

**Capabilities of principals managing parental involvement in township primary
schools in Ekurhuleni South District**

By

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Declaration

I declare that the dissertation titled “*Capabilities of principals managing parental involvement in township primary schools in Ekurhuleni South District*”, which I hereby submit for the degree Magister Education 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.

Sinoyolo Dikana

November 2023

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Ethics Clearance Certificate



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Abstract

In considering well-being in educational settings beyond income generation, Melanie Walker makes the case for a Capability Approach to assess a person's ability to make actual and valuable achievements that will positively impact their well-being. The Capability Approach, a framework by Amartya Sen, seeks to enhance people's capability to function effectively to expand their capabilities and functionings until they have reason to value the kind of lives they lead. Principals of township primary schools are expected to manage parental involvement until it improves, while several structural issues cause parental involvement in township contexts to be poor. Such issues include the fact that townships experience higher levels of poverty which leads parents to work more jobs and hours and be less available for educational involvement. An additional reason is that township schools sometimes struggle to create strong connections between schools and families which are exacerbated by the illiteracy of parents because they are less able to get involved in issues of curriculum.

The problem that this study sought to address is the limited knowledge available on the capabilities that principals of township primary schools possess to manage parental involvement. The findings show that the capabilities of township primary schools in managing parental involvement are underdeveloped when considering structural conversion factors but concerning their individual conversion factors, they are equipped to manage parental involvement. The theoretical framework the study employed is the Capabilities Approach and the methodology to implement this framework included data collection through individual semi-structured interviews which was analysed through deductive thematic analysis.

Key terms:

Capability approach; capabilities; functionings; conversion factors

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This letter confirms that I have language edited and proofread the master's thesis

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List of Abbreviations

DBE	Department of Basic Education
ELRC	Education Labour Relations Council
NECT	National Education Collaboration Trust
OECD	The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SACE	South African Council for Educators
SGB	School Governing Body
SMT	School management team
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UNESCO	The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Educational management, particularly the role of principals, is increasingly being acknowledged as a pivotal factor in promoting and facilitating parental involvement, which has a profound impact on the quality of education and the outcomes of learners (Rapp & Duncan, 2012). This dissertation undertakes a deep exploration of the intricate relationship between school principals, their educational management practices and parental involvement, with a specific focus on the South African educational landscape. Providing the guiding framework for this study is Amartya Sen's Capability Approach.

Amartya Sen's Capability Approach, deeply rooted in principles of human agency and freedom (Walker & Unterhalter, 2007), offered a unique perspective through which to analyse the intricate dynamics of the capabilities of principals in managing parental involvement in underprivileged contexts within South Africa. The South African educational context, marked by its historical disparities in education and its ongoing commitment to fostering inclusivity, offers an exceptionally compelling backdrop for this study. By using the Capability Approach as a guiding framework, this study sought to shed light on how principals, as educational managers, can effectively navigate and optimise parental involvement within South African township schools, each beset with their own set of unique challenges. Through this exploration, the study ultimately aimed to ensure not only the well-being of the principals but also the holistic development and well-being of the learners.

Rapp and Duncan (2012) suggest that the management of parental involvement by principals holds a pivotal role in shaping the educational experience of learners and the overall well-being of these educational leaders. One vital dimension within the realm of educational management is the cultivation of parental involvement, a factor recognised globally as highly influential in fostering not only academic achievement but also holistic learner development (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Kadji-Beltran et al. (2013) see principals as key figures in the educational landscape who shoulder the responsibility of crafting policies, fostering a collaborative school culture and instituting practices that effectively facilitate and promote parental involvement.

South Africa's educational landscape is characterised by a complex blend of challenges and opportunities. In the post-apartheid era, the nation has made substantial progress in expanding access to education (Mahlangu, 2017). Nevertheless, deeply rooted educational inequalities continue to persist, manifesting themselves in disparities related to educational resources, educator quality, learning outcomes and contextual factors intricately linked to the geographical settings of schools. Mesutha (2019) views parental involvement increasingly as a strategic avenue to address these disproportions and enhance the overall quality of education.

Amartya Sen's Capability Approach provides an invaluable analytical framework for evaluating and enhancing the capabilities of principals in managing parental involvement within South African schools. At its core, this approach places paramount importance on human agency and freedom, asserting that education should transcend mere knowledge acquisition to empower individuals to lead lives they have reason to value (Walker, 2012). Within the sphere of educational management, the Capability Approach underscores the profound significance of principals creating an environment where parental involvement not only encompasses routine activities but also amplifies their own capabilities as educational leaders.

Despite the growing recognition of the pivotal role of principals in educational management and their potential to harness parental involvement for the betterment of education, there remains a notable scarcity of comprehensive research that examines these dynamics through the lens of the Capability Approach within the South African context. This study set out to bridge this research gap by conducting an in-depth investigation into the capabilities that principals use and should have to effectively manage and leverage parental involvement. Through this exploration, it aspired to contribute significantly to the existing body of knowledge on the Capability Approach in education and the enhancement of educational practices in South Africa.

1.2 Problem statement

In the South African educational context, characterised by historical inequalities and disproportionate access to quality education, the role of principals in managing parental involvement remains a multifaceted challenge and a critical determinant of learners' educational outcomes (Sathiapama et al., 2012). While extensive research has underscored the significance of parental involvement and recognised the pivotal

role of school principals in educational management (Schechter & Shaked 2017; Sebastian et al., 2016), there is a pressing need to explore these dynamics within the framework of Amartya Sen's Capability Approach. This approach, rooted in principles of human agency, freedom and individual capabilities, offered a unique lens for evaluating and enhancing principals' roles in managing parental involvement. However, a research gap exists in understanding how school principals, as educational managers, can effectively navigate and optimise parental involvement in a way that elevates the principals' own capabilities and addresses structural conversion factors in the context of underprivileged schools in townships of South Africa.

Within South Africa's complex educational landscape, marked by historical legacies of apartheid and ongoing inequalities in resources and opportunities, parental involvement is widely regarded as a potential catalyst for improving education quality and mitigating inequalities (Munje & Mncube, 2018). Nonetheless, the practical implementation of effective parental involvement strategies and the extent to which they align with the Capability Approach remains underexplored territory.

This research problem stemmed from the recognition that despite a growing body of literature on parental involvement and educational management, there is limited scholarship that scrutinises the strategies employed by school principals to manage and leverage parental involvement, particularly from the perspective of the Capability Approach. Moreover, the specific impact of well-managed parental involvement on learners' educational experiences and outcomes, framed within the context of the Capability Approach, remains insufficiently examined.

1.3 Purpose of the study

This study aimed to investigate the capabilities of principals in South African township primary schools, employing the lens of Amartya Sen's Capability Approach to comprehensively understand how these principals manage parental involvement. By exploring the interplay between principals' capabilities, management of parental involvement and the broader educational context, this study sought to provide valuable insights that could inform strategies for principals' management within township schools. Ultimately, the purpose of this study is to contribute to the body of knowledge on parental involvement management, particularly in under-resourced settings, with

the intent of improving the educational experiences and outcomes of learners and principals in South African township schools.

1.4 Rationale

1.4.1 Personal rationale

The experience of teaching in a South African township school for six years has been a deeply transformative one for me. It has given me firsthand insight into the intricate challenges that permeate our educational system. This unique perspective fuelled my personal motivation for undertaking this study which focused on the capabilities of principals in managing parental involvement, informed by Amartya Sen's Capability Approach.

I became interested in the strategies that principals used to manage parental involvement after observing a lack of visible strategies in primary schools. In township schools, the principal's role is crucial. These schools often grapple with limited resources, overcrowded classrooms and socioeconomic challenges that directly impact learners' educational experiences. Principals in township schools face unique challenges that require management skills, understanding of their communities, and the ability to inspire positive change in the learners in the schools and the parents of the learners.

Amartya Sen's Capability Approach resonates deeply with me. It places human well-being, agency, and freedom at the forefront of development. Applying this framework to educational management speaks to my belief that principals should have experience in management that empowers them to lead lives they have reason to value. It offers a holistic perspective on the capabilities of principals in township schools.

As an educator in a township school, I recognise the power of research to drive evidence-based policies and practices. By conducting this study, I aspire to contribute to the development of policies that recognise and nurture the capabilities of principals, particularly in township schools. I hope to shed light on how their leadership can be harnessed to create more inclusive, equitable and empowering educational environments.

My ultimate motivation centres on our learners. I am deeply committed to providing them with an education that transcends the confines of circumstance. Township schools are filled with potential and I believe that capable and visionary principals can be a driving force behind the transformation of learners' lives. Through this research, I sought to uncover insights that empower principals to create environments where every learner can thrive, regardless of their background.

In conclusion, my personal rationale for pursuing this research is intimately tied to my experiences as an educator in a South African township school. It is rooted in a commitment to making a meaningful impact on the education of our learners, recognising the crucial role of principals in this endeavour. I hoped that by exploring how their capabilities intersect with parental involvement management, I could bring about positive change and foster a brighter future for our learners and communities.

1.4.2 Scholarly rationale

The examination of principals' capabilities in the context of managing parental involvement within South African schools through the lens of Amartya Sen's Capability Approach is of paramount significance. While the role of principals in educational management has been extensively studied (Anastasiou & Papagianni, 2020), there is a compelling need to investigate how their capabilities influence the management of parental involvement and consequently impact the educational landscape of the school.

Principals are pivotal figures in educational management. Their capabilities in terms of leadership style, strategic decision making and interpersonal skills directly influence the functioning of schools (Lumby, 2019). A principal's capability to effectively manage parental involvement may significantly affect the school's overall climate, community engagement and educational outcomes. However, there is limited research that explicitly explores how principals' capabilities contribute to their management of parental involvement.

The Capability Approach asserts that individuals' capabilities are central to their well-being and agency. Extending this framework to educational management necessitates an exploration of the capabilities of principals. This study delved into the skills, knowledge, values and agency that principals bring to their roles, shedding light on

how these capabilities are harnessed to engage parents and foster collaborative partnerships.

The South African context is characterised by unique challenges, including historical inequalities, socioeconomic challenges and diverse cultural backgrounds. Understanding how principals' capabilities align with the Capability Approach is essential in this context, as it may reveal strategies for managing parental involvement that are responsive to the complex and dynamic South African educational landscape.

The study's findings hold potential management and policy implications. Examining how principals' capabilities are related to parental involvement management can inform the development of policies and guidelines for principals' training and support. Identifying best practices grounded in the Capability Approach can guide the professional development of principals and educational leaders, ultimately enhancing the quality of education in South Africa, especially in township schools.

There is a notable gap in the literature concerning the capabilities of principals in the context of parental involvement management, particularly in South Africa. This study aimed to bridge this gap by providing empirical insights and theoretical foundations for further research and suggestions for practice in educational management and leadership.

In sum, this research was motivated by the recognition that the capabilities of principals are integral to the effective management of parental involvement within South African schools. It sought to contribute to a deeper understanding of how principals' capabilities intersect with the principles of the Capability Approach, with the goal of informing educational policies and practices that promote collaborative, inclusive and equitable education in South Africa.

1.5 Research questions

1.5.1 Main research question

The primary research question for my study is: What capabilities do principals in Ekurhuleni South District township primary schools use to manage parental involvement?

1.5.2 Secondary research questions

The secondary research questions for my study are as follows:

- What are the capabilities of principals in township primary schools in managing the involvement of parents?
- How do structural and individual conversion factors impact principals' management of parental involvement?
- What are the enabling and constraining factors for principals in township primary schools in managing parental involvement?
- How do principals in township primary schools develop educators' capabilities to enable parental involvement?
- How do principals in township primary schools manage enabling and constraining factors of parents' agency and power to be involved in the school?

1.6 Research methodology

The research methodology of this study adopted a qualitative approach, firmly situated within an interpretivist paradigm. Guided by relativist ontological assumptions, this approach recognises the multifaceted nature of reality, acknowledging that individuals' experiences and perspectives are context-dependent and open to interpretation (Levers, 2013). Concurrently, the study aligns with subjectivist epistemological assumptions, which Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) emphasise is a lens which recognises that knowledge is constructed through the unique perspectives and interpretations of the participants involved. A collective case study design was employed to comprehensively explore the capabilities of principals in South African township schools and their management of parental involvement. This design allowed for an in-depth examination of multiple cases, offering a rich and contextually embedded understanding of the complexities surrounding the principals' capabilities and their interactions with parental involvement within the unique educational landscape of South African township primary schools.

1.7 Limitations of the study

This study used individual semi-structured interviews with five principals of township primary schools and had several inherent limitations that warrant consideration.

The sample size of five principals, although purposefully selected for its depth, might not have fully captured the breadth of experiences and practices within South African township schools which limits the generalizability of findings. The study's qualitative nature and the use of semi-structured interviews may also have introduced the potential for social desirability bias, as participants might have provided responses they perceived as favourable (Alsaawi, 2014). Moreover, the reliance on self-reported data from principals omitted the perspectives and experiences of other stakeholders, such as educators, parents and learners, which could offer a more holistic understanding of the dynamics surrounding the management of parental involvement in these schools. In addition, the study's reliance on retrospective data might have been subject to recall bias, affecting the accuracy and reliability of responses. Finally, the contextual specificity of township schools in South Africa means that the findings may not be readily transferred to other educational settings, necessitating caution when applying the results beyond this specific context. These limitations underscore the need for careful interpretation and acknowledgement of the study's scope and context when considering its implications and relevance.

1.8 Outline of chapters

Chapter 2 contains the literature review, where existing literature on the topic of this study is discussed. The literature review discusses parental involvement, management and leadership in education, principal and parental involvement and gaps identified in the reviewed literature.

Chapter 3 delves into the theoretical framework of the study, which is Amartya Sen's Capability Approach. This includes a discussion on functionings, capabilities, agency, conversion factors, the Capability Approach in education and the application of this theory in and to the current study.

Chapter 4 takes a closer look at the methodology used to conduct this study. This section covers the approach, research paradigm, the research design, sampling, data collection and data analysis.

Chapter 5 is where the data that was collected is presented according to the predetermined themes. Those themes are (1) Capabilities of principals in township primary schools in managing the involvement of parents; (2) Structural and individual conversion factors impact on principals' management of parental involvement; (3)

Enabling factors for principals in township primary schools in managing parental involvement; (4) Constraining factors for principals in township primary schools on managing parental involvement; and (5) Principals in township primary schools develop educators' capabilities to enable parental involvement.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Having introduced how the study was conducted by providing the background, the rationale, and brief motivations for the technical aspects of the study including the methodology, this following discussion relates the literature that was reviewed to find a unique perspective to conducting the research. Within the scope of education, the role of principals as managers and leaders stands out prominently, influencing the dynamics of the school environment and shaping the educational journey of all stakeholders of school, including parents of learners. The literature review, then, centres on the theme of how principals navigate and manage parental involvement, recognizing it as a crucial determinant of the success of schools.

The review starts from international trends in parental involvement, exploring the challenges and opportunities in under-resourced settings, and delving into the nuanced landscape of parental involvement within the African and South African contexts. The review also looks at theories and models that provide a lens for understanding the complexities of parental involvement in education. As the review unfolds, it takes a focused lens to investigate the distinct realm of management and leadership within education, with principals as central figures. Principals, in their dual capacity as managers and leaders, wield significant influence over the school's functioning and the cultivation of a conducive learning environment. Within this focus area, the review critically examines how principals strategically manage parental involvement, balancing the intricate dynamics of fostering collaborative partnerships while efficiently steering the operational aspects of the school. A key emphasis of the review is the examination of the intricate relationship between principals and parental involvement. By dissecting the strategies, challenges, and successes in this domain, the review aims to unravel the ways in which principals, as educational leaders and managers, shape the landscape of parental involvement. In tandem with this exploration, the literature review endeavours to identify gaps in the existing body of knowledge. By scrutinizing prior research, the review seeks to pinpoint areas where further investigation is warranted, shedding light on unexplored facets of how principals manage parental involvement.

2.2 Parental involvement

Parental involvement in education has garnered significant attention worldwide because of its positive correlation with learner success and well-being. Epstein (2011) defines parental involvement as a collaborative partnership between schools and parents, encompassing activities such as monitoring homework, attending parent-educator meetings and participation in school events. It is widely acknowledged that parental involvement positively influences learners' academic achievement (Abrahams, 2013) and socio-emotional development (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003).

Research has consistently demonstrated a positive correlation between parental involvement and learners' academic success (Caño et al., 2016). Recent studies reaffirm that learners benefit academically when their parents are actively engaged in their education, leading to improved academic performance and a greater likelihood of completing their school careers (Garcia & de Duzman, 2020; Gyamfi & Pobbi, 2016). Beyond academic outcomes, parental involvement continues to contribute significantly to learners' socio-emotional development, promoting positive self-esteem, motivation and a sense of belonging (Hill & Tyson, 2009).

The landscape of parental involvement has evolved with changing societal dynamics. Research has highlighted the influence of cultural, socioeconomic and technological factors (Epstein, 2011; Lareau, 2011). Cultural norms and values continue to shape the nature and extent of parental involvement but with greater recognition of cultural diversity (Fullan, 2001). Socioeconomic factors remain crucial, with initiatives focusing on reducing barriers to involvement among lower-income families. In addition, the role of school leadership, particularly principals, continues to be acknowledged as pivotal in fostering a culture of parental involvement.

There are several views of parental involvement and what it involves and scholars across the world have not reached a consensus about its definition (Harris & Robinson, 2016). Several of these scholars disagree about how parents ought to be involved in children's academic life. For example, Michael et al. (2012) recognised that part of this difficulty is because cultural contexts of countries impact the interplay between parents and schools and how parental involvement is understood. I view the involvement of parents in education from the perspective of the six types of parental involvement categorised and revised by Epstein (2011). These are parenting,

communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making and collaborating with the community. There are, ostensibly, opposing views to Epstein's six types of parental involvement in the education of children. One of these is employed by Harris and Robinson (2016) which they call 'stage-setting'. This theory is dissimilar to the conventional way in which parents are often encouraged to be involved in their children's education and is more about cultivating or enriching the child rather than affecting a particular academic outcome (Harris & Robinson, 2016). These contestations could be discouraging because they portray parental involvement in education as too complex an issue to understand and successfully apply.

Nonetheless, parental involvement has been deemed important in the quest for improvements towards effective education (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). This is because studies show a strong correlation between an increase in parental involvement and an increase in the academic performance of children (Caño et al., 2016; Lara & Saracosti, 2019; Wilder, 2014). In addition, the value that scholars reveal in parental involvement goes further and shows an improvement in not only the cognitive skills of learners but also in non-cognitive skills and motivational development (Borgonovi & Montt, 2012). Such non-cognitive improvement has a positive impact on learners' behaviour and their social-emotional factors (Motala & Luxomo, 2014). This makes it a worthwhile phenomenon to explore for scholars and managers in schools.

2.2.1 International parental involvement trends

Internationally, parental involvement trends have shown remarkable diversity. Lareau (2011) writes about how across developed nations, there is an increasing emphasis on the value of parental involvement with policies and programmes designed to engage parents in their children's education. However, the nature and extent of parental involvement vary. In some countries, such as China, a strong cultural emphasis on education results in high levels of parental involvement (Xie & Postiglione, 2016). In contrast, marginalised communities in many Western nations face barriers to involvement (Posey-Maddox et al., 2014). The Capability Approach's relevance lies in its adaptability to different cultural and social contexts, allowing for a nuanced understanding of how parental involvement can enhance parents' capabilities in diverse settings (Robeyns, 2005).

The importance of parental involvement in education has transcended borders, acquiring recognition as a global imperative for educational improvement (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003). There has been an increased emphasis on the value of parental involvement across diverse cultures and educational systems. International organisations, including UNESCO and OECD (Redding & UNESCO-IBE, 2001), have advocated policies and initiatives that promote parental involvement to enhance educational outcomes and foster inclusive school environments.

One notable trend is the growing recognition of the cultural diversity that shapes parental involvement practices (Hill & Tyson, 2009). Researchers (see Foulidi et al., 2022) have highlighted that cultural norms, values and expectations profoundly influence the nature and extent of parental involvement in education. This trend emphasises the importance of culturally responsive approaches to parental involvement that respect and harness the diverse perspectives and practices of parents from various backgrounds.

Socioeconomic factors continue to play a critical role in parental involvement trends. Studies have underscored the challenges faced by lower-income families in engaging with their children's education (Boettcher, 2022; Loeza, 2021; Smith, 2006). Initiatives aimed at reducing disparities in parental involvement and enhancing equity have acquired prominence (Boettcher, 2022; Epstein, 2011; Loeza, 2021; Smith, 2006). Strategies such as providing resources, offering support networks and addressing barriers to engagement have been implemented in various countries to ensure that all parents, regardless of their socioeconomic status, can actively participate in their children's education (Đurišić & Mila, 2017).

The digital transformation has reshaped parental involvement practices (Jaiswal, 2018). Technology integration in education has opened new avenues for communication and collaboration between schools and parents. From online parent-educator meetings to educational apps and virtual resources, parents now have increased access to information and opportunities to engage with their children's learning. This trend highlights the need for digital literacy among parents and educators and the potential for technology to bridge communication gaps.

