools to get an understanding of principals' leadership styles in different schools.



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ANNEXURE A: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH FROM GAUTENG DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Department of Basic Education
Gauteng Provincial Department of Education
Howard Avenue
Benoni
1500
30 September 2019

Dear Sir/Madam

REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN THE GAUTENG PROVINCE

My name is Sandice Naicker, a student currently doing a Masters of Education Degree in Education Management, Law and Policy at the University of Pretoria under the supervision of Dr R.N. Marishane. The title of the study is: School-parent engagement through relational leadership practices of school principals in a multicultural setting. Its purpose is to examine how school principals can practice relational leadership for effective parental engagement in a multicultural school setting. As part of study, I have to conduct interviews with school principals, Heads of Department and parents of learners at selected schools. Each interview will last approximately 30 minutes and every effort will be made to ensure that lessons are not disrupted during this process. I would, therefore, like to request for permission to conduct this study in selected public schools in your province.

Together with the management team we will ensure the safety of participants in this study. Both participants and their schools will remain anonymous and their identity will be kept confidential as pseudonyms will be used. Participants will be made aware of



their right to withdraw from this study at any stage during the research process without any repercussions. No monetary benefits or incentives shall be offered to them. I would like to assure you that the results from this study will be made available to you in the form of a dissertation on my completion of the study.

Kindly sign the consent form attached hereto as proof that you have granted me permission to proceed with the study. Your assistance in this regard will be greatly appreciated.

Kind Regards,

S. Naicker sandicenaicker11@gmail.com

Signature:

Supervisor: Dr R. N. Marishane nylon.marishane@up.ac.za

ANNEXURE B: GAUTENG DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION APPROVAL LETTER



GAUTENG PROVINCE

Department: Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

8/4/4/1/2

GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

Date:	01 June 2020
Validity of Research Approval:	04 February 2020 – 30 September 2020 2019/333
Name of Researcher:	Naicker S
Address of Researcher:	50 Vlottenburg Street 12 Klipberg Equestria Estate ,0184
Telephone Number:	0839441618/067254 2665
Email address:	Sandicenaicker11@gmail.com
Research Topic:	School-parent engagement through relational leadership practice by school principals in a multicultural setting
Type of qualification	Master's in Education
Number and type of schools:	3 Secondary School , 3 Primary school
District/s/HO	Tshwane South, Tshwane North

Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated above. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the school/s and/or offices involved to conduct the research. A separate copy of this letter must be presented to both the School (both Principal and SGB) and the District/Head Office Senior Manager confirming that permission has been granted for the research to be conducted.

The following conditions apply to GDE research. The researcher may proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met. Approval may be withdrawn should any of the conditions listed below be flouted:

1. Letter that would indicate that the said researcher/s has/have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.

Making education a societal priority

Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management

7th Floor, 17 Simmonds Street, Johannesburg, 2001
 Tel: (011) 355 0488
 Email: Faith.Tshabalala@gauteng.gov.za
 Website: www.education.gpg.gov.za

2. *The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s must be approached separately, and in writing, for permission to involve District/Head Office Officials in the project.*
3. *A copy of this letter must be forwarded to the school principal and the chairperson of the School Governing Body (SGB) that would indicate that the researcher/s have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.*
4. *A letter / document that outline the purpose of the research and the anticipated outcomes of such research must be made available to the principals, SGBs and District/Head Office Senior Managers of the schools and districts/offices concerned, respectively.*
5. *The Researcher will make every effort obtain the goodwill and co-operation of all the GDE officials, principals, and chairpersons of the SGBs, teachers and learners involved. Persons who offer their co-operation will not receive additional remuneration from the Department while those that opt not to participate will not be penalised in any way.*
6. *Research may only be conducted after school hours so that the normal school programme is not interrupted. The Principal (if at a school) and/or Director (if at a district/head office) must be consulted about an appropriate time when the researcher/s may carry out their research at the sites that they manage.*
7. *Research may only commence from the second week of February and must be concluded before the beginning of the last quarter of the academic year. If incomplete, an amended Research Approval letter may be requested to conduct research in the following year.*
8. *Items 6 and 7 will not apply to any research effort being undertaken on behalf of the GDE. Such research will have been commissioned and be paid for by the Gauteng Department of Education.*
9. *It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain written parental consent of all learners that are expected to participate in the study.*
10. *The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.*
11. *The names of the GDE officials, schools, principals, parents, teachers and learners that participate in the study may not appear in the research report without the written consent of each of these individuals and/or organisations.*
12. *On completion of the study the researcher/s must supply the Director: Knowledge Management & Research with one Hard Cover bound and an electronic copy of the research.*
13. *The researcher may be expected to provide short presentations on the purpose, findings and recommendations of his/her research to both GDE officials and the schools concerned.*
14. *Should the researcher have been involved with research at a school and/or a district/head office level, the Director concerned must also be supplied with a brief summary of the purpose, findings and recommendations of the research study.*

