

Rural school principals and teachers' perceptions of the contribution of parental involvement in learner performance

By

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

MAGISTER EDUCATIONIS (Education Management, Law and Policy)

in the

Department of Education Management and Policy Studies

at the

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

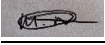
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Declaration of originality

I, Mzolisi Njiva (Student number: 21685780) hereby declare that this M.Ed. dissertation titled, **“Rural school principals and teachers’ perceptions of the contribution of parental involvement in learner performance”**, for the degree Magister Educationis (Education) at the University of Pretoria is my original work. It has not previously been submitted to another institution of higher learning. All the resources cited or quoted in this study are indicated and acknowledged with a comprehensive list of references.

Signed at the University of Pretoria on this 30th day of October 2023.

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Ethical clearance certificate



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CLEARANCE NUMBER: **EDU134/21**

MEd

Rural school principals and teachers'
perceptions of the contribution of parental
involvement in learner performance

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22 March 2022

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

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

Ethics statement

The study adhered to the ethical standards listed above. These ethical considerations are further discussed in detail in section 3.9 of Chapter 3.

Dedication

I dedicate this study to my mother Mafaku Njiva, my wife Zovuyo Basela-Njiva, my children Zukhanye, Lilitha, Hlaluminathi and Alulutho. Thank you very much for the support and understanding you demonstrated during my study. You gave me motivation to keep going even when the going got tough. It is all because of you guys that I have managed to complete this study.

MAY THE ALMIGHTY BLESS YOU!!!

Acknowledgements

My sincere gratitude to the Alfred Nzo East District Department of Education and the manager of circuit 3 for allowing me to conduct this research in their respective schools.

A special thanks to the principals and teachers of the three schools that were selected to take part in the interviews, thank you very much for your time and energy that you sacrificed in participating in the interviews. My study would not have been a success if it was not for your contribution.

My heartfelt appreciation to my beloved supervisor Dr. Diatleng Sebidi (SD), for his guidance and encouragement. You were such a blessing to me, you pushed and encouraged me even when I was at my lowest. I have learned a lot from your experience.

Thank you very much Prof. Maitumeleng Nthontho for your advice, encouragement, patience, and critical and constructive comments that have inspired me to complete this work. Your unwavering support taught me how to appreciate the artistry of research.

My friends and fellow master's students Tshimilandou RI, Senokoane L. and Masechaba N., thank you very much for supporting and encouraging me throughout my study period.

To my mother Mafaku Njiva, thank you MaDakhile for raising me the way you did, preaching the importance of education although you never got the chance to go to school yourself. I would not be where I am if it was not for your teachings. You mean the world to me.

To my siblings Thulisile, Phatheka, Mziwanele, Sipehelele and my two late brothers Thembalipheli and Nkosifikile Njiva, thank you very much for supporting me throughout my studies.

Lastly, I thank God for the mind and strength He gave me to persevere in life despite all the challenges I was faced with.

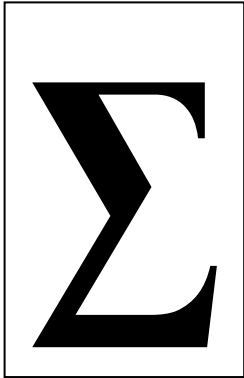
Abstract

There is a need to enhance parental involvement in rural primary schools in South Africa. There is evidence in the literature that parental involvement in the learning process of learners may influence the quality of learners' academic performance. However, the former apartheid education system in South Africa, where parents were not regarded important in education of their children has contributed in parents' negligence of their children education. For this study, Epstein theory for parental involvement was used as a lens through which data was scrutinized. Using qualitative research approach within the interpretivist paradigm, the study explored the rural school principals and teachers' perceptions of the contribution of parental involvement in learner performance. A sample of three principals and six teachers were purposively selected from three rural primary school in Eastern Cape Department of Education in South Africa using case study research design. Data were collected through interviews. Data analysis for the study adopted data analysis procedures advocated by Creswell where the data was organised, read through, coded, allocated themes, interpreted and validated for the generation of theory. The principals and teachers in this study confirmed their passion to involve parents in their children's education. However, there are problems of poor attendance and non-attendance of school activities by parents. These challenges are exacerbated by poor communication of parents with the school, poor attendance of meetings, inconsistent implementation classrooms and SGBs parental involvement policies. Consequently, the study recommends to schools to adhere to their parental involvement policies and make follow-up of the invites issued to the parents to attend school activities. It also recommends to schools to provide training to the parents regarding the importance and the benefits of their involvement in education of their children.

Keywords: academic performance; learners; parental involvement; policies; principal; rural primary school; teacher

LANGUAGE EDITOR CERTIFICATE

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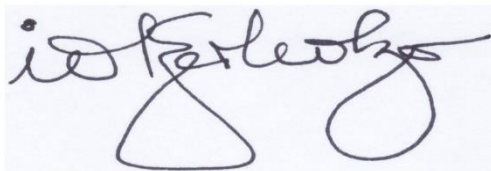
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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to confirm that I have completed the language editing of the thesis **Rural school principals' and teachers' perceptions of the contribution of parental involvement in learner performance** by Mzolisi Njiva (Student number: 21685780) submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree M. Ed. Education Management, Law and Policy in the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria.