In an era characterised by educational accountability, transparency in parental involvement has gained prominence (Rogers, 2006). Schools and educational

authorities increasingly recognise the importance of providing parents with clear information about their children's progress and the school's performance. This trend aligns with a broader commitment to involving parents as partners in the educational process and fostering a sense of shared responsibility for learner success.

2.2.2 Parental involvement in under-resourced contexts

Research shows that there are observable class differences in parental involvement between parents of higher socioeconomic status and those of lower socioeconomic status (Xie & Postiglione, 2016). Parents from under-resourced contexts often see education as the responsibility of the professionals at school (Xie & Postiglione, 2016). The study of parental involvement conducted by Xie and Postiglione (2016) in rural China attributes this trend of poor parental involvement in underprivileged contexts to the fact that the state, schools and educators provide few formal and routine channels for poorer parents to get involved in schools. Put differently, the lack of management strategies for parental involvement has led to the non-involvement of rural Chinese parents in schools.

Moreover, in the Philippines, Garcia and de Guzman (2020) conducted a study that investigated how parents of low socioeconomic status conceptualised parental involvement. They found that parents from this context (because they struggled to contribute financially to schools) volunteered to participate in the upkeep of the school premises by cleaning. These parents organized themselves to be involved as volunteers at the schools even though the schools do not have systematic management strategies in place for parental involvement (Garcia & de Guzman, 2020). This is a surprising perspective of the management of parental involvement as it shows that the cultural belief systems of the parents also play a role in how they get involved in education. Garcia and de Guzman (2020) explain that the strategies of involvement on the side of the parents were rooted in the Filipino cultural value of interdependence and their nurturing nature. Such findings further strengthen the importance of managerial strategies for parental involvement in schools. I believe that if schools have an in-depth understanding of the cultural capital of the parents of the school they can find ways to use that to improve the involvement of parents.

In a Ghanaian study conducted by Gyamfi and Pobbi (2016) it was found that parental involvement in monitoring the academic activity of the child was low. Furthermore, it

was recommended that schools should curb this low involvement through management strategies such as workshops, to educate parents on how they can be involved in monitoring their children's progress (Gyamfi & Pobbi, 2016). The findings in these contexts are not unique to these nations, as discussed in the following subsection.

2.2.3 Parental involvement in Africa

Parental involvement in education within the African context has gained recognition as a potent force for educational improvement. Researchers note that in many African countries, there is a strong tradition of community and family involvement in education (Sifuna & Otiende, 2006). However, challenges related to poverty, inadequate infrastructure and limited resources often hinder parental involvement. Amartya Sen's Capability Approach resonates with these challenges by emphasising the importance of expanding individual freedoms and capabilities in the face of such obstacles. Applying this framework in the African context underscores the need to address socioeconomic disparities and empower parents to participate actively in their children's education.

In East Africa, there has been a growing emphasis on inclusivity in education (Stone-MacDonald & Pinar-Irmak, 2021). Countries like Kenya and Tanzania have implemented policies to promote access to education for marginalised communities. In addition, linguistic diversity has been a key consideration with efforts to include Indigenous languages in education and engage parents in their preservation (Kigobe et al., 2018).

In West Africa, countries such as Nigeria and Ghana have grappled with significant socioeconomic challenges. To address this, community-based initiatives have gained prominence, empowering parents to take an active role in their children's education (Gyamfi & Pobbi, 2016). These initiatives are often facilitated by local NGOs and community leaders, fostering collaboration among parents.

In countries such as Zambia, they have witnessed a surge in the adoption of digital technologies in education (Chansa-Kabali, 2023). The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the shift to remote learning, prompting parents to engage with online platforms for communication, access to educational resources and monitoring of their children's progress.

2.2.4 Parental involvement in South Africa

As a nation marked by a unique socio-political history, South Africa presents a distinctive landscape for parental involvement in education. Post-apartheid, South Africa has made substantial efforts to promote inclusivity and parental participation. However, stark disparities in resources, socioeconomic backgrounds and historical legacies persist (Ndebele, 2015). Sen's Capability Approach offers a critical perspective in this context, urging policymakers to focus not only on increasing parental involvement but also on enhancing their capabilities (Walker & Unterhalter, 2007). This is especially important for those from disadvantaged backgrounds so they can engage actively in their children's education.

South Africa's post-apartheid era brought significant changes to the country's education system marked by a concerted effort to promote inclusivity and parental participation (Department of Education, 2001). Parental involvement is increasingly recognised as a means to address historical educational disparities and foster democratic engagement in the education process. Socioeconomic disparities continue to be a critical factor in parental involvement trends (Ndebele, 2015). Recent research has highlighted the challenges faced by lower-income families in actively engaging with their children's education. Initiatives aimed at reducing disparities and enhancing inclusivity have gained prominence and focus on providing resources and support networks and addressing barriers to engagement.

South Africa's linguistic and cultural diversities present unique challenges and opportunities for parental involvement (Msila, 2012). Researchers have emphasised the importance of recognising and respecting linguistic and cultural differences in parental involvement practices. This trend underscores the need for culturally sensitive approaches when involving parents and creating inclusive learning environments.

In recent years, community-based initiatives have played a pivotal role in fostering parental involvement (Department of Basic Education, 2016). These initiatives, often driven by non-governmental organisations such as the NECT and community leaders, provide platforms for parents to engage with their children's education. They emphasise community collaboration and the empowerment of parents as agents of change.

2.2.5 Parental involvement in South African township schools

South African township schools that are characterised by historical inequalities and limited access to quality education highlight the urgency of addressing parental involvement (Dick, 2016). Studies indicate that parental involvement in township schools can be constrained by socioeconomic challenges, language barriers and limited access to information (Munje & Mncube, 2018). Sen's Capability Approach becomes especially pertinent in this context, emphasising the need to empower principals' capabilities to actively manage parental involvement in township schools, recognising that the parents' capabilities may be restricted because of systemic inequalities.

There has been a paradigm shift in how parental involvement is perceived in South African townships (Maeresera, 2016). Previously, townships were characterised by systemic disengagement but there has been a conscious effort to shift towards a model of partnership between schools and parents. Socioeconomic barriers, which include poverty and unemployment, have posed significant challenges to parental involvement (Mahlangu, 2017). However, township communities have embarked on empowerment initiatives. These initiatives aim to address not only the economic challenges faced by parents but also their empowerment as active partners in their children's education (Manilal, 2015; Majozi, 2014).

Until South Africa became an all-inclusive democracy in the early 1990s, non-white citizens were forced to live outside cities in what were and still are called 'townships', based on a racially segregated system that dates back to British colonialism (Findley & Ogbu, 2011). While suburban South Africa is no longer necessarily a white domain, townships remain an area where most inhabitants are black (Jones & Mtshali, 2013). Parental involvement was only seen as a benefit for children of the white middle-class majority (Horny & Lafaele, 2011). This observation was mainly because working-class parents, unlike the white middle-class, faced challenges of being less involved, less represented and less informed by schools because they were less likely to have access to resources to contribute to schools (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). This was over 10 years ago, yet still, in more recent times it was discovered that in township schools, parents and learners do not benefit from the idea of parental involvement as they rarely have access to resources and opportunities to meet the required governance and parental involvement skills (Dick, 2016). The practice and policies of parental

involvement in schools to manage parental involvement make a greater impact and are of greater importance than any variable such as socioeconomic status, race or family background in determining the extent of parental involvement (Sathiapama et al., 2012).

Mbokodi and Singh (2011) observed that parents of children in township schools are not involved and that little to no efforts have been made by educators and the schools to involve them. Motala and Luxomo (2014) further argue that this lack of involvement is a missed opportunity to better support the overall progress of learners because it can compensate for a lack of meaningful learning and low academic performance in township schools.

Among the things that hinder parents from being involved in schools, in the case of the United Kingdom, for example, is that parents do not know how to be involved because there are limited strategies developed by schools to involve parents (Okeke, 2014). In South Africa, the South African Schools Act (SASA) 84 of 1996 legislates that parents are only officially involved with the governance of schools (Meier & Lemmer, 2015). However, even though the School Governing Body (SGB) is legislated in township schools only a few parents are involved in governance – most parents are not even aware of issues like the finance policy of the school which should be drafted in correlation with parents (Mbengashe, 2014). This results from a lack of clarity on the roles of parents and educators, a lack of time for parents, poor communication and a lack of training (Munje & Mncube, 2018). This raises the critical issue as to whose responsibility it is to empower parents to be involved in schools.

2.2.6 Parental involvement theories and models

Parental involvement in education is widely recognised as a crucial factor in learner success and school improvement. Over the years, scholars have proposed various theories and models to understand the dynamics of parental involvement. Such prominent theories and models include Epstein's Model of Parental Involvement (Epstein & Dauber, 1991), Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's Model of Parental Involvement (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005) and Lareau's Theory of Parental Strategies (Lareau, 2003).

Epstein's Model of Parental Involvement presents a comprehensive framework categorising parental involvement into six types: basic, communication, volunteering,

learning at home, decision making and collaborating with the community. This model underscores the importance of partnerships between schools, families and communities in enhancing learner success. Epstein's approach is grounded in empirical research, offering practical guidance to educators and policymakers (Epstein, 2022). However, Epstein's model is not without limitations. Its complexity can make comprehensive implementation challenging, particularly in resource-limited schools. There is an argument that it may not sufficiently account for the diverse needs and preferences of parents from various cultural backgrounds, potentially overlooking their agency in shaping involvement (Mapp, 2003).

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's Model of Parental Involvement (2005) places a strong emphasis on the psychological mechanisms through which parents become involved in their children's education. It highlights factors such as parental motivation, efficacy beliefs and perceptions of invitations from schools as key drivers of involvement (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). This model offers actionable insights by identifying factors that can promote or inhibit parental involvement. Nonetheless, this model also has limitations. It primarily focuses on individual psychological factors and does not extensively consider the broader social and systemic factors influencing parental involvement. Critics argue that it may not adequately address issues of equity and social justice, potentially ignoring systemic barriers faced by marginalised parents (Anderson & Minke, 2007).

Lareau's Theory of Parental Strategies (2003) provides a sociological perspective on parental involvement, emphasising how social class and cultural capital influence parental strategies. Lareau's ethnographic work offers rich descriptions of how different social classes engage with schools, challenging the dominant middle-class model of "concerted cultivation" and introducing the concept of "natural growth" in parental strategies. This theory does, however, primarily focus on the United States context, and its generalizability to other cultural and national contexts is a subject of debate. While it provides valuable insights into class-based differences in parental involvement, it may not adequately address other dimensions of diversity, such as race and ethnicity (Bodovski, 2010).

Each of these theories and models offers unique perspectives on parental involvement. Epstein's model emphasises a multifaceted approach to involvement, including both basic and advanced forms, while Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's

model focuses on the psychological mechanisms underlying involvement. Lareau's theory, on the other hand, delves into the influence of social class and cultural capital. Epstein's model has a strong empirical foundation supporting its effectiveness and provides practical guidance for educators. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's model emphasises the importance of parental motivation and perceptions, while Lareau's theory takes a sociological perspective and offers rich ethnographic descriptions.

2.3 Management and leadership in education

Management and leadership are terms often used interchangeably, but there are quite significant differences which are important to understand. Among those differences is the fact that management involves structured strategies and outright delegation approaches; this delegation involves being assigned, accepting and carrying the responsibility to accomplish organisational goals and objectives with resource allocation (Connolly et al., 2017). Leadership, on the other hand, involves influencing and being influenced to act to achieve organisational goals and objectives (Connolly et al., 2017). It can be easy to prioritise one over the other, especially leadership over management, because management carries negative connotations relating to dominance and power, with those higher up in the hierarchy of management controlling and monitoring those lower down in the hierarchy (Lumby, 2019). These are views of management in general terms.

However, when applying the Capabilities Approach to leadership and management, as this study does, the distinction between these two concepts can become difficult to distinguish due to the nature of the Capabilities Approach. Leadership (traditionally associated with inspiring agency) and management (associated with coordination and strategies) converge within the Capabilities Approach. Managers, by facilitating agency among team members, inadvertently incorporate leadership elements. When managers adopt a human-centric approach, they naturally integrate leadership qualities by recognizing and nurturing diverse capabilities. Effective management may require leadership qualities in certain situations, and vice versa, reflecting the fluidity of these roles in the context of the Capabilities Approach. In the following paragraphs, instances of principals as managers and as leaders are discussed, expressing how whether the work of the principals is framed within the construct of leadership or management, it demonstrates their capabilities.

Principals play a pivotal role in managing and leading educational institutions and their responsibilities have evolved significantly in recent years. As educational landscapes adapt to changing societal needs and technological advancements, principals have become instrumental in ensuring the success and sustainability of schools. The past decade has witnessed a paradigm shift towards distributed leadership models in education (Spillane et al., 2019). Principals are no longer viewed as the sole leaders but as key enablers of distributed leadership. They empower educators and staff to take on leadership roles, fostering collaborative decision making and shared responsibilities. Principals have gained increasing recognition as advocates of equity and inclusion in educational settings (Shields, 2018). They are expected to champion equitable policies, create inclusive learning environments, and ensure that diverse learner populations have equal access to a high-quality education. This shift in emphasis highlights the integral role of principals in promoting social justice within schools (Ryan, 2010).

In the United Arab Emirates (UAE), principals have emerged as pivotal figures fostering equity and inclusion within highly diverse educational contexts (Khaleel et al., 2021). Given the UAE's diverse population and multifaceted educational challenges, principals have played a decisive role in championing policies and practices aimed at addressing disparities. Their initiatives transcend beyond rhetoric to provide equal access to quality education for all learners, irrespective of their socioeconomic backgrounds or geographical locations. The multifaceted challenges that principals face in the UAE have led to creative management solutions in community involvement, resource allocation and curriculum adaptations to meet the needs of marginalised learners.

In the context of Ghana, educational leaders have placed a strong emphasis on the role of principals as facilitators of professional development (Gyamfi & Pobbi, 2016). Principals are recognised as crucial in fostering the ongoing growth and development of educators. Their management extends to creating a vibrant culture of professional learning within schools, providing mentorship, facilitating access to resources, and celebrating educator achievements. The management approach in Ghana has not only empowered educators but also has a ripple effect on learner performance and the overall quality of education.

In recent years, South Africa has borne witness to a notable transformation where principals have assumed the pivotal role of catalysts for collaborative transformation (Buthelezi & Gamede, 2019). Principals, in close collaboration with educators and school communities, have increasingly worked as equal partners to address historical disparities in education. This collaborative approach empowers schools not only to adapt to the changing societal landscape but also to foster a profound sense of collective responsibility in achieving educational transformation. This deeper involvement of principals as transformative leaders has led to innovative practices in learner support and community engagement.

Managing township schools is not an easy feat as principals of township schools noted that having parents who are disempowered through lack of formal education and training has a negative effect on management (Msila, 2011). However, in looking at how best principals can manage township schools, Mahlangu (2017) asserts that principals must place parents' hopes, aspirations, concerns and needs as precursors to all the managerial decisions they make. Therefore, in approaching the challenge of underprepared parents and managing their involvement, school management teams (SMT) should find a balance between their functions and the aspirations of parents. However, managing parental involvement first requires an understanding of the nature and value of parental involvement.

The notions of leadership and management in this study will be employed to investigate the multifaceted role of school principals, particularly in the context of their capabilities in managing parental involvement in township primary schools. The exploration delineates the gradations between leadership and management when it comes to capabilities, exhibiting their interconnectedness. This theoretical foundation informs subsequent discussions on principals' roles in managing and leading parental involvement in schools, elucidating principals' evolving responsibilities in response to changing educational landscapes.

2.3.1 Principals as managers and leaders in education

The role of school principals in educational leadership and management is central to the effectiveness of educational institutions. Principals serve as key players in translating educational policies into practice, shaping the school's culture and influencing learner outcomes.

Effective educational leadership is crucial for the success of schools and the development of learners. As the educational leaders of schools, principals play a pivotal role in shaping the learning environment, fostering educator development and influencing learner outcomes. The landscape of educational leadership and management has evolved significantly over the years, reflecting changing educational philosophies, policies and societal expectations (Ärlestig & Johansson, 2016). This section of the literature review explores the extensive body of research on educational leadership, focusing on the role and impact of principals in contemporary education. It delves into the multifaceted responsibilities of principals, the qualities that define effective leadership, the challenges they face and the evolving nature of educational leadership in the 21st century.

Educational leadership encompasses the actions, decisions and behaviours of individuals who guide educational institutions towards achieving their goals (Amanchukwu et al., 2015). It is a complex and multifaceted concept that involves not only the management of administrative tasks but also the cultivation of a positive school culture that fosters educator development and promotes learner achievement. Principals are central figures in the domain of educational leadership, serving as the link between educational policies and school practices (Leithwood et al., 2008). They are responsible for orchestrating a wide range of activities within their schools, including educator professional development, learner discipline and parent and community engagement (Olibie, 2014).

One of the primary roles of principals is to serve as instructional leaders (Bafadal et al., 2019). Instructional leadership involves creating a school environment that supports effective teaching and learning (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000). Effective principals focus on curriculum development, instructional improvement and educator development to enhance learner achievement. Research suggests that principals who prioritise instructional leadership have a positive impact on learners' learning outcomes (Heaven & Bourne, 2016). They set high expectations for both educators and learners, monitor teaching practices and provide feedback for improvement – this facilitates a culture of collaboration among educators which has been linked to improved learner performance.

Transformational leadership is another critical aspect of effective educational leadership (Kwan, 2020). Transformational leaders inspire and motivate followers by

fostering a shared vision and promoting individual growth and development. Studies have found that transformational leadership behaviours, such as intellectual stimulation and individualised support, are positively associated with educator job satisfaction and commitment (Basar et al., 2021). Principals who exhibit transformational leadership qualities are more likely to create a school culture characterised by innovation, collaboration and a commitment to continuous improvement (Supermane, 2019).

2.3.1.1 Capabilities of effective principals

Effective principals possess a unique set of capabilities that enable them to lead and manage educational institutions successfully. While individual leadership styles may vary, certain characteristics have consistently emerged as markers of effective educational leadership. Visionary leadership involves the ability to articulate a clear and compelling vision for the school's future (Erna, 2023). Effective principals inspire their staff and stakeholders by communicating a shared vision of excellence and growth. This vision provides a sense of purpose and direction, guiding decision making and actions within the school. Communication is a cornerstone of effective leadership. Principals must be skilled communicators who can convey expectations, provide feedback and engage with various stakeholders, including educators, learners, parents and the community (Yirci et al., 2014). Open and transparent communication fosters trust and collaboration, key ingredients for school success.

Effective principals set high expectations for both educators and learners (Yirci et al., 2014). They believe in the capacity of all individuals to achieve and continuously challenge their staff to strive for excellence. High expectations create a culture of achievement and accountability within the school. In the rapidly changing landscape of education, adaptability is a crucial quality for principals who are open to new ideas, willing to adjust their strategies in response to challenges and capable of navigating complex educational reforms (Delpont et al., 2021).

2.3.1.2 Constraining factors for principals

Despite their critical role in education, principals face a myriad of constraining factors that can impact their leadership effectiveness and well-being. Understanding these challenges is essential for addressing them and supporting principals in their roles.

The accountability movement in education has placed greater demands on principals to demonstrate school improvement and learner achievement (Wang et al. 2022). Principals are often held responsible for factors beyond their control such as socioeconomic conditions which can create high levels of stress and job dissatisfaction.

Principals frequently report long work hours and limited time for instructional leadership (Ongaga, 2021). The administrative tasks associated with the role, including budgeting, scheduling and managing personnel, can leave little time for the instructional leadership activities that research has shown to be vital for learner success (Heaven & Bourne, 2016).

The nature of the principalship can be isolating, with principals often lacking opportunities for collaboration and peer support which can lead to feelings of loneliness and hinder professional growth and development (Dor-Haim, 2022). This is particularly challenging because principals are frequently required to make complex decisions that can have far-reaching consequences for their schools. Balancing the needs of learners, educators, parents and policymakers while navigating educational reforms can be daunting. This is a potential reason why the recruitment and retention of effective principals is an ongoing challenge in education (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2008). Many schools struggle to attract and retain high-quality leaders, resulting in frequent turnover in principalship.

2.3.1.3 Conversion factors impacting principals' capabilities

Educational leadership is not static; it evolves in response to changes in education, society and technology. Several factors are reshaping the landscape of educational leadership. For example, the integration of technology into education has given rise to the concept of digital leadership (Zhong, 2017). Digital leaders, which are leaders who enable digital innovation, initiation, implementation, and transformation (Magesa & Jonathan, 2020) leverage technology to enhance teaching and learning, promote data-driven decision making and foster innovation within their schools. The ability to be a digital leader is a necessary conversion factor for a principal in the current digital age.

An increasing emphasis on equity and social justice in education has led to a re-evaluation of leadership practices (Ryan, 2010). Principals are now expected to lead

efforts to reduce achievement gaps, create inclusive environments and address systemic inequities. The globalisation of education requires principals to prepare learners for an interconnected world. This entails fostering global competencies, cultural awareness and a commitment to sustainability within the school community.

Principals occupy a critical role in educational leadership and management. They serve as instructional leaders, motivators and decision-makers within their schools, influencing the learning experiences and outcomes of learners. Effective principals possess visionary leadership qualities, strong communication skills, high expectations, adaptability and emotional intelligence. However, the principalship is not without its challenges. Increased accountability, time constraints, leadership isolation, complex decision making and recruitment and retention issues can impact principals' effectiveness and job satisfaction. To address these challenges, it is essential to provide support, professional development opportunities and a conducive working environment for principals.