The Gauteng Department of Education wishes you well in this important undertaking and looks forward to examining the findings of your research study.

Kind regards



M. Gumani Mukatuni
Acting CES: Education Research and Knowledge Management

DATE:01 June 2020.....

ANNEXURE C: REQUEST TO PRINCIPAL TO CONDUCT RESEARCH



Education Management, Law & Policy Studies

University of Pretoria, Groenkloof Campus

Pretoria

0002

South Africa

Tel No: (+27) 12 420 5513

Fax No: (+27) 12 420 3581

Dear Principal

APPLICATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT YOUR SCHOOL

My name is Sandice Naicker, a student currently doing a Masters of Education Degree in Education Management, Law and Policy at the University of Pretoria under the supervision of Dr R.N. Marishane. The title of the study is: **School-parent engagement through relational leadership practices of school principals in a multicultural setting**. Its purpose is to examine how school principals can practice relational leadership for effective parental engagement in a multicultural school setting. As part of my study, I have to conduct interviews with school principals, Heads of Department and parents of learners at selected schools. Each interview will last approximately 30 minutes and interviews will be conducted outside teaching time to avoid disruption of classes. I would, therefore, like your permission to conduct research at this school.

Your participation in this research project is entirely voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the research process at any time without any repercussions. I assure

and guarantee you that information collection from you will remain confidential and anonymous. The results from the interview will be treated confidentially and the interview recordings will only be heard by you (the participant), the researcher (S. Naicker) and her supervisor (Dr R.N. Marishane). To protect the institution and the participants in this study, names of the school will not be disclosed when information and the results obtained from the study are discussed. You will not receive payment or be offered any incentives for your participation.

Hard copies of interview transcriptions will be stored by my supervisor for a period of five years in a locked cupboard at the University of Pretoria. Electronic copies of the study will be stored on my supervisor and my laptop as well as a cloud server which is password protected. Future use of information will be subject to the approval of the Ethics Committee and after 15 years the hard copies will be shredded and electronic copies will be permanently deleted. The summary of the findings from this study will be made available on request should the school and you as the participant wish to know what the researcher found during the research process.

If you agree to participate in this study and grant me permission to conduct research at this school, please complete the consent form attached. Your cooperation in this regard is greatly appreciated. For further information please contact the following people:

S. Naicker (Researcher)

Email: sandicenaicker11@gmail.com Cell phone number: 0672542665

Supervisor: Dr R.N. Marishane

Email: nylon.marishane@up.ac.za

Permission for research

I,principal ofschool gives permission to the researcher S. Naicker to interview me during her research, provided that the research does not interfere with the school's teaching and learning programme.

Principal Date

ANNEXURE D: INVITATION AND CONSENT FORM FOR PRINCIPALS



Dept. Education Management, Law & Policy Studies

University of Pretoria, Groenkloof Campus

Pretoria

0002

South Africa

Tel No: (+27) 12 420 5513

Fax No: (+27) 12 420 3581

Dear Principal

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

My name is Sandice Naicker, a student currently doing a Masters of Education Degree in Education Management, Law and Policy at the University of Pretoria under the supervision of Dr R.N. Marishane. The title of the study is: School-parent engagement through relational leadership practices of school principals in a multicultural setting. Its purpose is to examine how school principals can practice relational leadership for effective parental engagement in a multicultural school setting. As part of my study, I have to conduct interviews with school principals, Heads of Department and parents of learners at selected schools. Each interview will last approximately 30 minutes and interviews will be conducted outside teaching time to avoid disruption of classes. I would, therefore, like to invite you to participate in this interview.