Yours faithfully



Isobet Oberholzer

10 December 2023

List of abbreviations

ACE	Advanced Certificate in Education
BA	Bachelor of Arts
B. Ed	Bachelor of Education
B. Ed (Hons)	Bachelor of Education Honours
DBE	Department of Basic Education
GET	General Education and Training
NSNP	National School Nutrition Programme
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SASA	South African Schools Act
SGB	School Governing Body

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CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

1.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I introduce the study and provide the background regarding rural school principals and teachers' perceptions of the contribution of parental involvement in learner performance. I provide an international and national overview regarding the importance of parental involvement in schools. It is in this chapter that I discuss the problem statement, rationale the purpose and aims of the study, the rationale, significance of the study, the main research question and secondary research questions and the limitations of the study. I conclude by summarising the contents of the chapter.

To underscore the importance of parental involvement in the education of their children, countries like the United States of America (US) and the United Kingdom (UK) are adopting laws and policies to promote family-school partnerships. For instance, in Canada, the Education Quality Improvement Act of 1997 gives a mandate for school councils to be established (Antony-Newman, 2019). In the US there is the "No Child Left behind" Act (NCLB, 2003), which is dedicated to the collaboration between parents and schools to enhance the education system. Similarly, in the UK, the government is promoting many learning and social schemes such as the National Literacy Strategy and the National Numeracy Strategy to boost learners' achievement by getting families to work together with schools (Wolfendale & Bastiani, 2000). This commitment is further embodied into Goal No4 of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals which states that every member state must "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all". In aligning its goals with those of the United Nations, the African Union, under Goal 6 of Agenda 2063 – The Africa We Want – promises "An Africa whose development is people driven, relying on the potential offered by African People, especially its Women and Youth, and caring for Children".

Section 29 of the South African Constitution states that "everyone has the right to basic education" (RSA, 1966a). To implement this section of the Constitution, the state enacted education legislation and policies to make provision for a functional parental

involvement in children education. Of primary importance amongst the legislation passed, was the South African Schools Act of 1996 (Act No. 84 of 1996) (SASA) which focuses specifically on issues of redress, equality, quality and democratic participation. This legislation addressed amongst others, the creation of a new school governance system, one which is intended to democratize school education by localising decision-making-devolving power to the individual school and community and promoting the forming of citizen / community and state partnerships (RSA, 1996b).

In essence, the intention of SASA, was to create an enabling context for school-based management of education (RSA, 1996a), which at the same time makes provision for the involvement of parents in the governance structure of public schools (RSA, 1996b). Imperative to such devolution is the election of School Governing Bodies (SGBs) by parents, staff and learners in primary and secondary schools, and on the one hand, allowing schools and their surrounding communities to democratically decide on matters concerning their schools (RSA, 1996b) In addition Section 3(1) of SASA declares compulsory attendance of children of which parents must play a pivotal role. The Section also pronounces that *“Subject to this Act and any applicable provincial law, every parent must cause every learner for whom he or she is responsible to attend a school from the first school day of the year in which such learner reaches the age of seven years until the last school day of the year in which such learner reaches the age of fifteen years or the ninth grade, whichever occurs first”* (RSA, 1996b). These are some of the international and continental efforts to decentralise power to involve all the stakeholders in power sharing (Erol & Turhan, 2018) though they are not immune from challenges as research suggests.

Erol and Turhan (2018) posit that parental involvement forms part of distributed leadership in which all stakeholders, including parents, work together because they have a common goal to achieve. In this context, a common goal is for the learners to achieve to the best of their abilities. It therefore becomes very important for the school and the home to work together. However, factors such as traits of the apartheid era contribute to the lack of parental involvement (Fadiji & Reddy, 2020). Learners get their first education from their parents (Cheng & Chen, 2018). Indeed, learners attend formal education at school having obtained prior knowledge from their parents and

communities. It is imperative for parents make efforts to help teachers with their children so that they can reach their educational goals because parents are the first and undoubtedly the best teachers to their children (Sadiku & Sylaj, 2019). Linking what the learner has learned from home and what they learn at school could also help them understand the school environment better. As a result, the learner can develop healthily when the home and school experiences are parallel (Sahin, 2019).

According to Avnet, Makara and Larwin and Erickson (2019) parental involvement is one of the factors that affect learners' academic performance. This highlights the importance of parental involvement for the benefit of the child. Furthermore, the responsibility to educate the child rests with both the school and the family (Sadiku & Sylaj, 2019). For this reason, it is very significant that parents and teachers work together and share responsibilities in order to help learners reach academic success. Cheng and Chen (2018) rate parental involvement so highly that they believe that it is as important as teaching a learner in a classroom setting.