Furthermore, the evolving nature of educational leadership calls for digital leadership, distributed leadership, a commitment to equity and social justice and an awareness of the global dimensions of education. Principals must adapt to these changes to ensure that their schools remain dynamic, inclusive and responsive to the needs of all learners. As educational policies, technologies and societal expectations continue to evolve, the role of principals in educational leadership and management will remain central. Principals are not only managers, but also visionaries, change agents and champions of educational excellence. Their leadership has a lasting impact on the educational experiences and prospects of the learners, parents, staff and other stakeholders they serve.

2.4 Principals and parental involvement

Keetanjaly et al. (2019) insist that a large part of the responsibility of managing parental involvement lies with principals. The argument for this is because of principals' unique position of engagement within multiple contexts such as at the provincial and district levels, with the School Governing Bodies and the immediate school community (Schechter & Shaked, 2017). This makes them suitable candidates to facilitate the connectedness of parents with schools and other educational stakeholders.

However, not all principals share this view of getting parents involved in schools. Rural principals in American, Canadian and Australian settings believe that parental involvement is a barrier to improving academic achievement because they feel that it is difficult to balance the political interests of bodies such as parent-educator associations for the benefit of the schools (Preston et al., 2013). However, in the context of South Africa, Shezi (2012) found perceptions antithetical to the preceding views. He found that principals of rural schools perceived that the academic achievement of the schools increased the more parents were involved and that they preferred that parents were more involved. What may account for this dichotomy is that South African principals are guided by policy on how they ought to perceive the concept of parental involvement. The Policy on the South African Standard for Principalship (Department of Basic Education, 2015) asserts that principals must manage parental involvement by possessing knowledge on how parents can support children's learning and take action to impart that knowledge so that parental involvement can improve in the school.

In many European countries, the relationship between principals and parental involvement has evolved towards collaborative decision making (Bryk et al., 2018). This trend reflects a shift from top-down management models to shared governance in education. Principals in European contexts actively seek input from parents in shaping school policies, curriculum choices and improvement plans. This collaborative approach fosters a sense of ownership and shared responsibility among parents, contributing to effective school governance. This model emphasises a partnership in which principals are not merely managers but active partners with parents in shaping the educational experience.

In Asia, particularly countries like Japan and South Korea, the scope of parental involvement has expanded beyond traditional classroom interactions (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Principals in these regions encourage parents to be involved in various aspects of school life, including volunteering, participating in school events and contributing to extracurricular activities. This multifaceted engagement approach enriches the school community and enhances learners' learning experiences. It is not just about academics; it is about fostering a holistic educational environment that encompasses cultural, social and emotional aspects.

In Brazilian schools, principals are increasingly focused on measuring and enhancing the impact of parental involvement on learner outcomes (Koepp et al., 2022). They are adopting data-driven approaches to assess the effectiveness of parental involvement initiatives. Principals actively seek feedback from parents and make informed decisions to improve engagement strategies. This results-oriented approach ensures that parental involvement efforts align with educational goals, ultimately contributing to improved academic performance and overall learner development.

Across the diverse and dynamic nations of Africa, the roles and responsibilities of principals concerning parental involvement in education have undergone significant transformations. In Nigeria, for example, collaborative decision making has gained prominence, with principals actively seeking input from parents (Olibie, 2014). This collaborative approach reflects Nigeria's cultural values of community and collective responsibility. Principals involve parents in shaping school policies, curriculum choices and improvement plans. These partnerships foster a sense of ownership and shared responsibility among parents and educators, aligning with Nigeria's ethos of communal participation in education.

South African principals have transitioned from traditional management roles to proactive facilitators of parental involvement (Buthelezi & Gamede, 2019). This transformation is deeply rooted in the country's historical context to address historical disparities in education. Principals are increasingly regarded as leaders who actively seek ways to engage parents in the educational process. They work to create welcoming school environments, initiate programmes and encourage parental participation. This shift not only fosters a stronger connection between schools and families but also promotes the idea of shared responsibility for learners' education. Collaborative decision making has gained prominence, with principals actively seeking input from parents (Bryk et al., 2018). This collaborative approach reflects a commitment to inclusivity and shared governance. Principals actively involve parents in shaping school policies and improvement plans. This partnership between principals and parents fosters a sense of ownership and shared responsibility, mirroring the broader societal shift towards inclusivity and social justice in South Africa.

The scope of parental involvement in South African schools has expanded beyond traditional activities (Dick, 2016). Principals encourage parents to be engaged in various aspects of school life, including volunteering, participating in school events

and contributing to extracurricular activities. This multifaceted engagement approach enriches the school community and enhances learners' learning experiences. It aligns with South Africa's goals of holistic education and community building. Principals are increasingly focused on measuring and enhancing the impact of parental involvement on learner outcomes.

2.5 Gaps identified

A gap that I identified in the literature was that most studies that examined parental involvement in South African township schools looked at the status quo of parental involvement and included educators and parents as sources of data in diagnosing the state of parental involvement (Dick, 2016; Majozi, 2014; Mbokodi & Singh, 2011; Ndebele, 2015). However, the trend that was seen when involving principals as participants in studies on parental involvement is that it was more beneficial to have principals as participants to understand the overall levels of parental involvement in schools (Sebastian et al., 2016) as opposed to involving only educators. Therefore, the gap I intended to address was the inclusion of principals as participants in a study of parental involvement. The involvement of principals as participants would be of value because of their unique position of engagement within multiple contexts as explicated before (Schechter & Shaked, 2017).

Another gap I found is the context of studies similar to mine. Most of the studies I came across that looked at the management of parental involvement by principals and their perceptions of parental involvement were based outside of South Africa (Erdener, 2016; Keetanjaly et al., 2019; Rapp & Duncan, 2012; Rios-Harrist, 2011). Furthermore, this study focused on the management of parental involvement by principals, unlike other studies which focused primarily on the perceptions of principals regarding the level of parental involvement (Anastasiou & Papagianni, 2020; Olibie, 2014; Rios-Harrist, 2011).

Finally, the Capability Approach is still a growing theory in South Africa as a framework for educational studies. While there are studies conducted in higher education which use the Capability Approach (Calitz et al., 2016; Calitz, 2017; Calitz, 2018; Tsephe, 2021; Wilson-Strydom, 2012) there are a limited number of studies whose educational context is other than that of higher education.

2.6 Conclusion

This literature review underscores the pivotal role of principals as both managers and leaders in the capabilities they possess in their management of parental involvement within schools. The exploration began with an international perspective on parental involvement trends, extended to the challenges and opportunities in under-resourced settings, and provided insights into subtleties within the African and South African contexts. Theoretical frameworks offer a lens to comprehend the complexities surrounding parental involvement. A focused examination of management and leadership in education unveiled principals as central figures wielding significant influence. The intricate relationship between principals and parental involvement is scrutinized, revealing strategies, challenges, and successes in fostering collaborative partnerships while efficiently steering school operations. This review aspires to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by having identified gaps that warrant further investigation, shedding light on unexplored facets of how principals, in their multifaceted roles, strategically manage and navigate parental involvement in township primary schools.

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

The literature review motivated how the Capability Approach is a profound, revolutionary framework that has changed how we understand and quantify human well-being in the fields of development economics and welfare analysis. This method, developed by Amartya Sen, focuses on people's capabilities and opportunities to lead lives they have reason to value rather than on traditional well-being measurements primarily based on income. The Capability Approach goes beyond the constraints of traditional economic perspectives by highlighting the intrinsic value of human agency and the freedoms required for people to realise their aspirations. This chapter aims to clarify the Capability Approach concept, delve into its guiding principles and highlight Amartya Sen's enduring contributions.

The theory is rooted in social choice theory and has fundamentally reshaped how scholars and policymakers conceptualise human well-being and development (Robeyns, 2006). At its core, this approach asserts that the focus should not solely be on traditional economic metrics like income but rather on individuals' capabilities—their real freedoms to choose and achieve valuable functionings (Walker, 2006). These functionings span various dimensions, from basic needs like nutrition, health and education to broader capabilities, such as political participation, personal development and cultural expression.

3.2 Functionings and capabilities

At the heart of the Capability Approach are two central concepts – capabilities and functionings. Capabilities represent the set of valuable functionings that an individual can achieve. Sen defines capabilities as something that “represents a person's freedom to achieve well-being” (Sen, 1992, p. 48). Capabilities are the real opportunities that people have to lead lives they value. Functionings are the various valuable activities and states of being that individuals can engage in or experience (Robeyns, 2006). They encompass a wide range of aspects, from basic needs like nourishment and health to more complex capabilities like political participation and artistic expression.

Functionings take on particular significance within the context of education. Education is not merely about the transmission of knowledge and skills; it is about expanding the capabilities of individuals (Saito, 2003).

A fundamental aspect of the Capability Approach is its focus on expanding individuals' capabilities by providing them with substantive opportunities. Within education, this means ensuring that people have access to quality educational opportunities that enable them to choose and pursue valuable functionings. Some studies have used this framework to evaluate educational systems and policies, particularly in the context of access to education (Calitz et al., 2016; Calitz, 2017, 2018; Tsephe, 2021).

Functionings also play a crucial role in evaluating the quality of education. It is not enough to provide access to education; the education must be of sufficient quality to expand individuals' capabilities effectively. Studies within the Capability Approach framework have examined issues like the relevance of the curriculum, the effectiveness of teaching methods and the provision of supportive learning environments. Walker and Unterhalter (2007) explain it this way, "Education that contributes to *un*freedoms would be deeply incompatible with the Capability Approach" (p. 14). For example, research may assess the quality of education by examining whether learners are gaining valuable functionings such as critical thinking skills, social awareness and problem-solving abilities. This approach shifts the focus from mere inputs (such as the number of schools or educators) to the substantive outcomes and capabilities that education should provide (Unterhalter, 2007).

The Capability Approach is inherently concerned with social justice and this extends to its application in education. Several studies have employed the CA to investigate how educational policies and practices can contribute to greater social justice by expanding individuals' functionings and capabilities (Nussbaum, 2003; Robeyns, 2017; Vaughan, 2016). This perspective allows for an examination of how education can address societal inequalities. For instance, Robeyns (2017) discusses how redistributive policies in education, such as providing free textbooks or scholarships to disadvantaged learners, can enhance their capabilities and thus contribute to a more just society.

The Capability Approach does not view education as limited to formal schooling but emphasises the importance of lifelong learning. In this framework, learning

opportunities should be available throughout a person's life to continually expand their functionings and capabilities. Studies have applied this perspective to assess adult education programmes, vocational training and opportunities for skill development (Calitz et al., 2016; Tsephe, 2021). The CA highlights that education should not be confined to a particular age group but should be accessible to individuals at all stages of life (Walker, 2006).

3.3 Agency

In the context of education, the Capability Approach provides a powerful lens through which to understand the significance of agency. Education is not merely about acquiring knowledge and skills; it is a means through which individuals can develop agency and expand their capabilities (Walker, 2006).

One critical aspect of agency in education is the ability to make choices regarding one's educational path (Wilson-Strydom & Walker, 2015). This could include decisions about what to study, where to study and how to approach learning. Studies within the CA framework emphasise that education should empower individuals to make informed choices that align with their values and aspirations (Walker, 2006). For instance, research may examine how inclusive educational policies and guidance systems enable learners to choose courses and career paths that resonate with their agency. A study by Walker (2006) underscores the importance of education in providing individuals with the capability to make choices about their own lives.

The pedagogical approaches adopted in educational institutions can significantly influence learners' and educators' or principals' agency. Studies have explored the impact of teaching methods, classroom environments and educational practices on learners' engagement and sense of agency. For example, collaborative and learner-centred teaching approaches that encourage critical thinking, problem-solving and active participation are aligned with the principles of the Capability Approach. Research by Unterhalter (2007) highlights the role of pedagogical strategies in promoting learners' agency and enabling them to exercise their capabilities effectively.

The Capability Approach places a strong emphasis on social justice and the elimination of disparities that restrict agency. In the context of education, this means addressing inequalities in access to quality education, resources and opportunities. Studies within the CA framework often investigate policies and interventions aimed at

reducing educational inequalities. For instance, research may analyse the impact of affirmative action programmes, scholarships and inclusive educational policies on marginalised groups' agency and well-being (Robeyns, 2005).

The Capability Approach underscores the importance of lifelong learning as a means of continually expanding one's agency. Learning opportunities should not be confined to formal education but should be accessible throughout a person's life. Studies have explored how adult education programmes, vocational training and skill development initiatives contribute to individuals' agency. Lifelong learning initiatives aim to empower individuals to adapt to changing circumstances, pursue new functionings and participate actively in society (Walker, 2006).

3.4 Conversion factors

In Amartya Sen's Capability Approach, conversion factors are essential components that bridge the gap between resources and capabilities (Nambiar, 2013). Resources refer to the means and opportunities individuals have at their disposal, such as income, education, health care and social support. Capabilities, on the other hand, are the valuable functionings or achievements that people can actually achieve or engage in, such as being educated, healthy and socially integrated (Walker, 2006).

Nambiar (2013) explains conversion factors as the mechanisms or processes that enable individuals to transform their resources into capabilities. They help in understanding how various resources contribute to an individual's well-being by facilitating the achievement of specific functionings. Conversion factors acknowledge that the same resource can have different impacts on different individuals or in different contexts. For instance, the same level of income may enable one person to access high-quality healthcare while only allowing another person to afford necessities.

Conversion factors recognise that individuals may have diverse preferences and goals, leading them to prioritise different functionings. For example, some individuals may prioritise education, while others may prioritise good health or social participation. Conversion factors allow for the assessment of how various resources contribute to the achievement of these diverse functionings – turning resources into functionings (Robeyns, 2017). They consider that capabilities are not fixed but can change over time. Changes in personal circumstances, societal conditions or policy interventions

can affect how resources are converted into capabilities. For example, access to quality healthcare may improve an individual's health capability over time. In addition, Sen's approach emphasises the role of individual agency and choice in the conversion process. People have the freedom to make choices about how they use their resources to achieve the functionings they value. This agency is a fundamental aspect of human development.

Martha Nussbaum (2003), another prominent scholar in the Capability Approach, has developed her list of central human capabilities which she considers to be universal and essential for human dignity. Nussbaum's approach includes 10 core capabilities, such as life, bodily health, education and political participation. While both Sen and Nussbaum share the foundational concept of capabilities, they differ in their treatment of conversion factors and the extent to which they prescribe specific capabilities and policy interventions. Sen's approach is more open, adaptable and focused on the dynamics of human development, while Nussbaum's approach is more normative and prescriptive in its list of central capabilities and policy recommendations.

One notable difference between Sen and Nussbaum is their treatment of conversion factors. While Sen's Capability Approach is more open and flexible in allowing for context-specific functionings and conversion factors, Nussbaum's approach tends to be more prescriptive. Nussbaum's (2003) list of capabilities represents a normative framework that is less adaptable to varying cultural contexts and individual preferences. In addition, Nussbaum places a strong emphasis on the state's responsibility to ensure that all citizens have the opportunity to achieve these central capabilities. Her approach is more prescriptive in terms of policy recommendations, advocating specific entitlements and minimum thresholds for each capability. In contrast, Sen's approach is more focused on the evaluation of the process of human development and the role of individual agency. While Sen acknowledges the importance of policy interventions to enhance capabilities, his approach leaves more room for democratic deliberation and cultural variation in defining and prioritising functionings and conversion factors.

3.5 The Capability Approach in education

At the core of Sen's Capability Approach lies the concept of capabilities. Sen contends that the aim of education is not merely to impart knowledge and skills but to enhance

individuals' capabilities – their real freedoms to choose and achieve valuable functionings in life. These functionings encompass a wide range of dimensions, including health, well-being, personal development and social participation. Education should enable individuals to make choices and lead lives that align with their aspirations and values (Walker, 2006).

This foundational idea reshapes the very essence of education. It shifts the focus from traditional metrics like literacy rates and school enrolment to the quality of education and its impact on capabilities. The Capability Approach challenges the narrow focus on traditional educational metrics, such as standardised test scores and enrolment rates. While these metrics offer valuable insights, they often fall short of capturing the multifaceted nature of education and its impact on individuals' capabilities. High-quality education is not solely about academic achievements; it is about equipping learners with the capacities and agency to lead meaningful lives (Robeyns, 2017). Sen's approach emphasises that education is both a means and an end in itself. Education equips individuals with the foundational skills, knowledge and reasoning abilities necessary for expanding their capabilities. It enables them to navigate life's complexities, make informed choices and participate actively in society (Saito, 2003). Moreover, education is intrinsically valuable because it enhances individuals' capabilities for critical thinking, creativity, empathy and ethical reasoning. These capabilities are essential for personal development and for fostering a just society (Walker & Unterhalter, 2007).

Scholars and practitioners have explored alternative indicators of educational quality that align with the Capability Approach's vision (Vermeulen, n.d). These indicators encompass non-cognitive skills, social and emotional development and the ability to address real-world challenges. They recognise that education should foster a broad range of capabilities that enable individuals to adapt, innovate and contribute positively to their communities. Nielsen and Axelsen (2017) explain how one of the most compelling applications of Sen's Capability Approach in education is its potential to address educational inequalities and promote social justice. Sen contends that education should not merely aim to equalise opportunities but to eliminate disparities in capabilities. Educational policies should prioritise enhancing the capabilities of the most disadvantaged and marginalised learners, ensuring that they have the same freedoms as others.

This perspective has given rise to a focus on educational equity and inclusive education. Scholars and policymakers explore how educational systems can be designed to accommodate diverse needs, including those of learners with disabilities, learners from marginalised communities and learners with different learning styles. By enhancing the capabilities of all learners, education becomes a powerful tool for promoting social inclusion and reducing societal inequalities (Unterhalter, 2007). The Capability Approach introduces a fundamental shift in how we perceive and measure educational quality. It extends the assessment beyond traditional metrics like academic performance to consider the impact of education on learners' lives. High-quality education, from this perspective, equips learners with foundational skills, knowledge and agency to navigate life's complexities and to participate actively in society (Walker & Unterhalter, 2007).

Kelly (2012) argued that evaluating education solely based on its effectiveness, often measured by standardised test scores or economic outcomes, is insufficient. Such an approach fails to capture the diverse and multifaceted nature of education's impact. Instead, Kelly (2012) advocated assessing education in terms of its contribution to enhancing individuals' capabilities – their real freedoms to lead lives they value. Saito (2003) similarly emphasised that education's value goes beyond economic productivity and should be assessed in terms of how it enhances individuals' capabilities – their real freedoms to lead lives they value. Education is not merely an investment in skills but a means to expand people's substantive freedoms and choices.

One of the primary criticisms of Sen's Capability Approach in education, given by Alkire (2003), is the difficulty in operationalising and measuring capabilities. Unlike traditional metrics such as academic performance which provide quantifiable data, capabilities are inherently multidimensional and subjective. Critics argue that this subjectivity makes it challenging to assess and compare educational outcomes consistently.

3.6 Application of the theory to this study

Engaging with Amartya Sen's Capability Approach within the context of researching the capabilities of principals in South African township primary schools regarding parental involvement was a promising endeavour.

Addressing the first secondary research question necessitated an exploration of the capabilities that principals should possess to effectively manage the involvement of parents in the schools. Amartya Sen's Capability Approach emphasises that individuals should not be seen merely as passive recipients of services but as active agents capable of making choices. In the context of South African township schools, the capabilities of principals could encompass effective communication skills, the ability to create a welcoming and inclusive school environment and the capacity to build trust between the school and parents. Moreover, the capabilities of principals may extend to leadership skills that enable them to mobilise their teaching staff and create a school culture that values and promotes parental involvement. Researching these capabilities involved an examination of the attributes, skills and qualities that enable principals to play a pivotal role in fostering parental involvement in township primary schools.

The second secondary research question delved into the interplay between structural factors (such as educational policies and community socioeconomic status) and individual factors (including principals' abilities and attitudes) that collectively influence the management of parental involvement in township schools. Sen's Capability Approach underscores that an individual's freedom and well-being are shaped not only by their personal attributes but also by the broader socioeconomic and political context. To address this question, I explored how structural factors impact the capabilities of principals in managing parental involvement. Furthermore, it was crucial to examine how principals' individual conversion factors, such as their creativity and empathy, interact with these structural elements to either enable or constrain their effectiveness in managing parental involvement.

To investigate the third secondary research question effectively, it was important to examine both the enabling and constraining factors that influence principals' capabilities in managing parental involvement. Drawing from Amartya Sen's Capability Approach, these factors were analysed as opportunities or constraints that affect principals' freedom to achieve valuable functionings. Enabling factors included strategies that encourage parental involvement and access to resources such as effective communication tools and parental involvement programmes. On the other hand, constraining factors could involve limited financial resources, inadequate training or professional development opportunities for principals (and SGB members

and educators) and cultural norms that hinder effective parent-school partnerships. This study aimed to uncover the interplay of these factors in the context of South African township schools and their impact on principals' capabilities to manage parental involvement effectively.