Your participation in this research project is entirely voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the research process at any time without any repercussions. I assure and guarantee you that information collection from you will remain confidential and



anonymous. The results from the interview will be treated confidentially and the interview recordings will only be heard by you (the participant), the researcher (S. Naicker) and her supervisor (Dr R.N. Marishane). To protect the institution and the participants in this study, names of the school will not be disclosed when information and the results obtained from the study are discussed. You will not receive payment or be offered any incentives for your participation.

Hard copies of interview transcriptions will be stored by my supervisor for a period of five years in a locked cupboard at the University of Pretoria. Electronic copies of the study will be stored on my supervisor and my laptop as well as a cloud server which is password protected. Future use of information will be subject to the approval of the Ethics Committee and after 15 years the hard copies will be shredded and electronic copies will be permanently deleted. The summary of the findings from this study will be made available on request should the school and you as the participant wish to know what the researcher found during the research process.

If you agree to participate in this study and grant me permission to conduct research, please complete the consent form attached. Your cooperation in this regard is greatly appreciated. For further information please contact the following people:

S. Naicker (Researcher)

Email: sandicenaicker11@gmail.com Cell phone number: 0672542665

Supervisor: Dr R.N. Marishane

Email: nylon.marishane@up.ac.za

Permission for research

I,principal/HOD/parent ofschool gives permission to the researcher S. Naicker to interview me during her research, provided that the research does not interfere with the school's teaching and learning programme.

Principal Date



ANNEXURE E: INVITATION AND CONSENT FORM FOR HEAD OF DEPARTMENT



Dept. Education Management, Law & Policy Studies

University of Pretoria, Groenkloof Campus

Pretoria

0002

South Africa

Tel No: (+27) 12 420 5513

Fax No: (+27) 12 420 3581

Dear Head of Department

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

My name is Sandice Naicker, a student currently doing a Masters of Education Degree in Education Management, Law and Policy at the University of Pretoria under the supervision of Dr R.N. Marishane. The title of the study is: School-parent engagement through relational leadership practices of school principals in a multicultural setting. Its purpose is to examine how school principals can practice relational leadership for effective parental engagement in a multicultural school setting. As part of my study, I have to conduct interviews with Heads of Department of the selected schools. I will be conducting research for a duration of two months. Each interview will last approximately 30 minutes and interviews will be conducted outside teaching time to avoid disruption of classes. I would, therefore, like to invite you to participate in this interview.



Your participation in this research project is entirely voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the research process at any time without any repercussions. I assure and guarantee you that information collection from you will remain confidential and anonymous. The results from the interview will be treated confidentially and the interview recordings will only be heard by you (the participant), the researcher (S. Naicker) and her supervisor (Dr R.N. Marishane). To protect the institution and the participants in this study, names of the school will not be disclosed when information and the results obtained from the study are discussed. You will not receive payment or be offered any incentives for your participation in the study.

Hard copies of interview transcriptions will be stored by my supervisor for a period of five years in a locked cupboard at the University of Pretoria. Electronic copies of the study will be stored on my supervisor and my laptop as well as a cloud server which is password protected. Future use of information will be subject to the approval of the Ethics Committee and after 15 years the hard copies will be shredded and electronic copies will be permanently deleted. The summary of the findings from this study will be made available on request should the school and you as the participant wish to know what the researcher found during the research process.

If you agree to participate in this study and grant me permission to conduct research, please complete the attached form. Your cooperation in this regard is greatly appreciated. For further information please contact the following people:

S. Naicker (Researcher)

Email: sandicenaicker11@gmail.com Cell phone number: 0672542665

Supervisor: Dr R.N. Marishane

Email: nylon.marishane@up.ac.za



Permission for research

I,an HoD atschool gives permission to the researcher S. Naicker to interview me during her research, provided that the research does not interfere with teaching and learning in our school.