The fourth secondary research question shifted the focus to principals' roles as agents in enhancing the capabilities of their teaching staff to facilitate parental involvement. Sen's Capability Approach underscores that individuals have the agency to empower others and foster capabilities in a broader sense. In researching this question, it was essential to explore how principals provide professional development opportunities for educators that specifically target the skills and knowledge required to engage parents effectively. This involved an inquiry into training programmes or workshops. In addition, examining the strategies used by principals to create a school culture that values and prioritises parental involvement shed light on their capabilities as leaders. The study aimed to uncover how principals, as agents of change, enable their teaching staff to expand their own capabilities in fostering parental involvement.

The final secondary question centred on the agency and power of parents in the context of school involvement. Sen's approach emphasises that capabilities are not just influenced by external factors but also by the choices and agency of individuals. To investigate this, I examined how principals navigate the complex dynamics of parental agency and power within the school community. This involved strategies to empower parents, create opportunities for meaningful (and voluntary) participation and educate parents on their role in education.

In summary, these research questions, guided by Amartya Sen's Capability Approach, encouraged a nuanced exploration of the factors that enable or hinder principals' management of parental involvement, their role in enhancing educators' capabilities and their strategies for addressing the agency and power of parents in South African township schools. By considering these questions, the study aimed to contribute valuable insights into the field of education and promote more effective parental involvement practices.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

Having explicated on the complexities and value of the Capabilities Approach as a theoretical framework best suitable for the study, this chapter delves into the methodological framework employed to conduct this study in practically applying the theoretical framework. The research approach is carefully outlined, emphasizing a qualitative paradigm that aligns with the study's exploratory nature and the need for in-depth insights into the complex dynamics of the capabilities of principals in managing parental involvement. The research design is detailed as a comprehensive strategy employed to gather rich and contextually relevant data. The sampling strategy is discussed, informed by purposive and snowball sampling, which ensured the selection of participants with direct experiences in managing parental involvement in township schools. The research site, focusing on township primary schools in Ekurhuleni South District, is described, providing the geographical backdrop for the study. Data collection methods, individual semi-structured interviews, are explicated for their suitability in capturing diverse perspectives and contextual nuances. The chapter concludes with an overview of the data analysis process, incorporating thematic analysis to derive meaningful insights from the gathered data.

4.2 Research approach

My study had a qualitative approach. Qualitative research has emerged as a cornerstone in educational studies, offering an in-depth exploration of the complex dynamics within educational contexts. Qualitative studies approach research by collecting data that heavily relies on words in a natural setting by collecting information from individuals within these settings (Maree, 2016).

One of the primary strengths of qualitative research in education lies in its capacity to provide rich, textured insights into educational phenomena. Researchers employ a repertoire of methods, including interviews, focus groups and observations, to delve deeply into the experiences, perspectives and behaviours of participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This richness of data allows researchers to unravel the intricacies of learning, teaching and the school environment. Furthermore, qualitative research

excels in capturing the contextual undertones surrounding educational processes. It enables researchers to explore the socio-cultural, historical and situational factors that exert influence within educational settings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Ethnographic studies, for instance, have played a pivotal role in unveiling the intricate cultural dynamics within classrooms and schools, shedding light on how these dynamics shape educational outcomes and are qualitative in nature.

Flexibility is another hallmark of qualitative research. Its adaptive nature allows researchers to tailor their approaches to suit the research questions and emerging findings. This adaptability enhances the validity of research by ensuring that the methodology aligns with the research objectives and the data's nature (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

Despite its numerous strengths, qualitative research is not devoid of challenges and limitations. One notable challenge pertains to subjectivity and potential bias. The interpretive nature of qualitative research implies that researchers' own perspectives and preconceptions can influence data collection and analysis, potentially compromising the objectivity of findings (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Researchers must exercise reflexivity and transparency in addressing this issue. Moreover, qualitative research is resource intensive. Collecting data through interviews, observations or fieldwork demands considerable time and effort. In addition, the analysis of qualitative data requires meticulous coding and interpretation (Burnard et al., 2008). These resource demands can limit the scope and scale of qualitative studies, making them less feasible for large-scale investigations. Qualitative research often involves small, purposive samples which may not be representative of broader populations (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As a result, findings from qualitative studies may have limited generalizability. This raises questions about the applicability of such findings beyond the specific context under investigation. However, an advantage of qualitative over quantitative research in the aforementioned limitation, is that the results of qualitative research are generally considered to be more accurate (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Qualitative research has made substantial contributions to our understanding of educational phenomena. It excels in unravelling complex educational issues, such as the experiences of marginalised learners, the intricacies of classroom interactions and the implementation of innovative teaching practices (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Through qualitative inquiry, researchers have revealed subtleties that quantitative

approaches might overlook. Moreover, qualitative research findings often have direct implications for educational practice. They inform the development of culturally responsive curricula, educator training programmes and policies aimed at improving educational outcomes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). By highlighting the unique needs and perspectives of various stakeholders within the educational ecosystem, qualitative research guides evidence-based decision making. It is worth noting that qualitative research does not exist in isolation but rather complements quantitative approaches. The triangulation of data from both qualitative and quantitative studies can provide a more comprehensive understanding of educational phenomena (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). This integrated approach fosters a holistic perspective that is essential for addressing the multifaceted challenges facing education today. However, for the purposes of this study, considering the limitations of time and the level of study, this will not be done.

Some of the scholars who have found that there are problems with and hindrances to parental involvement in township schools (Dick, 2016; Matshe, 2014; Mbokodi & Singh, 2011; Motala & Luxomo, 2014) have not looked at the phenomenon from the management perspective – these studies were not in-depth enough from the perspective of my purpose for this study. To gain an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon (in this case the management of parental involvement) it would best be done from a qualitative approach (Maree, 2016). The intention of my study was not only to highlight whether parental involvement is poor or high, rather it was to get a deep understanding of how principals manage parental involvement, hence, a qualitative approach was more fitting.

4.3 Research paradigm

This study was underpinned by the interpretivist paradigm. Within the realm of educational research, qualitative inquiry finds a profound resonance within the interpretivist paradigm. This paradigm intends to understand and interpret what the participant is thinking and the meaning they make of a phenomenon in their context (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). This study sought to ask principals questions which would help understand what meaning they make of managing the phenomenon, that is, parental involvement in their respective township school contexts – hence the title “Capabilities of principals managing parental involvement in township primary schools

in Ekurhuleni South District.” This paradigm helped me to study the management of parental involvement from the meanings that principals of township schools gave it.

Qualitative research possesses inherent compatibility with the interpretivist paradigm, making it particularly well-suited for exploring the subjective, contextually embedded and socially constructed nature of educational phenomena. The interpretivist paradigm centres on understanding the meanings, interpretations and lived experiences of individuals within their social and cultural contexts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). One of the primary strengths of qualitative research within this paradigm is its capacity to delve deeply into the subjective world of educational participants. Researchers employing qualitative methods, such as in-depth interviews, participant observations and narrative analysis, can interpret the intricacies of individuals’ experiences, perspectives and interactions (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). This profound understanding of participants’ subjectivities aligns seamlessly with the interpretivist commitment to uncovering the multifaceted layers of meaning. Furthermore, qualitative research excels in capturing the contextual distinctions that are intrinsic to the interpretivist paradigm. It offers the flexibility to explore the socio-cultural, historical and situational factors that imbue educational processes with meaning (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This contextual sensitivity enables researchers to unravel the complex interplay of variables within educational settings, shedding light on the profound impact of context on individuals’ experiences and interpretations.

Qualitative research, situated within the interpretivist paradigm, offers a unique lens through which to examine educational phenomena. It excels in unravelling the intricate web of meanings, experiences and interpretations that shape the educational landscape. This approach has been instrumental in exploring complex educational issues, such as the lived experiences of learners in diverse educational settings, the dynamics of classroom interactions and the impact of culturally responsive pedagogies (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). Moreover, qualitative research findings within an interpretivist paradigm are inherently attuned to informing educational practice. They provide valuable insights into the development of contextually relevant curricula, pedagogical practices that honour learners’ diverse perspectives and interventions designed to enhance the quality of education (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Importantly, qualitative research serves as a complement to quantitative approaches within the interpretivist paradigm. By triangulating data from both qualitative and quantitative

studies, researchers can gain a more comprehensive understanding of educational phenomena, capturing both the breadth of statistical trends and the depth of lived experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). As valuable as the aforementioned is, it was not the case for this study.

Despite its remarkable alignment with the interpretivist paradigm, there are specific challenges and limitations for qualitative research within this paradigm. Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) make us aware that one notable challenge is the potential for subjectivity and bias in interpretation. The interpretivist approach embraces researchers' active engagement with participants and their data, which can introduce subjectivity and personal biases into the research process. Consequently, researchers within this paradigm must navigate a delicate balance between their interpretations and participants' lived experiences. Another challenge pertains to the resource-intensive nature of qualitative research. Collecting data through in-depth interviews, prolonged observations or extensive fieldwork demands substantial time and effort (Maree, 2016). In addition, the analysis of qualitative data necessitates meticulous coding and interpretation. These resource demands can be prohibitive, limiting the scope and scale of qualitative studies within the interpretivist paradigm. Furthermore, qualitative research often involves small, purposive samples that may not be representative of broader populations (Creswell & Poth, 2018) as is the case in this study with five participants. While this aligns with the interpretivist focus on depth rather than breadth, it raises questions about the generalizability of findings. This is of particular importance in an educational landscape characterised by diversity, especially from the perspective of providing practice recommendations.

Qualitative research within the interpretivist paradigm plays an indispensable role in advancing our understanding of educational phenomena. Its capacity to explore the subjective, contextual and socially constructed aspects of education aligns seamlessly with the interpretivist commitment to uncovering the meanings and interpretations that shape individuals' experiences within their educational contexts. While subjectivity, resource intensity and generalizability remain challenges, qualitative research within the interpretivist paradigm remains a powerful tool for researchers and educators seeking a profound and contextually grounded comprehension of the intricate landscape of education.

4.4 Research design

This study was developed as a collective case study. Collective case studies are instrumental because they use multiple cases as opposed to a single case (Simons, 2009). Instrumental case studies are designs where the choice of an issue to be explored is made first and then a case is chosen as an instrument to gain insight into the issue chosen to be explored. The issue I wanted to explore was the management of parental involvement in township primary schools and the cases I chose helped me explore this issue in-depth. Within the interpretivist paradigm, collective case studies represent a unique and insightful approach to exploring complex educational phenomena.

Collective case studies offer a powerful methodological framework for researchers seeking to explore educational phenomena within the interpretivist paradigm. Their primary strength lies in their ability to provide in-depth, contextually rich insights into complex issues. These studies typically involve the examination of multiple cases or instances, allowing researchers to explore the diversity and depth of experiences within a given context. Collective case studies are well-suited within an interpretivist paradigm as case studies prioritise understanding the subjective, contextual and socially constructed aspects of education (Percival, 2017). Researchers employing this approach can delve into the meanings, perspectives and experiences of individuals within their social and cultural contexts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). By examining multiple cases, researchers can uncover commonalities and variations in these subjective experiences, facilitating a deeper comprehension of educational phenomena. Simons (2009) explains that one value of collective case studies is that they are inherently flexible and adaptive. They can accommodate various data collection methods, including interviews, observations and document analysis, depending on the research questions and the nature of the cases. This flexibility allows researchers to tailor their approaches to suit the specificities of each case, ensuring that the research remains responsive to the context.

When conducted within an interpretivist paradigm, collective case studies have made substantial contributions to our understanding of educational phenomena. They excel in unravelling complex educational issues, such as the lived experiences of learners in diverse educational settings, the dynamics of classroom interactions and the impact of culturally responsive pedagogies (Simons, 2009). Moreover, collective case studies

within an interpretivist paradigm provide a valuable platform for exploring context-specific interpretations and meanings. By examining multiple cases, this study could identify patterns, variations and outliers, facilitating an understanding of the subjective experiences and interpretations that shape the management of parental involvement in the context of township schools in South Africa. Collective case studies also play a pivotal role in informing educational practice. Findings from these studies often offer contextually relevant insights that can inform curricula, pedagogical approaches and interventions aimed at enhancing the quality of education within specific settings.

Furthermore, this collective case study design was theory-led. This is a way of conducting a case study through a particular theoretical perspective – not to test the theory, but to use it as a guide to data collection (Simons, 2009). As discussed previously, the theory that guided my data collection was Amartya Sen's Capability Approach. One of the key strengths of this design is that it allows for early, exploratory investigations where the variables are still unknown and the phenomenon is not at all understood (Ebneyamini & Moghadam, 2018). This was particularly valuable for me as a novice researcher because it left room for vulnerability in the underdeveloped understanding of the phenomenon to acknowledge and address what I did not fully understand by the time I went into the field. What made this a strength was that when I went into the field, there was more room for discovery where the data spoke more than the assumptions I had or may otherwise have had about the phenomenon studied. The value thereof for my intended study was that it assisted in developing a clear description and understanding of principals' managerial practices of parental involvement in township schools because the focus of the data was on what was directly given by the principals, as participants, versus relying on speculations made by myself as the researcher. The findings from the experiences of these principals were valuable in getting to the crux of the management of parental involvement in township primary schools and contributed to the body of knowledge that looks at effective parental involvement in schools.

A potential limitation that Simons (2009) warns against in theory-led case studies is that it can lead to a false consensus. This is where the researcher fails to see the unexpected as it deviates from the expectations created by the perspective of the theoretical framework. This is something I guarded against and addressed by ensuring

that the data analysis process was iterative which created opportunities to see what I did not notice the first time around when analysing the data.

4.5 Sampling

The sampling technique for my study was convenience sampling. This sampling technique is where the researcher selects the sample based on practical criteria that the sample meets, such as accessibility or geographical proximity (Etikan et al., 2016). Moreover, Simons (2009) explains that when choosing cases, it is important to consider location, depth of data that can be generated, travel costs and time. I teach in a school in the Ekurhuleni South District; therefore, it was advantageous for me to choose cases that were close by. I then contacted the principals of the schools from different township circuits so that I could get a variety of principals from across the district to invite them to be part of my study. This was beneficial for me as it was cost-effective in terms of transportation and it saved time as Maree (2016) indicates, because I selected the first five available principals from these different circuits. Convenience sampling is a widely used method in educational research, particularly within the interpretivist paradigm. It offers practical advantages that align with the interpretivist paradigm's focus on understanding subjective experiences and meanings within specific educational contexts. Its primary strength lies in its accessibility and ease of implementation (Etikan et al., 2016). Researchers can readily access participants or cases that are convenient to study, often requiring fewer resources and less time compared to other sampling methods (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Within the interpretivist paradigm, which emphasises understanding the socially constructed nature of educational phenomena, convenience sampling can be particularly relevant. This method allows researchers to engage with individuals who are readily available and willing to participate, facilitating an exploration of the meanings, perspectives and lived experiences of those directly involved in the phenomena (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Furthermore, convenience sampling can be well-suited for exploratory research or when conducting pilot studies. It allows researchers to gain initial insights, generate hypotheses or explore emerging research questions within educational settings (Etikan et al., 2016). This adaptability makes it a valuable method for researchers seeking to explore new educational phenomena within the interpretivist paradigm.

4.5.1 Participant criteria

The criteria that the participants had to meet to be participants of the study was that they had to be principals of a township primary school in the Ekurhuleni South District. In addition, members of the SMT who wanted to be part of the study were also welcomed, as this widened the range of responses I received.

4.5.2 Size

The sample size was five principals. I chose this sample size considering the nature of my data collection methods. Because I wanted in-depth data, I chose this sample size to avoid data saturation (Marshall et al., 2013). I knew it would be time-consuming to collect the qualitative data through semi-structured interviews and analyse such data (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009), therefore, I chose a sample size of five principals so that I could complete the study within the time frame of approximately eight months. The eight-month period was because participants of Gauteng public schools cannot be involved in research except from the second week of February until the end of the third quarter of the year (Gauteng Department of Education, 2021).

4.6 Research site

The research sites for this study were township schools. The interviews were conducted in the offices of the school principals. Township schools are educational institutions in historically marginalised and economically disadvantaged areas in South Africa. These schools often face unique challenges and opportunities. The research sites were within two municipalities of Ekurhuleni, namely Boksburg and Germiston. Townships are historically segregated areas that were originally established because of apartheid-era policies. Over time, they have evolved into densely populated urban areas characterised by a mix of housing, informal settlements and limited access to resources and services. In these schools, the learner population consists of a mixture of learners coming from formal and informal settlements.

The principals' offices within the schools served as the primary site for conducting interviews with the school principals. These offices were typically in the administrative block of the school and represented the administrative heart of the institution. They provided a professional and private space for the principals to carry out their administrative duties, meet with staff, parents and other stakeholders and make critical

decisions related to the school's operation. They also offered a private space for the interviews to be conducted with minimal to no distractions.

4.7 Data collection: semi-structured interviews

To collect the data that would answer my research questions, I used individual semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews are where I, as the researcher and interviewer, asked pre-planned questions which the principals, as the participants, answered (Alsaawi, 2014). The difference between this type of interview and structured interviews is that I gave the principals an opportunity to elaborate on and explain issues by asking open-ended and probing questions, guided by the work of Maree (2016). Individual semi-structured interviews hold a prominent place in educational research within the interpretivist paradigm due to their ability to provide rich, contextually embedded insights. One of their primary strengths is their capacity to elicit in-depth narratives and perspectives from participants. Researchers can employ open-ended questions, allowing participants to express their views, experiences, and interpretations in their own words (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This aligns with the interpretivist paradigm's focus on understanding the subjective, contextual, and socially constructed nature of educational phenomena. Individual semi-structured interviews provide a flexible and adaptable approach to data collection. Researchers can tailor questions based on the participant's responses, allowing for probing and clarification (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This adaptability ensures that the research remains responsive to the specificities of each participant's experience and perspective. Within the interpretivist paradigm, which values exploring the lived experiences and meanings of individuals within their social and cultural contexts, individual semi-structured interviews excel in facilitating a profound understanding of participants' subjectivities (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). This method allows researchers to delve into the complexities of educational phenomena by engaging directly with participants' voices.

The value of semi-structured interviews for my study was that the flexibility in designing and refining the interview schedule and the actual interviews (as I interviewed one principal to the next) outweighed the statistical analysis limitation (which was not an issue seeing that my intent is not to gather statistical data) of semi-structured interviews (Horton et al., 2004). In addition to the aforementioned statistical analysis limitation, a challenge with conducting semi-structured is that it is time-consuming to

conduct, transcribe and analyse the interviews (Adams, 2015). I addressed this challenge by managing my time well especially with the transcribing of the interviews. I transcribed the interviews on the same day to make sure the transcript was read before the next interview. I did this so that I could reflect on how the previous interview went and assess the effectiveness of the questions in eliciting in-depth data. This was important as I was also able to see how some questions were redundant and could then re-evaluate which questions to include in the next interview.

4.8 Data analysis

The data collected was analysed through the method of theoretical, thematic analysis. This method of data analysis constitutes an analysis of data that is driven by the theoretical framework and research questions of the study (Javadi & Zarea, 2016; Maguire & Delahunt, 2017, 2016). This method is more deductive than inductive (hence it is also called deductive thematic analysis) as I would only be coding text that was relevant to the research questions (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Furthermore, Nowell et al. (2017) explicated that when employing this method of data analysis, it is possible to come to the field with a pre-existing thematic framework that a researcher expects to find based on the theoretical framework. The thematic framework based on the theoretical framework and research questions is indicated in Figure 4.1.

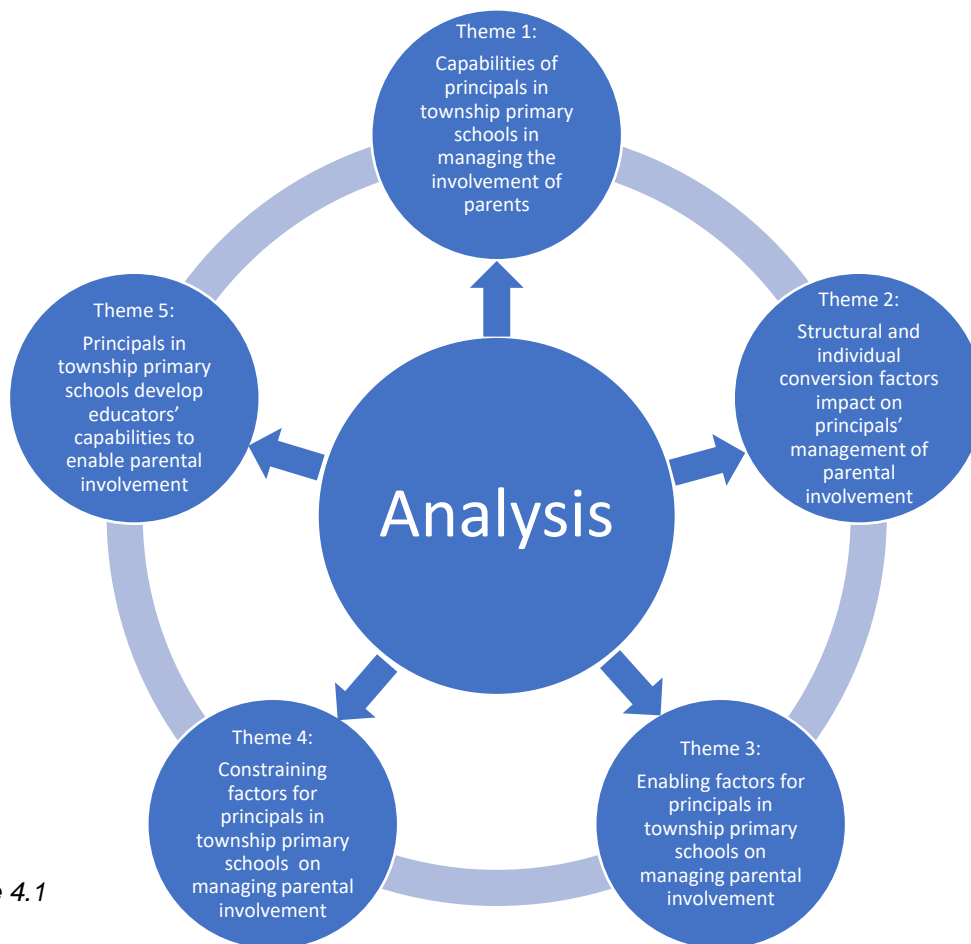


Figure 4.1

Figure 4.1: Data analysis themes

The phases involved in the theoretical, thematic analysis were as follows: first, I familiarised myself with the data by rereading the transcripts and listening to the interviews multiple times (Maree, 2016); second, I generated initial codes by systematically organising the data (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017); third, I constructed themes aligned with the codes (Terry et al., 2017) and the aforementioned thematic framework; fourth, I reviewed the themes from the previous step because those themes were drafts that were open to change (Terry et al., 2017); the fifth step of the process is where I named the themes (Terry et al., 2017); and the final step is where I produced the report of the entire analysis (Terry et al., 2017). This was done in a coding table (Figure 4.2 is an example).

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (RESEARCH QUESTIONS)	RESPONSES	SEGMENTS	CATEGORIES	THEMES/SUBTHEMES
<p>1. Does the school have a PI policy? (1. What are the capabilities of principals in township primary schools in managing the involvement of parents?)</p>	<p>Alecia: No, uhm, I think the learner code of conduct will then explain the expectations for parents. But we don't have separate policy on parental involvement.</p> <p>Dellsiwe: Mmm, our policies are in line with the Gauteng department of education, so in terms of policy involvement we are strictly strictly, strictly in line with what the Gauteng department of education has, you know, developed. So our implementation, that is in terms of parental involvement, is in line with that. We cannot deviate from that. [question rephrased]: No, no.</p> <p>Hopolang: No, as a school we don't have a specific policy regarding parental involvement, but we only involve our parents in the school policy.</p> <p>Keitumetse: No, we do not. We do not have a policy, let me stop there.</p> <p>Mapule: What kind of policy? Because the policy that we have for parents is the code of conduct one. No.</p> <p>Alecia: It would [be valuable], and it would not. It would not in the sense that, for example, we have a code of conduct for learners, but parents do not refer to it. They only find out later that there are issues of learners</p>	<p>we don't have separate policy on parental involvement (Alecia)</p> <p>No, no. (Dellsiwe)</p> <p>No, as a school we don't have a specific policy regarding parental involvement (Hopolang)</p> <p>No, we do not. We do not have a policy (Keitumetse)</p> <p>No (Mapule)</p> <p>learner code of conduct will then explain the expectations for parents (Alecia)</p>	<p>No parental involvement policy</p> <p>Depend on other GDE & DBE policies e.g. LCoC</p> <p>Believe PI school policy would be valuable</p> <p>Lack of confidence in parental support for school PI policy implementation</p>	<p>Capabilities of principals in township primary schools in managing the involvement of parents</p>

Figure 4.2

Figure 4.2: Example of coding table

This method was beneficial for my study because I wanted to identify, analyse and report on the themes within the data in relation to aspects of the theoretical framework and the research questions which would be answered through the interviews with the principals (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). Although this method of analysis is said to be limiting in terms of the richness of the overall data it is expected to yield, its strength was that it provided a more detailed analysis of the actual data than I was looking for (Nowell et al., 2017). This ensured that I did not stray and formulate themes that were unrelated to the purpose of my study.

CHAPTER 5: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter identified how the data was collected in order to address the research questions, while the following chapter presents the aforementioned data organized according to predetermined themes and codes. The purpose of the study was to establish which capabilities principals of township primary schools possess and use in managing parental involvement. The data is analysed according to Amartya Sen's Capability Approach. Based on the aforementioned framework, the themes from which the data was analysed were: (1) Capabilities of principals in township primary schools in managing the involvement of parents; (2) Structural and individual conversion factors impact on principals' management of parental involvement; (3) Enabling factors for principals in township primary schools on managing parental involvement; (4) Constraining factors for principals in township primary schools on managing parental involvement; and (5) Principals in township primary schools develop educators' capabilities to enable parental involvement.

Section 5.1 presents a brief overview of the demographic details of the participants. Sections 5.2 to 5.7 presents findings according to the themes. Section 5.8 provides a summary of the findings.

5.2 Participant and school profiles

This section provides a brief description of the demographic details of the participating principals and the schools. Table 5.1 shows the principals' gender and race.

Table 5.1: Gender distribution of participants

Gender	Number of principals
Male	1
Female	4

Out of the five participating principals, four of them were female and one was male. All the principals were African.

Table 5.2: Race of the participants

Race	Number of principals
African	5

All the schools were township schools as intended. The municipalities in the Ekurhuleni South District where the schools are located are provided in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3: Municipalities where the schools are located

Municipality	Number of schools
Boksburg	3
Germiston	2

In observance of ethical standards required in terms of the University of Pretoria's *Code of ethics for researchers and the Policy guidelines for responsible research ethical standards for research*, pseudonyms have been given to all the participants to maintain their anonymity.

5.3 Capabilities of principals in township primary schools in managing the involvement of parents

5.3.1 School policy on parental involvement

Among the first capabilities researched was the availability of a school policy specifically on parental involvement. Of the school principals who participated in the study, none of them had a school parental involvement policy. When asked about the existence of this policy, the responses given were:

*"[...] we don't have a separate policy on parental involvement."
 (Alecia)*

“No, no.” (Delisiwe)

“No, as a school we don’t have a specific policy regarding parental involvement.” (Hopolang)

“No, we do not. We do not have a policy.” (Keitumetse)

“No.” (Mapule)

There is a consistent and clear theme: the absence of a formal policy on parental involvement in township primary schools. This theme is indicative of the capabilities of principals in managing parental involvement and emphasises the lack of a structured framework to guide their efforts in this critical aspect of school management. The responses from all participants uniformly indicated the absence of a dedicated policy for parental involvement. This absence suggests that principals in township primary schools are operating without a formalised set of guidelines or strategies for engaging parents in their children’s education. The principals seemed to rely on their personal capabilities, experiences and informal approaches to involve parents. It also suggested that the absence of a formal policy may affect the consistency and effectiveness of parental involvement efforts across different township primary schools.

The participants’ responses also indicated that while they might not have a separate policy that focuses on parental involvement, they consult existing policies to guide them on how to manage parental involvement. Principals in these schools leveraged existing frameworks like the learner code of conduct to indirectly manage parental involvement by setting expectations for parents. This approach reflected the resourcefulness and capabilities of principals in navigating the complexities of parental involvement. Two of the principals cited the school’s learner code of conduct as their reference point on how to involve parents in the school.

“[...] learner code of conduct will then explain the expectations for parents.” (Alecia)

“[...] the policy that we have for parents is the code of conduct one.” (Mapule)

A third principal was not specific regarding a policy they consult to guide them on how to manage parental involvement, but instead mentioned that they consult policies which are provided by the Gauteng Department of Education. This principal stated:

“[...] our policies are in line with the Gauteng Department of Education.” (Delisiwe)

While none of the schools had a parental involvement policy, four of the participating principals believe that having one would be of value. The principals recognised the need for a policy explicitly addressing parental involvement. They acknowledged that a formalised framework is essential for guiding and structuring efforts to engage parents effectively. They also perceived such a policy as a valuable tool for guiding and facilitating the implementation of parental involvement initiatives. The policy is seen as a means to make parents aware about the importance of their involvement in their children’s education. It serves as a tool to raise awareness among parents who may not be well-informed about their role in their child’s learning journey. The principals expressed a strong belief in the helpfulness of such a policy, indicating that it can significantly contribute to the management of parental involvement in the school. Two of the participants expanded on this belief in the following ways:

“Yes, I think it must be done, we must have a policy on parental involvement, because as you view our school, you can see that the only parents that are involved in their learner’s education are those that are well-informed.” (Hopolang)

“Having that policy can help because I believe that if there is nothing or is no guide it becomes very difficult to implement or try to conscientise parents to participate in their children’s education.” (Keitumetse)

Even though these four principals believed that the availability of a school policy on parental involvement would be beneficial, they also expressed concerns that the implementation of such a policy would be cumbersome. Their main concern was that they lacked confidence in the parental support of such a policy and voiced their concerns:

“[...] but in most cases, parents do not take documentation from schools seriously.” (Alecia)

“I am worried that even if we have one, we going to follow the same pattern of having beautiful policies we never implement.” (Keitumetse)

“Our parents they are not hands-on when it comes to helping or coming to school, yeah.” (Mapule)

“Other parents they don’t care about their learner’s well-being.” (Hopolang)

Even though participants believed that there would be value in having a policy, they do not have one at their schools. This suggested that there might be constraining factors that prevents the development of the policy. The principals’ lack of confidence in the support of parents in the development and implementation of the said policy could be what has been constraining them from developing the policy. It suggested their previous experience in receiving parental support, or lack thereof, discourages them from exploring strategies to improve parental involvement. There seemed to be a strain on the creativity of the principals to develop such a policy which is caused by a lack of parental support. The principals expressed concerns about parental disengagement and lack of seriousness regarding school documentation and their children’s well-being. This indicates the principals’ capability to recognise the prevailing challenges in parental involvement. These responses highlighted the worry about the potential lack of implementation of a parental involvement policy if there were to be one and suggests an awareness of the implementation gap often observed in education policies. The concerns imply an understanding of the recurring pattern where policies are created but not effectively put into practice. This reflects an awareness of the need to address policy implementation challenges. This recognition of the current state of parental participation demonstrates the principals’ capabilities to assess and acknowledge the existing dynamics. This situation poses a challenge in diagnosing whether the principals ought to have developed the policy first to encourage parental involvement or whether the prevalence of parental involvement should come first which would then dictate the development of a parental involvement policy. Regardless of what the answer to that question is, the capability of the

participating principals to manage parental involvement in terms of policy development and implementation was compromised.

5.4 Structural and individual conversion factors' impact on principals' management of parental involvement

Structural conversion factors' impact on principals' management of parental involvement. Structural conversion factors also impact the capabilities of principals in managing parental involvement, one of which is the socioeconomic status of the community where the school is located. The socioeconomic climate of the school's neighbourhood has direct implications on its access to and use of resources highlighting the influence of the community's socioeconomic status and limited access to resources on principals' management of parental involvement in township primary schools. When the principals were asked about the impact of the socioeconomic status of the community on their management of parental involvement, their immediate responses were a recognition of the fact that the socioeconomic status of their school's community is low.

The principals demonstrated an understanding of the contextual factors that shape their schools' realities. Their awareness of the socioeconomic status of the community is indicative of their capability to assess the structural and individual conversion factors at play. They further expanded on the fact that this means there is widespread poverty:

*"[...] learners are coming from an impoverished background."
(Delisiwe)*

"Firstly, our learners are coming from disadvantaged economic background." (Keitumetse)

Both principals emphasised that learners in their schools come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. This highlights the structural factor of socioeconomic status within the community. The mention of learners' disadvantaged economic backgrounds implies limited access to resources, including educational materials and tools. This underscores the impact of resource constraints on the ability to engage parents effectively. The economic disadvantage of the community presents challenges in managing parental involvement. The principals recognised that parents facing

economic hardships may have limited time and resources available to be actively involved in their children's education.

The socioeconomic status also poses additional challenges in the community which further hinders their capabilities. One of the challenges that these communities face, and principals by extension, is child-headed households:

"[...] we have child-headed families, there are learners who are just fully responsible for the whole entire family." (Delisiwe)

Delisiwe acknowledged the presence of child-headed families within the community. This is a structural factor related to the socioeconomic status of the community, indicating the vulnerability and challenges faced by some learners who are fully responsible for their families. Learners in child-headed families bear significant responsibilities beyond their education, which can include providing for their siblings and managing household affairs. This individual conversion factor directly affects their ability to engage in school-related activities and their parents' involvement. Principals in township primary schools must navigate the complexity of parental involvement within the context of child-headed families. The presence of such families adds another challenging layer to fostering parental involvement. Similarly, because of the low socioeconomic status of the community, many of the learners are left without adult supervision:

"[...] learners are in control of themselves where learners are independent because parents are at work, or if they are home, do not spend time with learners." (Alecia)

Alecia recognised that some learners in the community are highly independent, often because parents are either at work or not actively engaged with them. This observation underscores the structural factor of parents' work commitments and limited availability. Parents' limited availability and engagement with their children are conversion factors that directly affect learners' independence and their ability to participate in school-related activities, including parental involvement initiatives. The presence of under-supervised learners due to parents' work commitments or lack of involvement poses challenges for principals in managing parental involvement. These challenges may

necessitate innovative strategies to involve parents effectively. The aforementioned challenge arises as many parents go out to look for work and return home late:

“[...] most of the parents here are not working.” (Mapule)

Such lack of supervision leaves learners susceptible to social ills such as substance abuse, underage sexual activity and other delinquent activities:

“[Learners] are involved in gangsterism, substance abuse such as benzine and nyaope. And what happens in this community is that there is a lot of alcohol abuse.” (Alecia)

Alecia pointed out the prevalence of serious social issues within the community, including gangsterism, substance and alcohol abuse. These issues are structural factors deeply rooted in the socioeconomic status of the community. The presence of these social issues places learners at risk and affects their well-being. Principals in township primary schools must contend with the complex repercussions of these structural and individual conversion factors on parental involvement. The challenges posed by social issues can create barriers to effective parental involvement.

A more direct impact of the socioeconomic status of the community is on one of the key functions of parental involvement – raising funds for the school. The SGB has a responsibility to raise funds for the school through securing sponsorships and the like, but also has to come up with fundraising activities for the school through parental and learner participation. However, this becomes challenging because of the low socioeconomic status of the community. The principals mentioned the following:

“Now if our parents come from disadvantaged backgrounds then it becomes very difficult to raise funds.” (Keitumeste)

“When it comes to fundraising project where we may expect parents to be involved, they don’t take part.” (Mapule)

Both participants emphasised the economic disadvantage of parents within the community. This is a structural factor deeply connected to the socioeconomic status of the community and it impacts parents’ financial capabilities. The economic disadvantage of parents directly affects the school’s ability to raise funds. Keitumetse explicitly mentioned the difficulty in raising funds when parents come from

disadvantaged backgrounds. Mapule's response highlighted the challenges of involving parents in fundraising projects. This reflects how structural factors can influence parents' willingness and capacity to participate actively in school activities. Principals must manage parental involvement within the constraints of limited resources. The economic status of parents is an individual conversion factor that affects their ability to contribute financially or through active participation.

Furthermore, some of the parents (in the SGB) do not possess the needed skills and education to secure funding for the school to supplement the budget allocated by the Gauteng Department of Education:

"[...] parents serving the school do not have the education to face or look for companies to support the school." (Keitumetse)

Keitumetse recognised that some parents involved in school activities may have limited education themselves. This is an individual conversion factor related to the educational background of parents. The limited education of parents can have an impact on their ability to seek external support for the school. They may lack the skills and knowledge needed to approach companies for sponsorship or support. Principals must manage parental involvement within the constraints of limited resources, including human resources with specific skills like seeking external support. Keitumetse's response highlighted the specific challenges principals may face when parents who are involved lack the educational background to effectively seek support from external entities.

5.4.1 Principals' individual conversion factors' impact on their management of parental involvement

This part of the analysis explores the intricate interplay of individual conversion factors in the management of parental involvement by the participating principals. It delves into the capabilities of these educational leaders, examining how their individual qualities, such as creativity, enthusiasm and method of management, influence their strategies for engaging parents effectively. In addition, it scrutinises how structural factors, such as economic disadvantage and social challenges, pose unique challenges that principals must navigate.

The first individual conversion factor explored is the principals' creativity in managing parental involvement. The following responses were given:

"We do sit and try to find ways to creatively involve parents." (Alecia)

"[...] without creativity, enthusiasm and method of management, if you don't awaken that you will not be able to succeed." (Keitumetse)

Both participants acknowledged the role of creativity in their approach to managing parental involvement. They viewed creativity as a valuable tool in designing strategies and methods for involving parents effectively. Keitumetse specifically emphasised that creativity, enthusiasm and the method of management are interconnected. This suggests that principals' personal enthusiasm and creative thinking are integral components of their management style. The responses reflect the individual conversion factors of principals, including their creativity, enthusiasm and personal management approaches. These factors influence how they design and implement parental involvement initiatives.

Furthermore, the principals expanded on some of the creative strategies they had to come up with to manage parental involvement in the school:

"So, because as the SGB we noticed that parents support our fundraising activities, let us use similar strategies to invite them to come to meetings. So ... we have raffles for parents to come where we give them small gifts like kettles or toasters when we have the raffle draw at the end of the meetings." (Alecia)

Alecia's responses showcased a high degree of creativity in her approach to parental involvement. She draws on successful fundraising activities to design strategies for inviting parents to meetings. By organising raffles with enticing rewards like kettles or toasters, she infuses an element of excitement and engagement into these gatherings.

Furthermore, Alecia leverages the creativity of learners by having them showcase their talents during meetings. This innovative approach not only enriches parental involvement but also demonstrates the tangible outcomes of their participation, as seen in the support for the Zulu dance group. Alecia's creativity serves as a catalyst for generating interest and active participation among parents. This is what was said:

“[...] what we do to demonstrate what activities learners are doing, we have learners showcase their talents during meetings to show what the school does with the funds raised by parents’ participation. For example, we had a Zulu dance group where we raised funds to buy them their dance attire and props.” (Alecia)

The responses given tell of more individual conversion factors that the principals embody in managing parental involvement such as empathy (which will also come up later):

“[...] tomorrow, we will be having a parents’ meeting and in the parents’ meeting. ... it’s winter ne, then even those invites will be saying come one come all, analysis of results Term 1, then soup will be served.” (Delisiwe)

“[...] we organise transport for them because they are coming from afar.” (Delisiwe)

Delisiwe’s responses reflected her empathetic approach to managing parental involvement. She not only recognises parents’ challenges but also proactively addresses them. For instance, during the winter months as indicated, she combines the purpose of the meeting with practical support by serving soup. This thoughtful gesture not only acknowledges the difficulties parents may face but also enhances their comfort and willingness to attend. Moreover, her provision of transport for parents travelling from afar demonstrates a commitment to breaking down geographical barriers, ensuring that parents can actively participate in school affairs. Delisiwe’s personal qualities, such as empathy and problem-solving, are integral to her management of parental involvement. Here is a further response provided by Delisiwe:

“[...] we have open days, open days, that’s another strategy you know just to understand your parents.” (Delisiwe)

Open days serve as an opportunity for the school to gain a deeper understanding of parents and their needs. By organising such events, Delisiwe creates a platform for open communication and engagement, allowing the school to connect with parents on a personal level. This aligns with her individual conversion factor of empathy, as she

seeks to build stronger relationships with parents by actively understanding their perspectives and concerns. In addition, Delisiwe mentioned:

“[...] we would invite Home Affairs to come within the school on that day, we know some of them, there are no means of travelling from here to Germiston, so they will be able to be close by now, here is Home Affairs and we are experiencing these challenges, learners they don't have birth certificates.” (Delisiwe)

This reference to inviting Home Affairs to the school demonstrates her innovative problem-solving skills. She identified a specific challenge faced by parents, namely the lack of birth certificates for learners. Instead of merely acknowledging the issue, she took proactive steps to address it directly. Her idea of bringing Home Affairs to the school reflects her creative thinking in finding practical solutions to obstacles hindering parental involvement. Delisiwe's individual conversion factors of creativity and problem-solving abilities are evident in her approach to tackling challenges faced by parents. Delisiwe's consideration of parents who may have difficulty travelling to government offices, such as those in Germiston, further highlights her commitment to parental involvement. By bringing Home Affairs closer to the school, she ensures that parents who face geographical constraints can access essential services conveniently. This approach reflects her individual conversion factor of inclusivity, as she strives to make parental involvement accessible to all, regardless of their circumstances.

In addition, another principal gave the following response when it comes to creativity in managing parental involvement:

“Now what we used to do we used to make a soup person when we have parents meeting and they buy that soup it was making a huge contribution to is in assisting very much yah.” (Mapule)

Mapule's responses highlighted her creative and incentive-driven strategies to enhance parental involvement. Her provision of soup during parents' meetings creates a welcoming atmosphere, making these gatherings more appealing and comfortable. This approach leverages an incentive to encourage attendance and active participation. Moreover, Mapule added:

“[...] there is a strategy that we [have] as this school [to try] to get parents [to attend meetings.] When we issue out learners’ reports [we call for a parents’ meeting] then they do come.” (Mapule)

Her strategic timing, such as using the issuing of learners’ reports as an opportune moment for parental involvement, reflects her understanding of when to communicate with parents effectively. Mapule’s emphasis on learners’ reports aligns with the idea of engaging parents when their involvement can have the most significant impact on their children’s education. Her innovative approach, combined with strategic thinking, showcases her individual conversion factors in action. Mapule’s capabilities as an educational leader are evident in her creative and strategic approach to parental involvement management.