HoD Date

ANNEXURE F: INVITATION AND CONSENT FORM FOR PARENT



Dept. Education Management, Law & Policy Studies

University of Pretoria, Groenkloof Campus

Pretoria

0002

South Africa

Tel No: (+27) 12 420 5513

Fax No: (+27) 12 420 3581

Dear Parent

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

My name is Sandice Naicker, a student currently doing a Masters of Education Degree in Education Management, Law and Policy at the University of Pretoria under the supervision of Dr R.N. Marishane. The title of the study is: School-parent engagement through relational leadership practices of school principals in a multicultural setting. Its purpose is to examine how school principals can practice relational leadership for effective parental engagement in a multicultural school setting. As part of my study, I have to conduct interviews with parents of learners at the selected schools. Each interview will last approximately 30. I would, therefore, like to invite you to participate in this interview.

Your participation in this research project is entirely voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the research process at any time without any repercussions. I assure and guarantee you that information collection from you will remain confidential and anonymous. The results from the interview will be treated confidentially and the



interview recordings will only be heard by you (the participant), the researcher (S. Naicker) and her supervisor (Dr R.N. Marishane). To protect the institution and the participants in this study, names of the school will not be disclosed when information and the results obtained from the study are discussed. You will not receive payment or be offered any incentives for your participation in the study.

Hard copies of interview transcriptions will be stored by my supervisor for a period of five years in a locked cupboard at the University of Pretoria. Electronic copies of the study will be stored on my supervisor and my laptop as well as a cloud server which is password protected. Future use of information will be subject to the approval of the Ethics Committee and after 15 years the hard copies will be shredded and electronic copies will be permanently deleted. The summary of the findings from this study will be made available on request should the school and you as the participant wish to know what the researcher found during the research process.

If you agree to participate in this study and grant me permission to conduct research, please complete the attached form. Your cooperation in this regard is greatly appreciated. For further information please contact the following people:

S. Naicker (Researcher)

Email: sandicenaicker11@gmail.com Cell phone number: 0672542665

Supervisor: Dr R.N. Marishane

Email: nylon.marishane@up.ac.za

Permission for research

I,a parent with a child attendingschool gives permission to the researcher S. Naicker to interview me during her research, provided that the research does not interfere with teaching and learning at my child's school.

Parent Date

ANNEXURE G: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR PRINCIPALS

1. What do you understand by the term 'parent engagement'?
2. What does parent involvement mean?
3. How would you describe your relationship with the parents in this school?
4. What would you say are the barriers to effective parent engagement at this school?
5. In what ways do parents engage themselves within this school?
6. How do you communicate with parents whose medium of communication is not English?
7. What opportunities are given to parents to communicate with the school?
8. What leadership style do you practice to enhance parent engagement and how does that style assist you and parents?
9. How do you accommodate the diverse needs of learners in a multicultural school setting like yours?
10. What do you understand by the term 'relational leadership'?
11. What strategies can be used to enhance effective parent engagement in multicultural schools?

ANNEXURE H: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR HEAD OF DEPARTMENTS (HoD'S)

1. What do you understand by the term 'parent engagement'?
2. What efforts do you make to gain the support of parents for their children's education?
3. What attempts do you make to meet the needs of a multicultural community the school is serving?
4. How do parents engage in their children's education at your school?
5. How can you describe the attitude of parents towards engaging in their children's education?
6. What are some challenges you have identified when parents engage themselves with the school and their children's education?
7. How do you address the parent engagement challenges you have identified in your school?
8. What leadership style do you practice for effective parent engagement in a multicultural school setting?
9. How do you communicate with parents whose medium of communication is not English?
10. What measures are in place to ensure effective communication occurs with parents whose medium of communication is not English?
11. How does the school accommodate the diversity of needs of parents?

ANNXURE I: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR PARENTS

1. What does 'parent engagement' mean to you?
2. What does parent involvement mean?
3. What basic obligations do you meet as a parent in your child's school?
4. What are some of the efforts made by the school to get you engaged with your child's learning in the school?
5. What are you happy and unhappy about regarding parent engagement in your child's school?
6. What are some of the factors hampering you from engaging with the school?
7. What can the school do to ensure parent engagement is effective?
8. How does the school accommodate the diversity of needs of parents in a multicultural setting?
9. What are the benefits of parent engagement?
10. How often does the school contact parents?
11. What are some of the reasons that the school contacts you?
12. What are the attitudes of the principal, Hod's and teachers when you go to the school for a random visit?
13. What leadership style does the principal practice for effective parent engagement?
14. What do you understand by the term 'relational leadership'?