One of the posed questions probed into the role of empathy in the principals’ management of parental involvement. Alecia stated the following:

“It’s important to show empathy, it doesn’t matter how the situation is, academically”. (Alecia)

Alecia emphasised the importance of empathy in the context of managing parental involvement. She suggested that showing empathy is essential, regardless of the academic situation. This perspective underscores the idea that empathy should be a fundamental element of all interactions with parents. Alecia’s recognition of the universal relevance of empathy aligns with the notion that empathetic school leaders are better positioned to establish trust and rapport with parents, thereby fostering a collaborative and supportive educational environment. Similarly, Delisiwe shared these sentiments:

“It plays [a big role], you know these kids are suffocating, there are so many challenges.” (Delisiwe)

By acknowledging the suffocating challenges that many learners face in township schools, she highlighted the role of empathy in recognising and understanding the complex challenges that learners and their families encounter. By recognising these challenges, principals can adopt a more empathetic approach when engaging with parents.

In addition, she said:

“[...] we have engaged with the socially ... social workers within the community, there’s a clinic within the community, we have, you know, those relations. We’ve built the relations with them, and also a cop that has been adopted, we’ve adopted a cop, if we see that this is a problem, maybe the child has been abused physically.” (Delisiwe)

Delisiwe’s mention of collaborating with social workers, clinics and law enforcement reflects her empathetic commitment to addressing not only academic issues but also the broader well-being of learners. This holistic approach resonates with the idea that empathetic principals can act as advocates for their learners and their families, seeking solutions to various challenges beyond academics. Hopolang also believes that their role of managing parental involvement requires them to be empathetic:

“Yes, yes, I think especially when we involve the parents of those learners that are at risk.” (Hopolang)

This response highlights the role of empathy as a crucial factor in addressing the unique needs and circumstances of vulnerable learners and their families. Principals who demonstrate empathy can create a safe and supportive space for parents of at-risk learners to engage with the school. By acknowledging and understanding the challenges these families face, principals can tailor their approaches to provide the necessary support and resources, ultimately enhancing parental involvement.

5.5 Enabling factors for principals in township primary schools on managing parental involvement

5.5.1 Strategies for parental academic involvement

The responses provided by principals Alecia, Delisiwe and Hopolang shed light on the strategies they employ to foster parental academic involvement in township primary schools. These strategies play a pivotal role in enabling principals to manage and encourage parents to engage actively in their children’s academic performance. One of the responses was:

“[...] curriculum meetings, those are educators talking to parents now.” (Alecia)

This response emphasised the significance of curriculum meetings where educators directly communicate with parents. These meetings serve as a platform for parents to gain insights into the academic curriculum and understand what is being taught in the classroom.

Importantly, Alecia notes that the departmental heads have a plan to engage parents specifically on curriculum-related matters. This is mentioned below:

“[...] but the HODs [Heads of Department] have a plan on how they are going to manage curriculum with the parents, and those are the meetings that talk to curriculum and after the general meeting when they split and they go to classes and they talk to individual subject educators, then that’s where curriculum comes in.” (Alecia)

This division of meetings, including general meetings and those addressing individual subjects, enables parents to receive focused information and guidance. It aligns with the enabling factor of clear communication and structured engagement. Alecia recognises the importance of targeted discussions to facilitate parental understanding of their children’s academic journey.

Delisiwe mentions “sessions of engagement” and “open days” as strategies to involve parents in developing their children’s academic performance. Specific mention was as follows:

“[...] sessions of engagement, open days.” (Delisiwe)

These events provide parents with opportunities to actively participate in their children’s educational experiences. Open days, in particular, serve as a bridge between the school and parents, allowing parents to witness firsthand the learning environment and their children’s progress. Delisiwe’s emphasis on “engagement” underscores the idea that these sessions are not merely informational but interactive, promoting a collaborative approach to academic involvement. This aligns with the enabling factor of creating a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere for parental involvement.

Hopolang mentioned the use of “communication books” and “WhatsApp groups” as tools to facilitate parental involvement in developing their children’s academic performance.

“[...] we use the communication books.” (Hopolang)

“[...] WhatsApp group.” (Hopolang)

Communication books likely serve as a means for parents and educators to exchange information about learners' progress, assignments and any concerns. WhatsApp groups offer a more immediate and digital platform for communication and updates. These strategies leverage technology to enhance communication between parents and educators, making it convenient for parents to stay informed and engaged in their children's education. Hopolang's mention of these tools aligns with the enabling factor of adapting to modern communication methods to meet the needs and preferences of parents.

5.5.2 Challenges to parental academic involvement

Since the principals have strategies in place to manage parental involvement, they still face challenges that constrain the strategies they have in managing parental involvement. Such responses included:

“[...] it is very difficult for them, remember illiteracy is another challenge.” (Delisiwe)

“[...] syllabus now is not the same as yesterday, things have drastically changed, these kids because of technology, they are so advanced. So, at times it's very difficult for them.” (Delisiwe)

Delisiwe identifies illiteracy as a substantial challenge hindering parental academic involvement. Illiterate parents may struggle to comprehend modern educational materials and the evolving curriculum. Furthermore, Delisiwe acknowledges the impact of rapid technological changes, which can create a generation gap between parents and learners. Parents may find it challenging to support their children's academic progress when they are not familiar with the technologies and methods used in contemporary education. These challenges underscore the need for principals to provide additional support and resources to bridge the knowledge gap between parents and the school. Keitumetse gave the following response:

“[...] when you call parents, they do not come, and you can see the parents are far from their education so you ask how one can support their children if they do not show interest at all.” (Keitumetse)

Keitumetse highlights a critical issue: the lack of parental interest in their children’s education. Despite efforts by the school to involve parents, some parents remain disengaged. This disinterest poses a significant challenge, as parental involvement requires active participation and engagement. Keitumetse’s observation raises questions about how principals can motivate and incentivise parents to take a more active role in their children’s academic development.

She further explicated:

“[...] I’ve realised that most of the parents did not have a good experience when there were at school, so school is not a place they would want to be. Therefore, it is my assumption that that is why they fail to be involved.” (Keitumetse)

This suggests that some parents may harbour negative memories of their own experiences in school. These past experiences may influence their perception of the school environment and their willingness to engage with it. If parents associate school with negative experiences, they may be less inclined to participate actively in their children’s education. Principals must find ways to address these negative perceptions and create a more welcoming and positive school culture.

Keitumetse also stated the following:

“[...] our educators are not properly trained to deal with parents. If you know your child is not performing as a parent, you’re already hurting as a parent, so it requires an educator who is sensitive enough to realise that and align themselves and be conscious they are dealing with a hurting.” (Keitumetse)

By this, she raised concerns about educator training and sensitivity. Educators who lack training in parent-educator interactions may struggle to effectively engage with parents. Moreover, the emotional state of parents, especially when their children are not performing well academically, can create a sensitive dynamic. Educators must be

equipped to navigate these challenges with empathy and sensitivity, ensuring that they do not inadvertently discourage parental involvement.

5.6 Constraining factors for principals in township primary schools on managing parental involvement

5.6.1 Educator training on parental involvement

During the interviews, principals asked about formal training that is provided to educators on how to interact with parents as a means of managing parental involvement. The responses were as follows:

“I don’t remember, I really don’t remember being called or a school or the principal conducting a meeting to say this is how we it stand you know even new educators when they come in the system you’ll just see how the other educators speak and you learn from there.” (Alecia)

Alecia expressed her inability to recall any formal training sessions or initiatives focused on equipping educators with the skills to work effectively with parents. Her statement suggests that in her experience, such training sessions or guidance from the school’s leadership has been absent. Instead, she highlights the informal learning that occurs among educators through observation and interaction with colleagues. This lack of formal training reflects a significant gap in preparing educators for successful parent-educator interactions.

Delisiwe and Hopolang also expressed that educators are not trained to interact with parents. Their responses, however, indicate a level of expectation that this is the responsibility of the Department of Basic Education when they said:

“No, There’s no training at all unfortunately from the Department of Education.” (Delisiwe)

“Mmm ... there was no specific departmental training about that.” (Hopolang)

Both responses unequivocally state that there is no training provided by the Department of Education regarding how educators should effectively work with parents. Their responses highlight that this issue might not be confined to individual

schools but extends to the broader educational system. The absence of departmental training on this critical aspect of education underscores a systemic challenge that leaves educators with limited guidance and skills to engage with parents proactively. Mapule also agreed that no training is provided to educators on engaging with parents or involving parents in educational issues:

“There is no special training that we give to educators.” (Mapule)

The lack of specialised training programmes for educators to enhance their interactions with parents is a recurring theme in these responses. This implies that within these school environments, educators are not equipped with the specific tools and strategies needed to engage parents effectively.

5.6.2 What informs educator-parent interaction

As mentioned, all principals expressed that the educators in their respective schools have never received any training on parental involvement. However, all their educators interact with parents regularly. Therefore, it was interesting to be privy to what informs how educators interact with parents and how the principals manage this.

Alecia mentioned that

“[...] you know even new educators when they come in the system you’ll just see how the other educators speak and you learn from there and you pick up which method which one is better than the other which one handles parents better than the other you know.” (Alecia)

This suggests that educators, including new ones, rely on informal learning and peer observation to inform their interactions with parents. Educators learn from their colleagues, observing how others handle parent-educator interactions. This peer-based learning approach allows them to discern effective methods and strategies for engaging with parents. However, this reliance on informal learning implies that the effectiveness of these interactions may vary, as it depends on individual educators’ abilities and approaches. Hopolang, on the other hand, said:

“[...] as the management of the school, we normally interact with educators to develop them on how to interact with parents.” (Hopolang)

This provides insight into how school management plays a role in informing how educators work effectively with parents. She mentions that the SMT interacts with educators to develop their skills in engaging with parents. This implies that the school administration recognises the importance of educator-parent interactions and actively seeks to guide and support educators in this regard. However, the specific methods and strategies used to develop educators' abilities in this area are not detailed in the response.

5.6.3 Unavailability of parents

The responses provided by principals Delisiwe and Hopolang point to a significant constraining factor in managing parental involvement in their schools – the unavailability of parents:

“It’s very difficult for us to have our parents without having something.”
(Delisiwe)

This suggests that parental involvement in school activities often hinges on the provision of incentives or reasons for parents to participate. This implies that parents may require tangible incentives or motivations to be present and engaged in school-related activities. This reliance on incentives highlights a potential barrier to parental involvement, as it may not always be feasible to provide rewards or incentives for parents. Hopolang mentioned:

“[...] you do need this certain amount of parents to address them about the progress of the learners, but the parents are not in.”
(Hopolang)

Hopolang's response also underscores the challenge of securing parental attendance at school events. She mentions the need for a certain number of parents to address them about the progress of learners but highlights that parents are often not present. This lack of parental presence can hinder the school's efforts to communicate important information and engage parents in discussions about their children's education.

5.6.4 Lack of parental involvement management strategies

Keitumetse emphasised the absence of guidelines or support provided to school principals on parental management:

“[...] no guidelines or no support in terms of keeping us or equipping us principals.” (Keitumetse)

Her statement suggests that there is a dearth of formal strategies, protocols or tools to help principals effectively manage parental involvement. This lack of guidance and support can significantly hinder principals’ efforts to initiate and sustain meaningful interactions with parents. This response underscores the systemic challenge faced by principals in township primary schools. The absence of clear strategies or resources for parental management places the onus on principals to develop their approaches which can be a daunting task. It also implies that principals may lack the necessary knowledge and tools to navigate the complexities of engaging parents effectively.

5.6.5 Political interference

Keitumetse further highlighted a unique and challenging constraining factor in managing parental involvement in township primary schools: political interference. This factor points to external pressures and influences that can disrupt the school’s efforts to engage parents effectively in their children’s education. She said:

“[...] parents who come with a political agenda to you.” (Keitumetse)

This suggests that some parents may approach the school with political agendas or motivations. These parents may have ulterior motives that go beyond the educational welfare of their children. When parents bring political agendas into the school environment, it can introduce an element of complexity and potentially disrupt the school’s efforts to foster genuine and constructive parent-educator relationships. Political interference in the context of parental involvement can manifest in various ways, such as parents using their political affiliations or connections to influence school decisions or priorities. This interference may divert attention and resources away from the primary focus of education and the well-being of learners.

5.6.6 Attempts to alleviate constraining factors

Although there are constraining factors discussed above, principals also made attempts to alleviate some of the challenges they faced. In addressing, for example, the challenge of unavailable parents, Hopolang said:

“[...] we write the letters to the parents, we even send SMSs to the parents. This is the only way that makes us to increase gradually the parental involvement.” (Hopolang)

These communication strategies serve as a proactive approach to reach out to parents and involve them in school activities. By using multiple channels of communication, the principal’s management strategy aims to gradually increase parental involvement. Mapule said:

“[...] to be able to interact with those parents when we issue out learner’s reports is where we are able to talk to them.” (Mapule)

Mapule shows the importance of using learners’ report distribution as an opportunity to interact with parents as the school staff has to engage with the parents, providing an avenue for dialogue and discussion about their children’s academic progress. This interaction demonstrates a proactive effort to involve parents and address any concerns or questions they may have.

In contrast to the previous responses, where principals discussed specific strategies to mitigate constraining factors, Alecia’s response was:

*“[...] parents just does not ... will not show up no matter what you do.”
(Alecia)*

The response suggests a passive stance in addressing the challenges related to parental involvement. She expressed the belief that parents simply do not show up, regardless of the efforts made. This response does not indicate any specific strategies or actions taken by the school to actively engage parents or overcome these challenges. It highlights the need for schools to recognise the importance of actively engaging parents and implementing strategies to overcome barriers to involvement, even when faced with resistance.

5.6.7 Suggestions for alleviating constraining factors

The inquiry further expanded into asking the principals what they believe other principals should be doing to alleviate the constraining factors which hinder their management of parental involvement in their schools. Alecia suggested:

“[...] have the ceremony here, the Grade R graduation ceremony we will have it here but then we came up with another strategy to say no let’s not have it here let’s have the formal part here and then the informal part we go out to spur for lunch.” (Alecia)

The suggestion is essentially to redefine traditional ceremonies such as graduation to make them more inclusive and accommodating to parents. By separating formal and informal parts and organising lunch at an accessible location like Spur, this strategy aims to overcome the obstacle of parents’ time constraints or logistical challenges in attending events at the school. She further added that:

“[...] start a meeting with something or in between the meeting or after the meeting can these learners to something whether it’s a poem or whatever.” (Alecia)

This strategy involves incorporating learner participation during meetings. Allowing learners to present poems or other activities creates a more engaging and interactive atmosphere, potentially attracting parents who are more likely to attend when their children are involved. Delisiwe and Hopolang similarly suggested:

“[...] have interaction with your community, understand your community as a principal.” (Delisiwe)

“[...] have interaction with your community, understand your community as a principal.” (Hopolang)

They emphasise the importance of principals interacting with the community and gaining a deeper understanding of it. This strategy enables principals to build relationships, identify community needs and tailor parental involvement initiatives accordingly. It also aligns with the notion that a strong school-community bond can mitigate certain constraining factors, such as mistrust or lack of awareness. Mapule said:

“[...] have sort of a workshop ehhe and it must not be a once off workshop it needs to be a continuous thing where we need to engage parents to ensure the importance of them to be involved in the education of their kids.” (Mapule)

This approach recognises that one-time events may not be sufficient to engage parents effectively. By offering ongoing workshops, schools can provide consistent support and education to parents, addressing various concerns and building their capabilities to participate in their children’s education.

5.6.8 Support needed from the Department of Basic Education

The participating principals also voiced requests for the type of support they would need from the DBE to effectively improve their capabilities in managing parental involvement. Since the principals have their own suggestions for other principals to improve their capabilities in managing parental involvement, they also have support needs from the DBE.

Alecia and Keitumetse emphasised the need for professional development:

“[...] Guest speakers ... challenges in leadership, separating us, challenges that women in leadership face, we ask representatives maybe from places like your SACE [South African Council for Educators], your ELRC [Education Labour Relations Council] offices, not the district officials to conduct the session.” (Alecia)

“[...] Obviously, training is important I mean skilling people is the way to go.” (Keitumetse)

Their responses argue that principals should receive guidance and training from the Department of Education on how to increase parental participation effectively. This training could cover areas such as leadership, parental involvement strategies and financial management. Alecia’s response further suggests that the DBE could organise opportunities for networking with people who possess the expertise they need to improve their capabilities in managing parental involvement. She mentions inviting guest speakers from organisations like the SACE and the ELRC to conduct sessions on leadership and challenges faced by women in leadership. Such sessions

could create a support network among principals and help them address common issues.

Delisiwe highlighted the emotional toll that the role of a principal can take:

“[...] We need counselling as principals, we are so drained.” (Delisiwe)

She suggests that principals need counselling and emotional support to help them cope with the challenges they face. This type of support could alleviate stress and prevent burnout, ultimately enabling principals to focus on managing parental involvement initiatives.

Hopolang called for the reinstatement of effective parental support programmes that the Department of Education once had in place:

“I think from the Department of Education they must bring back the programmes of parental support because they were so effective to parents.” (Hopolang)

This suggests that revisiting successful initiatives from the past could be a viable strategy to boost parental involvement.

Mapule proposes that the Department of Education should take a more active role in engaging parents by organising their meetings:

“[...] maybe the department themselves I don’t know how they can do it, it’s just my thinking or maybe to reinforce what they will be doing at schools maybe they themselves will try to call [parent’s] meetings.” (Mapule)

This suggests that direct involvement from the department in facilitating parental participation could encourage more parents to get involved.

5.7 Principals in township primary schools developing educators’ capabilities to enable parental involvement

5.7.1 Parental volunteer recruitment

The strategies employed to inform parents about opportunities to volunteer in township primary schools are addressed below. Delisiwe mentioned that

“[...] there are parents who are cleaning classrooms on Fridays, today maybe on your way out you will see them. They will be coming to assist us, then we make a pledge as educators how best can we assist them. We collect something, we say it’s a coffee shop, maybe we bake cakes, we put that money in the bottle, then we collect that, we just give them.” (Delisiwe)

Delisiwe’s response illustrates a proactive approach to recruiting parent volunteers. She mentions that some parents actively engage in cleaning classrooms on Fridays to assist the school. To incentivise and appreciate their contributions, educators collectively contribute money, which they refer to as a “coffee shop,” and give it to the volunteering parents. This strategy not only recognises the parents’ efforts but also encourages their ongoing involvement. Hopolang responded:

“In each and every parent’s meeting, we normally emphasise that parents please come into school with your skill.” (Hopolang)

It highlights the importance of emphasising skills during parents’ meetings. Principals play a key role in these meetings by encouraging parents to come to school with their specific skills. This approach implies that parents’ skills and expertise are highly valued and can be harnessed to benefit the school community. By emphasising skills, principals encourage parents to see their involvement as a valuable contribution to the school’s success.

5.7.2 Challenges around parental volunteering

This data analysis shed light on the challenges associated with encouraging parental volunteering in township primary schools. These challenges reflect a critical aspect of how principals in these schools develop educators’ capabilities to enable parental involvement. Alecia mentioned that

“there’s always an expectation when it comes to volunteering that there must be something attached never free.” (Alecia)

Alecia’s response highlights a common challenge related to parental volunteering: the expectation of compensation or something in return for their contributions. She notes that there is often an expectation that when parents volunteer, there must be

something attached to it, and it is never seen as a purely altruistic act. This perception can hinder efforts to mobilise parental involvement as parents may be reluctant to volunteer without some form of compensation or benefit. Keitumetse highlighted the risk of misinterpretation when there is a request for volunteers:

“[...] when you say to parents they can volunteer to do things they immediately think of potential employment, then you risk as a principal if you open that.” (Keitumetse)

Keitumetse’s response delves deeper into the challenges concerning volunteering by pointing out that when parents are informed about volunteering opportunities, they may immediately think of potential employment. This risk is associated with the concern that parents might misinterpret volunteering as a pathway to employment within the school. Principals may be hesitant to openly discuss volunteering for fear of creating false expectations or misunderstandings among parents. These responses collectively emphasise the complexity of encouraging and managing parental volunteering in township primary schools. The challenges include addressing parents’ expectations for compensation and the risk of misinterpretation that volunteering might lead to paid positions within the school. Principals must navigate these challenges carefully while ensuring that parents are aware of the genuine opportunities to contribute to their children’s education without financial motives.

5.7.3 Stipulated guidelines for parents visiting the school to see educators

The responses from four of the five principals shed light on the guidelines and procedures in place for parents to engage with their children’s educators in township primary schools. Their responses were the following:

“[...] if the parents comes, they must have made an appointment and it ... they must via the office.” (Alecia)

“[...] we have a policy which states that parents will be invited if need arise, if the parent wishes to come to school, they have to make an appointment.” (Delisiwe)

“We know that at the gate there is a person who must they ... who they must get excess of coming into school and before they go to the

educator, they go straight to the administrators, and then the administrators will go and ask the educator if the educator has an appointment with the parent.” (Hopolang)

“[...] what we do as a school is to parents not only just come, we set an appointment with the educator then the educators will just check the timetable to when can he or she accommodate that parent.” (Mapule)

All four principals emphasised the importance of parents making appointments before meeting with their children’s educators. This procedure ensures that interactions are organised and that educators can allocate time to address parents’ concerns effectively. Parents are expected to make their appointments through the school’s office or administrators. This overt guideline aims to streamline communication and ensure that educator-parent interactions are purposeful and productive. These responses collectively underscore the role of principals in creating overt guidelines for parent-educator communication. By establishing a clear process that requires parental appointments, principals contributed to a structured and organised approach that benefits both parents and educators.

5.7.4 Informal guidelines for parents visiting the school to see educators

Two principals mentioned informal guidelines for parents visiting the school. Keitumetse said:

“We don’t have a specific guideline but all what I have and always advocating is that if parents want to talk with the educator, they are allowed to, but they are should not disrupt teaching and learning.” (Keitumetse)

Keitumetse acknowledged the absence of specific guidelines but emphasised a fundamental principle: parents are allowed to talk with educators. However, they should do so without disrupting the teaching and learning process. This informal guideline highlights the importance of respectful and considerate communication between parents and educators. It encourages parents to engage with educators in a manner that is conducive to the overall school environment.

Mapule had an additional informal guideline on parental interaction with educators:

“Now there is that interaction between the parents and the educators they are having what they call a group chat.” (Mapule)

This response introduces an informal practice known as a “group chat” between parents and educators. While not a formal guideline, this practice reflects a collaborative and communicative approach. It suggests that parents and educators engage in group discussions to address concerns and share information. This informal method may facilitate open dialogue and build a sense of community among parents and educators.

These principals collectively demonstrated that township primary schools leverage informal guidelines and practices to enhance educators’ capabilities for enabling parental involvement. While these guidelines may not be codified, they promote respectful and collaborative communication between parents and educators.

5.7.5 Formalised strategies for educating parents

Formalised strategies used in township primary schools to educate parents about parenting and supporting their children’s educational outcomes underscore the role of principals in developing educators’ capabilities to facilitate parental involvement through structured approaches. Alecia mentioned a specific meeting where parents are educated on how to analyse reports and understand the codes used:

“This particular meeting says how to analyse reports and what the codes mean you know.” (Alecia)

This formalised strategy focuses on equipping parents with the necessary skills to interpret their children’s academic reports effectively. By guiding report analysis, the school aims to empower parents with the knowledge needed to support their children’s educational progress. This approach highlights the school’s commitment to engaging parents in a structured manner. Delisiwe uses open days for formalised parental involvement strategies:

“[...] only during parents meetings and open days, open days it’s ... we are able to workshop them on how to analyse even, you know your learners’ assessment, that is to assess your own learner.” (Delisiwe)

This brings attention to the use of open days as an opportunity to conduct workshops for parents. These workshops serve as formalised strategies to educate parents on various aspects of their children's education, including how to analyse learners' assessments. By organising structured workshops during open days, the school ensures that parents receive valuable information and guidance on their roles in supporting their children's educational outcomes.

5.7.6 Informal strategies for educating parents

Some of the educator assistants at the school are engaged with learners in terms of homework assistance:

"I've also seen my parents and some of my educator assistants are engaged with learners in terms of homework assistance." (Alecia)

While not explicitly a formalised strategy or programme, this informal approach relies on the involvement of educator assistants who provide support to learners, including homework help. By involving these assistants, the school indirectly impacts parental involvement. When learners receive assistance with their homework from educator assistants, it can lead to more meaningful interactions between parents and their children regarding their academic progress. This response illustrates that not all strategies for parent education and support are formalised or structured. Informal interactions within the school environment, such as educator assistants assisting learners, can indirectly contribute to parental involvement by enhancing learners' academic experiences.

5.7.7 Absence of strategies for educating parents

Two principals spoke of how they do not have strategies for educating parents on how they can be involved. Hopolang said:

"But here at school we don't have such programmes only parents that are well-informed are those who are doing what is right." (Hopolang)

This points out that the school does not have any formal programmes aimed at educating parents on parenting and supporting their children's educational outcomes. The principal noted that the well-informed parents are those who are doing what is right, indicating that parental knowledge largely depends on individual initiatives rather

than school-led programmes. This response reflects the reality of many township schools where resources for formal parenting education programmes may be limited.

Similarly, Mapule mentioned:

“[...] there is no formal programme that teaches parents on how to parent eh it’s only the SGB whereby will be having those discussions with or those workshops with Mathew Goniwe where SGBs are involved in terms how to parent learners.” (Mapule)

She highlighted the involvement of the SGB in workshops with external entities like Mathew Goniwe. These workshops primarily focus on SGB members and may not directly address the broader parent community. This indicates that parental involvement initiatives are often directed more towards school governance than parenting education.

5.7.8 Impact of managing parental involvement in academic performance

At the end of each interview, the participating principals were asked what kind of impact they believed managing parental involvement would have on the academic performance of learners. The responses to the question from four of the five participating principals highlighted a common belief in the positive impact of effective parental involvement. Hopolang said:

“[...] thing is going to be instilled in the child’s mind that this time I’m doing my homework. And that child is going to be achiever here at school.” (Hopolang)

This highlights that managing parental involvement positively can instil a sense of responsibility in learners. When parents are actively engaged in their child’s education, it can motivate learners to complete their homework and excel academically. This, in turn, leads to improved academic performance. Keitumetse mentioned:

“If the position of a principal if it is well-managed it has the potential of increasing parental participation which will then obviously impact the performance of the learners.” (Keitumetse)

Keitumetse acknowledged that effective management of parental involvement has the potential to increase parents' participation in their children's education. When parents are more involved, they can provide additional support and guidance to their children, ultimately leading to better academic outcomes. Mapule saw the value of managing parental involvement in encouraging learners:

"[...] if maybe we can be able to manage the parental involvement positively it will have a huge impact may be to encourage the learners." (Mapule)

This suggests that when parents are actively engaged in school activities and events, it creates a supportive environment that encourages learners to perform better academically.

5.8 Summary of findings

Below in Figure 5.1 is a graphical representation of the summary of the findings according to the codes drafted from the main themes.

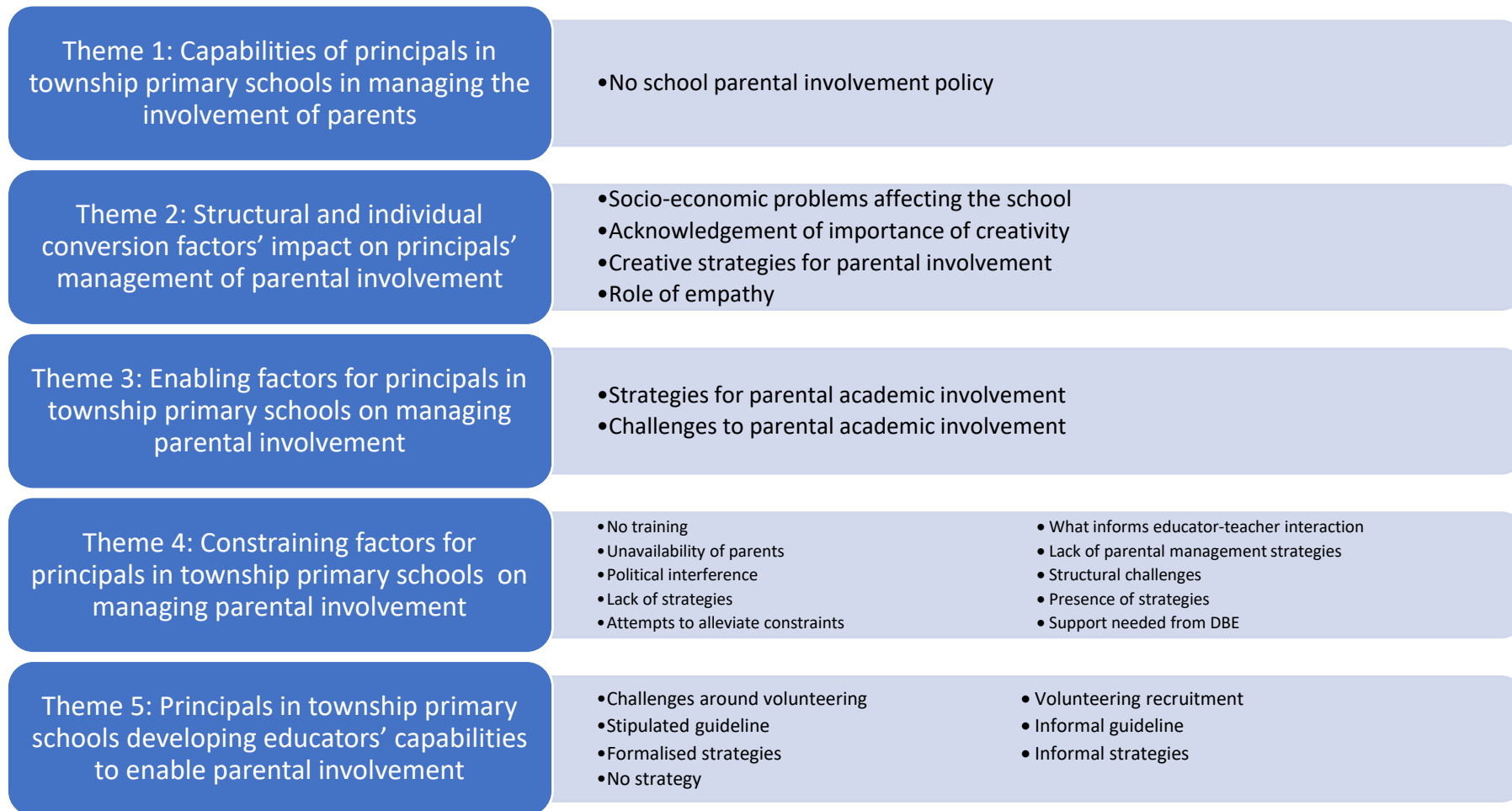


Figure 5.1: Graphic summary of findings

5.8.1 Capabilities of principals in township primary schools regarding the management of parental involvement

The analysis focused on having a school policy dedicated to parental involvement. The key findings can be summarised as follows.

None of the participating principals had a school policy specifically addressing parental involvement. Their responses uniformly indicated the absence of a formalised framework or guidelines for engaging parents in their children's education. Although there was no dedicated parental involvement policy, some principals consulted existing policies, such as the learner code of conduct, to indirectly guide parental involvement. This reflected the resourcefulness of principals in navigating parental involvement despite the absence of a dedicated policy. Most principals believed that having a school policy dedicated to parental involvement would be valuable. They saw it as an essential tool for guiding and structuring efforts to engage parents effectively, raising awareness among parents about their role in their child's education. Despite recognising the value of a parental involvement policy, the principals expressed concerns about the practicality of its implementation. They lacked confidence in parental support for such a policy, citing parental disengagement, lack of seriousness regarding school documentation and concerns about learners' well-being. Principals were aware of the challenges related to policy implementation in the education system. They acknowledged the recurring pattern where policies are created but not effectively put into practice, indicating their capability to assess and acknowledge existing dynamics.

5.8.2 Structural and individual conversion factors

This data analysis explored the interplay of structural and individual conversion factors impacting the capabilities of principals in managing parental involvement in township primary schools. When it came to structural conversion factors, principals in these schools were acutely aware of the low socioeconomic status of the community. Learners often come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, limiting their access to resources. This structural factor presents challenges in engaging parents who may have limited time and resources available for active involvement in their children's education. Some learners are from child-headed households, where children are fully responsible for their families. This individual conversion factor affects

their ability to participate in school-related activities and their parents' involvement. Principals must navigate the complexities of parental involvement within this context. Due to parents' work commitments or lack of engagement, some learners are highly independent and often left to their own devices. This individual conversion factor directly affects learners' participation in school activities and parental involvement initiatives. Principals must contend with serious social issues within the community, including gangsterism, substance abuse and alcohol abuse. These structural factors created barriers to effective parental involvement and required innovative strategies. The low socioeconomic status of the community affected the schools' ability to raise funds. Parents may lack the financial means to contribute, and the educational background of some parents may limit their ability to secure external support. These structural factors influenced the financial resources available for parental involvement initiatives.

Concerning individual conversion factors, principals leveraged creativity to design strategies for involving parents effectively. Innovative approaches, such as organising raffles or showcasing learners' talents, make parental involvement more engaging and appealing. Empathetic principals recognised and understood the challenges faced by parents and learners. They proactively addressed these challenges, such as serving soup during winter meetings or collaborating with social workers, clinics and law enforcement to support learners' well-being. Principals strategically timed engagement opportunities, such as issuing learners' reports, to maximise the impact of parental involvement on their children's education. Principals identified specific challenges faced by parents, such as the lack of birth certificates, and took proactive steps to address them. They seek practical solutions to obstacles hindering parental involvement. Principals aimed to make parental involvement accessible to all, regardless of their circumstances. They actively work to break down geographical and resource-related barriers to participation. Empathetic principals act as advocates for learners and their families, seeking solutions to various challenges beyond academics.

5.8.3 Enabling factors

This data analysis examined the enabling factors and challenges that principals face in township primary schools concerning the management of parental involvement in their children's academic performance. Principals Alecia, Delisiwe and Hopolang employ various strategies to promote parental academic involvement. These

strategies include curriculum meetings, open days, communication books and WhatsApp groups. Curriculum meetings provide parents with insights into the academic curriculum and open days facilitate interactive engagement. Communication tools like communication books and WhatsApp groups leverage technology to enhance parent-educator communication. Despite their strategies, principals encountered challenges that hinder parental involvement. Delisiwe highlighted illiteracy among parents, making it difficult for them to understand modern educational materials and technological advancements. Keitumetse identified a lack of parental interest in their children's education, potentially influenced by negative past experiences in school. She also raised concerns about educators' training and sensitivity in dealing with parents, particularly when parents are emotionally invested in their children's academic performance. These challenges underscore the need for additional support and resources to bridge knowledge gaps and motivate disengaged parents.

5.8.4 Constraining factors

This analysis explored the challenges and constraining factors that principals face in township primary schools regarding the management of parental involvement, along with their suggestions for improvement and support needed from the Department of Basic Education (DBE). Principals in the study noted a lack of formal training for educators on how to interact with parents effectively. They rely on informal learning through peer observation and interaction with colleagues to inform their interactions with parents. Some principals expected the DBE to provide this training, but it appears to be largely absent, indicating a systemic gap in preparing educators for successful parent-educator interactions. Educators typically rely on peer observation and informal learning to inform their interactions with parents. SMTs may play a role in developing educators' skills in engaging with parents, but specific methods were not detailed. Principals highlighted the challenge of securing parental attendance at school events. Parents may require tangible incentives or motivations to be present and engage in school-related activities which poses a potential barrier to parental involvement. Principals noted a lack of formal strategies, protocols or tools to help them effectively manage parental involvement. This absence of guidance and support from the DBE hinders principals' efforts to initiate and sustain meaningful interactions with parents. Some principals identified political interference as a unique and challenging

constraining factor in managing parental involvement in township primary schools. Parents with political agendas may disrupt the school's efforts to foster constructive parent-educator relationships. Principals employed various strategies to address these challenges, such as redefining ceremonies to make them more inclusive, using multiple communication channels to reach parents and engaging with the community to build relationships and tailor initiatives. Principals suggested that other principals could benefit from strategies like redefining traditional ceremonies, actively engaging with the community and providing ongoing workshops for parents. They also emphasised the need for professional development, emotional support and reinstating effective parental support programmes. Principals expressed a need for professional development, counselling and emotional support to help them cope with the challenges they face. They also called for the reinstatement of effective parental support programmes by the DBE and suggested that the DBE could take a more active role in directly facilitating parental participation such as organising parent meetings.

5.8.5 Developing educators' capabilities in managing parental involvement

This section of the data analysis explored how principals in township primary schools develop educators' capabilities to facilitate parental involvement. It encompasses strategies for parental volunteer recruitment, challenges associated with volunteering, stipulated and informal guidelines on parents visiting the school to meet educators, formalised and informal strategies for educating parents and the absence of such strategies. Principals employed several strategies to inform parents about volunteering opportunities. Delisiwe, for instance, rewards parent volunteers by collecting contributions from educators. Hopolang emphasises skills during parents' meetings, encouraging parents to contribute their expertise to benefit the school. These strategies promote active parental involvement in the school community. Challenges related to parental volunteering include parents expecting compensation or benefits for their contributions, as noted by Alecia. Keitumetse highlighted the risk of parents misinterpreting volunteering as a pathway to employment, potentially creating false expectations. These challenges underscore the complexity of encouraging parental volunteering in township schools. Principals established formal guidelines for parents to meet with educators, emphasising the importance of making appointments to ensure organised interactions. This structured approach ensures that educators can allocate time effectively and that interactions remain productive.

Informal guidelines, mentioned by Keitumetse and Mapule, are concerned with respecting the teaching and learning process and promoting collaborative communication between parents and educators. Formalised strategies include educating parents on how to analyse academic reports, as Alecia mentioned. Delisiwe uses open days as opportunities for structured workshops to educate parents on various aspects of their children's education such as analysing assessments. These strategies demonstrate the school's commitment to engaging parents through formalised education initiatives. Informal strategies encompassed interactions within the school environment such as educator assistants providing homework assistance to learners. While they are not formal programmes, these interactions indirectly contribute to parental involvement by enhancing learners' academic experiences. Some principals acknowledged the absence of formal programmes or strategies aimed at educating parents about parenting and supporting their children's education. Instead, parental knowledge often relies on individual initiatives and external workshops, primarily involving SGB members. This highlighted the resource limitations in implementing formal parenting education programmes.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

6.1 Introduction

This discussion unravels the findings that were presented and analysed in the preceding chapter, illuminating the multifaceted capabilities of principals in township primary schools as they manage parental involvement. The exploration begins with an analysis of the overarching capabilities that principals utilise to manage parental involvement, shedding light on their pivotal role in fostering collaborative partnerships. Following this, attention is directed towards the structural conversion factors that exert an impact on how principals manage parental involvement, unveiling the organizational dynamics that shape their strategies. Subsequently, the focus narrows to principals' individual conversion factors and their distinctive influence on the management of parental involvement, providing insights into the dimensions that shape their management practices. The discussion then transitions to the strategies employed by principals to enhance parental academic involvement, showcasing effective approaches that contribute to meaningful school-parent partnerships. Delving further, the discussion explores the challenges that principals encounter in facilitating parental academic involvement, unravelling the complexities that necessitate strategic navigation. Finally, the spotlight turns to parental volunteer recruitment, indicating the proactive strategies employed by principals to mobilize parental contributions, fostering a collaborative ethos within the school community.

6.2 Capabilities of principals in township primary schools in managing the involvement of parents

The findings regarding the absence of a school policy specifically dedicated to parental involvement in township primary schools are of significant interest when compared to existing academic literature and studies in the field of educational management and parental involvement.

Existing literature suggests that having a well-defined policy on parental involvement can be a cornerstone of successful engagement efforts (Hornby, 2011). Such policies provide a clear framework for schools, parents and learners to understand expectations and responsibilities. In the study's context, the principals' responses

showed that none of them reported having a dedicated parental involvement policy. This gap is noteworthy, especially in South African township schools where parental involvement is crucial for addressing educational shortcomings and improving overall quality (Abrahams, 2013).

The principals' reliance on existing policies, such as the learner code of conduct or departmental guidelines to indirectly manage parental involvement, is consistent with studies highlighting the adaptability of school leaders in resource-constrained environments (Granziera et al., 2016). However, these policies may not comprehensively address the multifaceted nature of parental involvement. Therefore, the absence of a dedicated policy can be seen as a limitation in providing clear guidance and structure for principals' efforts in this critical aspect of school management.

Furthermore, the recognition by some principals of the potential value of a parental involvement policy aligns with research emphasising the importance of proactive and strategic efforts to involve parents (Erdener, 2016). The participating principals understand that formalised policies can play a crucial role in raising awareness among parents about their role in their child's education, especially those who may not be well-informed. This perspective underscores their capability to recognise the potential benefits of a policy framework.

However, the principals' concerns about parental disengagement and a lack of seriousness regarding school documentation (such as school newsletters) and their children's well-being, reflect a common challenge in parental involvement efforts. Existing studies have highlighted the difficulty of achieving effective parental involvement in settings where parents face numerous socioeconomic challenges (Dick, 2016; Majozi, 2014; Mbokodi & Singh, 2011; Mesutha, 2019). The principals' doubts about parents' commitment to policy implementation mirror the real-world complexities faced by educators in fostering parental involvement.

The principals' recognition of the potential implementation gap and the challenge of translating policies into practice reflects their capabilities in critically assessing the existing dynamics. This awareness aligns with studies emphasising the need for ongoing evaluation and adaptation of parental involvement initiatives (Anastasiou & Papagianni, 2020; Borgonovi & Montt, 2012; Hornby, 2011; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011)

However, it also raises questions about the readiness of the school system to effectively bridge this gap between policy and practice, suggesting a need for capability-building efforts among school leaders.

6.3 Structural conversion factors' impact on principals' management of parental involvement:

Socioeconomic Status: The study findings resonate with previous research emphasising the significant influence of a community's socioeconomic status on parental involvement (Benner et al., 2016; Duan et al., 2018; Vellymalay, 2012). The recognition by principals of their schools' communities as having a low socioeconomic status aligns with literature highlighting how economic factors can limit parents' resources, time, and capacity for involvement.

The presence of child-headed households, as mentioned in the findings, is a poignant example of how structural factors related to socioeconomic status can impact parental involvement. However, it is worth noting that not all studies have explored this specific aspect of parental involvement. This uniqueness in the findings adds to our understanding of the multifaceted challenges faced by principals in underprivileged communities and exposes an opportunity for future research.

The findings align with research indicating that parents' work commitments can affect their involvement in school activities (Epstein & Sheldon, 2022). While the impact of work commitments on parental involvement is well-established, Hill and Tyson (2009) also pointed to the potential for flexible school policies and scheduling to mitigate this challenge.

The presence of social issues such as substance abuse and gangsterism in the community, as highlighted in the findings, is consistent with research that underscores how community challenges can indirectly impact parental involvement (Benner et al., 2016; Duan et al., 2018; Hornby, 2011). It is, however, important to note that the severity and types of social issues can vary widely between communities, which can lead to different outcomes in parental involvement.

The economic disadvantage of parents within the community directly affecting the school's ability to raise funds aligns with research suggesting that schools in low-income communities often face challenges with fundraising efforts. Nevertheless,

some studies have explored innovative strategies that principals can employ to overcome these challenges, such as community partnerships and grant applications.

6.4 Principals' individual conversion factors' impact on their management of parental involvement

The findings highlight the role of creativity in principals' approaches to parental involvement which resonates with existing literature (Hornby, 2011; Keetanjaly et al., 2019). While creativity is often seen as an asset for enhancing parental involvement, it is essential to acknowledge that the effectiveness of creative strategies can vary based on the unique context of each school and community.

The emphasis on empathy in principals' management of parental involvement aligns with the idea that empathetic school leaders can build trust and rapport with parents, fostering a collaborative and supportive educational environment (Hornby, 2011). Considering this, it is important to recognise that the impact of empathy may not be uniform across all parents and communities, as individual experiences and needs can differ significantly.

As demonstrated in the findings, principals' problem-solving abilities reflect the idea that principals who can find practical solutions to obstacles can enhance parental involvement. However, the effectiveness of these solutions may vary depending on the specific challenges faced by parents and the community.

The emphasis on inclusivity in Delisiwe's responses aligns with the idea that principals who strive to make parental involvement accessible to all can foster greater involvement (Erdener, 2016). While inclusivity is generally seen as a positive approach, its impact may depend on the extent to which it addresses the unique needs and circumstances of the community.

6.5 Strategies for parental academic involvement

Alecia's mention of curriculum meetings corresponds with the literature which emphasises the importance of providing parents with insights into the academic curriculum (Epstein & Dauber, 1991). These meetings offer a structured platform for parents to understand what their children are learning, enabling them to support their education effectively. However, a study by Davies (2009) argued that curriculum meetings may not always be effective in improving parental involvement. The study

found that while these meetings provided information, they often lacked interactive components, making it challenging for parents to actively engage with the material.

Alecia's description of structured meetings, including general meetings and individual subject meetings, aligns with research highlighting the significance of clear communication and structured engagement for parental involvement (Epstein, 2018). These targeted discussions cater to the specific needs and concerns of parents, enhancing their understanding of their children's academic progress. On the other hand, a study by Sheldon and Sanders (2016) suggested that structured meetings might overwhelm parents, especially those with busy schedules. These meetings may lead to information overload, making it difficult for parents to digest and act upon the information effectively.

Delisiwe's emphasis on engagement sessions and open days reflects the literature's view that involving parents in interactive and experiential events can foster a collaborative approach to academic involvement (Davids, 2015). In particular, open days offer parents a firsthand experience of the school environment and their children's educational journey. However, a study by Maluleke (2014) found that open days, while valuable for showcasing the school's environment, did not necessarily lead to increased parental involvement in academic activities. The study argued that more targeted efforts might be needed to bridge the gap between school events and academic engagement.

6.6 Challenges to parental academic involvement

Delisiwe's identification of illiteracy as a significant challenge is consistent with prior research (Sibanda & Netshitangani, 2021). Illiterate parents may indeed struggle to comprehend modern educational materials and curricula, underscoring the need for schools to provide additional support and resources to bridge this knowledge gap. Similarly, the observation of parents' difficulties in coping with rapid technological changes aligns with literature discussing the generation gap in technology literacy (Şad et al., 2016). Parents' unfamiliarity with contemporary educational technologies can hinder their ability to support their children's academic progress, calling for strategies to bridge this gap. In contrast, a study by Hollingworth et al. (2011) found that many parents, even those from older generations, were willing to learn and adapt to new technologies when it came to supporting their children's education but that the

difference between the two types of parents was also influenced by the home's access to the Internet or lack thereof. The study suggested that with appropriate guidance and training, parents could overcome technological barriers.

Keitumetse highlighted parent's interest in their children's education which resonates with prior findings. Some parents may indeed lack motivation or interest in actively participating in their children's schooling. This points to the need for schools to explore ways to incentivise and engage such parents effectively. However, a study by Meier and Lemmer (2015) argued that parental disinterest often stemmed from feeling excluded or undervalued by the school. The study suggested that schools that fostered a welcoming and inclusive environment saw increased parental interest and involvement, even from initially disengaged parents.

Keitumetse's insight into parents' negative memories of their own school experiences echoes research that suggests parents' past school experiences can influence their perceptions of the school environment (Msila, 2012). This underscores the importance of principals addressing negative perceptions and fostering a positive school culture that encourages parental involvement.

Keitumetse's concern about educator training and sensitivity aligns with the literature emphasising the role of educators in facilitating parental involvement (Anastasiou & Papagianni, 2020; Erdener, 2016). Educators need training and emotional intelligence to navigate sensitive parent-educator interactions effectively. The emotional state of parents is indeed crucial, and educators should approach these interactions with empathy and understanding. However, while educator training is important, it is not the sole factor influencing parental involvement. Parents' perceptions of the school's overall approach to involvement, including its policies and practices, play a significant role in shaping their interactions with educators.

The responses from the principals regarding educator training on parental involvement shed light on a concerning gap in the preparation of educators to engage effectively with parents in township primary schools. Alecia's inability to recall any formal training sessions on how educators should interact with parents is indicative of a significant gap in educator preparation which Hornby (2011) also alluded to. Her assertion that educators learn from observing their peers implies that parental involvement strategies may be inconsistent and reliant on individual educator's practices.

Delisiwe and Hopolang's statements about the absence of training provided by the Department of Education indicate that this issue extends beyond individual schools and reflects a systemic problem. The lack of departmental training underscores the need for systemic changes to ensure that educators are adequately prepared to engage parents in the educational process. The DBE (2016) committed to playing a pivotal role in training educators (and other stakeholders) for parental involvement. When departments provide guidance and resources, it can lead to more consistent and effective approaches to engaging parents. The commitment is that "all role-players should be trained in this framework to understand its objectives and to identify strategies for improving their engagement with parents and communities as key partners" (DBE, 2016, p. 13). Mapule's confirmation of the lack of specialised training programmes for educators in parental involvement further reinforces the need for targeted professional development in this area. Without specific training, educators may lack the skills and confidence required to engage parents effectively. Educators who participate in specialised training programmes on parental involvement can initiate and sustain meaningful interactions with parents. Providing educators with focused training can yield positive outcomes in terms of parental involvement.

Alecia's description of educators learning from each other through observation and informal communication suggests a reliance on peer learning. Educators appear to adopt strategies based on what they perceive to be effective when engaging with parents. While valuable, too much reliance on peer learning can result in inconsistent practices. Educators may adopt strategies that align with their personal preferences rather than evidence-based approaches, potentially leading to varied outcomes in parental involvement.

Hopolang's mention of school management's role in developing educators' skills in parent-educator interactions highlights the potential influence of school leadership. Principals can actively shape the school culture and guide educators on effective engagement with parents (Erna, 2023). Leadership alone may not be sufficient to ensure consistent and effective parental involvement, but it plays a key role in it. A more comprehensive approach involving training and systemic support may be necessary.

Delisiwe's assertion that parents require incentives or reasons to participate suggests a dependency on rewards or motivations for engagement. This dependency may pose

difficulties when it is not feasible to provide incentives consistently. Fan et al. (2001) where they argue that while incentives can be effective in the short term, sustained parental involvement should be rooted in a genuine interest in their child” education. A sole reliance on incentives may not foster long-term engagement.

Keitumetse’s mention of the absence of guidelines or support for managing parental involvement emphasises the lack of formalised strategies in place for principals to follow. This response suggests a systemic issue where principals in township primary schools are left to navigate parental involvement without clear guidance. This absence of strategies may result in inconsistent practices and challenges in fostering effective parental involvement. Research by Hornby (2011) argues that a lack of clear strategies can hinder parental involvement efforts. Schools that implement evidence-based approaches and provide clear guidance tend to experience higher levels of engagement.

Keitumetse’s mention of political interference as a constraining factor in managing parental involvement underscores the complex external pressures that principals may face. The presence of parents with political agendas can introduce complexities into the school environment (Maeresera, 2016). Political interference may divert the school’s focus from educational objectives to external interests. Epstein and Sheldon (2022) suggest that schools can mitigate external pressures by maintaining a strong focus on their educational mission and involving parents in decision-making processes. Effective communication and transparency can help address concerns related to political interference.

6.7 Parental volunteer recruitment

While recognising and rewarding parental volunteers is a common strategy, offering tangible incentives might inadvertently discourage volunteerism by making it appear transactional rather than altruistic. In some cases, parents may volunteer purely out of a desire to contribute, and providing financial rewards could undermine their intrinsic motivation. While tapping into parents’ skills can be valuable, Burstein and Court (2015) also highlight the importance of acknowledging and valuing parents’ time and presence, irrespective of their specific skills. Overemphasising skills might inadvertently exclude parents who wish to contribute in other ways or who may not have specialised skills to offer. The challenges related to parental volunteering

mentioned by Alecia and Keitumetse align with common concerns, but some contrasting findings exist – the expectation of compensation, as mentioned by Alecia, can be a genuine concern.

While Keitumetse’s concern about misinterpretation is valid, clear communication about volunteer roles and expectations can mitigate these misunderstandings. When parents are well-informed about volunteer opportunities, the risk of misinterpretation decreases.

The principals’ emphasis on appointment-based systems for parental visits aligns with best practices but some studies suggest flexibility. Requiring parental appointments is a structured approach (Keetanjaly et al., 2019). However, overly rigid appointment systems might deter parents from seeking immediate assistance when urgent concerns arise. Balancing structured appointments with flexibility for urgent matters could be beneficial.

The informal guidelines mentioned by Keitumetse and Mapule reflect collaborative practices but might need careful consideration. Encouraging respectful interaction is crucial. However, informal guidelines should also ensure that parents understand the importance of adhering to school policies, especially during classroom hours, to maintain a conducive learning environment.

The absence of formal programmes for educating parents is a reality in many township schools and some studies propose alternative approaches. While formal parenting education programmes may be limited, research (see Epstein & Sheldon, 2022) suggests that schools can collaborate with community organisations to offer parenting workshops or information sessions, even if these are occasional. This could help fill the gap in parental education. Schools can encourage the formation of peer support networks among parents, where experienced parents help newcomers understand the school system and share effective strategies for supporting their children’s education. This informal approach can complement formal programmes.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Introduction

The discussion of the findings prior to this chapter steer to this concluding section, garnering and presenting insights from the study into actionable recommendations for both future research and practical applications within the educational landscape. By synthesizing the findings on the capabilities, challenges, and strategies employed by principals in managing parental involvement, suggestions are presented for future investigations to delve into underexplored research themes. Additionally, this section provides practical recommendations for educational practitioners, policymakers, and principals to enhance the efficacy of managing parental involvement initiatives. The synthesis of research findings and practical insights serves as a foundation for shaping the trajectory of both scholarly inquiry and real-world practices, fostering a collaborative and conducive environment for the continued improvement of management of parental involvement in township primary schools.

7.2 Recommendations for future research and practice

The thematic analysis highlighted a potential area for further research. These recommendations aim to promote a holistic and human-centred approach to education, where individuals are empowered to exercise their agency, pursue valuable functionings and lead lives they value. By incorporating the insights from the Capability Approach into educational practices and policies, we can work towards a more equitable, inclusive and empowering education system that benefits individuals and societies alike.

7.2.1 Recommendations for research

Investigating how principals navigate parental involvement in the absence of a formal policy could provide valuable insights into their capabilities and the contextual factors that shape their practices. Understanding these dynamics can contribute to the development of contextually relevant strategies such as a parental involvement school policy for enhancing parental involvement in township primary schools.

In addition, the analysis showed that future research could involve investigating the content and implementation of the learner code of conduct within schools. Understanding how these codes of conduct are structured to communicate expectations to parents and how they are applied in practice could provide valuable insights into the capabilities of principals in managing parental involvement within the unique context of township primary schools.

Future research should continue to explore the concept of agency within the context of education. Future studies could investigate how educational policies, practices and pedagogical approaches can be designed or modified to enhance principals' agency. Comparative studies can also be conducted to assess the impact of different educational systems in Southern Africa, or broader, on principals' agency.

Another suggestion is conducting empirical studies to measure the impact of the Capability Approach on educational outcomes and implementation of educational policies. These studies could assess how educational policies and interventions influenced by the Capability Approach have affected principals' well-being.

7.2.2 Recommendations for practice

Schools should consider adopting pedagogical approaches that align with the Capability Approach. They should encourage learner-centred learning, critical thinking and problem-solving to empower learners and enhance their agency. The effectiveness of these approaches should be evaluated through ongoing assessment and feedback mechanisms.

Schools should focus on educator training and professional development programmes that equip educators with the skills and knowledge needed to engage with parents. They should also provide educators with the needed resources and strategies to create inclusive and empowering educator-parent interactions that facilitate well-being.

Principals, as far as is in their control, should foster collaborative efforts between themselves, schools, policymakers and researchers to develop evidence-based policies and practices to improve their capabilities for managing parental involvement. They should encourage interdisciplinary efforts that integrate insights from fields such as education, business and social services to inform educational decision making.

Principals should involve learners, parents and communities in the educational decision-making process. Stakeholders who are affected by these challenges could find solutions to the constraining factors. This will create mechanisms for meaningful participation and dialogue to ensure that practice aligns with the values and aspirations of the stakeholders.

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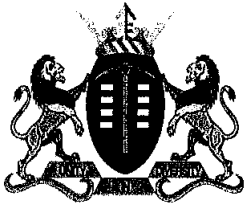
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Appendix A: GDE permission letter



GAUTENG PROVINCE

Department: Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

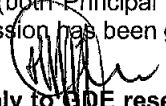
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GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

Date:	21 January 2022
Validity of Research Approval:	08 February 2022– 30 September 2022 2022/09
Name of Researcher:	Dikana S
Address of Researcher:	104 Green Reef Village
	Greenworks Street
	Angelo/ Boksburg
Telephone Number:	073 767 5589
Email address:	<u>sinodikana@gmail.com</u>
Research Topic:	Principals manging parental involvement in township Primary schools in Ekurhuleni South District, Gauteng Province
Type of qualification	Masters
Number and type of schools:	5 Primary Schools
District/s/HO	Ekurhuleni South

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.


 21/01/2022

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.

1

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. **Because of COVID 19 pandemic researchers can ONLY collect data online, telephonically or may make arrangements for Zoom with the school Principal. Requests for such arrangements should be submitted to the GDE Education Research and Knowledge Management directorate. The approval letter will then indicate the type of arrangements that have been made with the school.**
4. **The Researchers are advised to make arrangements with the schools via Fax, email or telephonically with the Principal.**
5. 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.
6. 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.
7. 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.
8. 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.
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain written parental consent of all learners that are expected to participate in the study.
12. 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.
13. 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.
14. 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.
15. 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.
16. 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



Mr Gumani Mukatuni

Acting CES: Education Research and Knowledge Management

DATE: 21/01/2022

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Making education a societal priority

Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management

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Appendix B: School agreement forms



Department of Education Management & Policy Studies

Faculty of Education

University of Pretoria

0002 Pretoria

Dear Principal and SGB Chairperson

My name is **Sinoyolo Dikana** and I am a M.Ed student at the University of Pretoria. I am conducting research on *Principals managing parental involvement in township primary schools in Ekurhuleni South District, Gauteng Province*.

My research supervisor is Dr Talitha M.L Calitz, who is a senior lecturer at the University of Pretoria. The Faculty of Education Ethics Committee of the University of Pretoria gave ethical clearance to do this research (Number: EDU177/21).

The purpose of this letter is to request that you grant me permission to invite the Principal in your school to participate in this study.

The aim of the study is to explore the ways in which township primary school principals of Ekurhuleni South district manage parental involvement.

The data will be collected through individual interviews followed by a focus group interview of the principal and other participating principals. The individual interviews will take 30 to 45 minutes after school hours at a place that is convenient for the participating principal. Only the Principal (or a member of the SMT where relevant) who has given their consent will participate in this study. If permission to do so will be granted, the principal will be interviewed as part of the data collection process.

Data collected from this study will be kept strictly confidential and neither the school nor the participant will be identifiable in any report. The principal who is participating may withdraw at any time during the research process without any penalty.

After I have received approval to approach the principal in your school to participate in this study, I will:

- obtain informed consent from the principal; and
- arrange time for data collection in your school (or another place convenient for the principal), which will be after school hours.


The findings of this study might be useful to education practitioners. The research study has the ability to provide insight to Education Management and Policy issues in schools.

We would also like to request your permission to use your data, confidentially and anonymously, for further research purposes, as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria and, where relevant, project funders. Further research may include secondary data analysis and using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies.

If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact me (see contact details below) or my supervisor:

Dr Talita ML Calitz: Signature:  _____

Email: talita.calitz@up.ac.za; Tel: +27 (0)12 420 5624).

Sinoyolo Dikana Signature:  _____

073 767 5589 sinodikana@gmail.com

Education Management and Policy Studies

Faculty of Education

University of Pretoria

Pretoria

0002

AGREEMENT FORM

Title of the research project:

Principals managing parental involvement in township primary schools in Ekurhuleni South District, Gauteng Province

We confirm that as a representative of the SGB, and the principal, we have been informed about the nature of the research and that our rights have been explained to us. We have received and understood the information about the project from the researcher, **Sinoyolo Dikana**, who is conducting the project for his M.Ed degree, whose supervisor is **Dr Talita ML Calitz** in the Department of Education Management and Policy Studies at the University of Pretoria.

We understand that if we agree to the school being a research site in this project, the principal will be interviewed.

We understand that if the principal participates in this study, their contribution will be kept confidential and neither they, nor the school will be identifiable in any research report. We also understand that there are minimal risks associated with this study.

We understand that the principal will remain anonymous, their participation is voluntary, and they have the right to withdraw at any time during the research process. Their withdrawal will not affect me in any way.

For more information and questions, you may contact the researcher, **Sinoyolo Dikana** Cell phone number: **073 767 5589** email: **sinodikana@gmail.com**

We understand that by signing the agreement letter we are agreeing to have the school be a research site in this study. We also understand that the principal's contribution will be used primarily for a research project for the M.Ed degree.

SGB representative signature: _____ Date: ____/____/202__

Principal's signature: _____ Date: ____/____/202__

Appendix C: Interview schedule

Secondary research question	Interview questions
1. What are the capabilities of principals in township primary schools in managing the involvement of parents?	Does the school have a separate written policy on parent involvement?
	How valuable do you think this policy is (or would be) in helping you manage parental involvement in the school?
2. How do structural and individual conversion factors impact principals' management of parental involvement?	How does the socioeconomic status of the community and its access to resources impact how you manage parental involvement?
	How does your creativity influence how you manage parental involvement?
	How are parents involved in developing their child(ren)'s performance?
3. What are the enabling factors for principals in township primary schools to manage parental involvement?	What kind of a role does empathy play in how you manage parental involvement?
	How do you think adaptability impacted how you have had to manage parental involvement?
4. What are the constraining factors for principals in township primary schools in managing parental involvement?	What input do parents have in deciding the educational goals for their children?
	How are parents encouraged to reinforce school programs at home?
	What training do educators get on how to work effectively with parents?
	How does the ability of educators to interact well (or not) with parents impact your involvement with parents?
	What would you say are the things that make it difficult for you to manage parental involvement?
5. How do principals in township primary schools develop	How are parents informed about the ways in which they can help out at the school?
	How is voluntary help from parents organised within the school?

educators' capabilities to enable parental involvement?	What guidelines are available for parents visiting the school to talk over a concern with their children's educators?
	How are parents educated on parenting and supporting the educational outcomes of their children?
	How are parents given opportunities to discuss their concerns on a one-to-one basis with a teaching staff?
General	Have you faced any challenges in managing parental involvement?
	How have you addressed these challenges you have faced in managing parental involvement?
	What do you think are the things that principals need to do to have more parents involved in their schools?
	What kind of support from the department do you believe principals need to manage parental involvement?
	What kind of influence do you believe managing parental involvement has on the academic performance of learners?