Rasool, Zhang, Aydin and Halpern (2021) postulate that cooperation between the school, home and community contributes to more academic proficiency and improvement in school attendance. On the other hand, low parental involvement may have a negative impact on learners' academic achievement (Paulynice, 2020). For this reason, it is very crucial for parents to be given the opportunity to participate in their children's academic lives. Parents need to be equipped with knowledge that will enable them to fulfil their roles and responsibilities in respect to their children's schooling (Lumadi, 2019). Therefore, it is the responsibility of the school to provide parents with opportunities to participate in the education of their children for the purpose of enhancing children's academic performance (Arce, 2019).

Roy and Giraldo-Garcia (2018) declare that involvement of parents in their children's education does not only contribute to the improvement of academic performance but to the development of the whole personality. In this way, learners' academic lives would be linked to their social lives. The school may also have information of learners' backgrounds and challenges they face at home from their parents (Roy and Giraldo-Garcia, 2018). However, this may happen provided there is active collaboration between the school and the home.

Rural schools in South Africa are very poor and located in remote and underdeveloped communities where most parents are not employed and rely on social grants for survival (Smit, 2017). According to van Dyk and White (2019) they are characterised by the quintile number they are allocated to. All South African schools are allocated from quintile one to five with quintile 1-3 being schools that are located in poor communities. Communities with quintile 1 schools also have a high rate of unemployment and illiteracy of the community members (van Dyk & White, 2019). Irrespective of parents' literacy level, their involvement may have a potential of benefiting the schools in delivering the curriculum relating to indigenous knowledge.

Possession of underqualified teachers is another challenge that rural schools are confronted with (du Plessis & Mestry, 2019). This problem is brought by the fact that safe accommodation and facilities such as water and electricity are mostly not available (Sumida & Kawata, 2021). This service delivery deficiency may force and experienced teachers to migrate to urban schools which may lead to imbalance of highly competent human resource between rural and urban schools (du Plessis & Mestry, 2019). However, maximising parental involvement can minimise learners' vulnerability on issues of quality education and enhance their educational achievements (Averill, Metson, & Bailey, 2016).

Rural schools face a number of challenges which are unique to their environment (du Plessis & Mestry, 2019). Tost, Spires and In (2019) declare that rural schools have limited resources and infrastructure. Some of the resources that can be found in urban schools are not available in rural schools. In some cases, even basic resources such as textbooks are not available in rural schools (Klocko & Justis, 2019). This is one of the factors that affect the academic performance of learners in rural schools in comparison to urban schools. Some families still possess those books used in the previous dispensations that schools can utilise in enhancing the teaching and learning. It is therefore through the parental involvement that schools can be aware of such avenues (Klocko & Justis, 2019).

Teacher development does not focus much on rural schools and their context (du Plessis & Mestry, 2019). Rural schools face a number of contextual challenges which need to be addressed. Teacher development needs to take these factors into

consideration. Since this problem is not addressed, teachers find it difficult to adapt to rural communities (du Plessis & Mestry, 2019). As a result, many teachers do not spend a lot of time teaching in rural schools. After a few years they usually take transfers to urban schools. This leaves rural schools with many vacant posts (du Plessis & Mestry, 2019).

Sumida and Kawata (2021) state that the poverty rate in rural areas is at 46%. This also affects learners' academic performance and school attendance. Absenteeism is another challenge related to this poverty rate because learners are required to work on the farms (du Plessis & Mestry, 2019). This happens because in some cases homes are headed by children. As a result of these and other challenges, rural learners perform at a very low level particularly in comparison to their urban counterparts (du Plessis & Mestry, 2019). Teachers need to be made aware of such challenges and be equipped with knowledge and skills of how to deal with them. Through this knowledge and skills, teachers would be able to understand and help learners to achieve academically despite these challenges.

The rate of school dropout is also very high in rural schools (Tost, Spires & In, 2019). Lack of parental involvement can be one of the contributing factors to this problem (Jackson, 2022). Du Plessis and Mestry (2019) opine that homes do not provide enough support to their children's learning. Therefore. Learners end up not putting much value on education since it is not given much support by their parents due to poor involvement (Jackson, 2022). They end up dropping out of school as they are not motivated to wake up and go to school every day.

According to Sumida and Kawata (2019) lack of collaboration opportunities is also a challenged faced by rural school principals. Rural school principals are always isolated and do not get the opportunity to communicate and get advices from their counterparts. Principals of rural schools are also expected to know the social, cultural, political and economic background of the communities where they are working (Klocko & Justis, 2019). Failure to have knowledge of these aspects results in the principal being viewed as an outcast and being subjected to scrutiny. Rural communities expect school principals to be seen as people who belong to the community or someone who values the community and its background.

Teachers limited access to professional development is also a challenge in rural schools (Lavalley, 2018). These teachers are not properly developed and trained to be more competent in their work. This is caused by the long distance between the schools where these teachers are working and the offices of departmental officials (Lavalley, 2018). As a result of lack of professional development, teachers in the rural schools may not have the capacity to involve parents in their schools.

There is an abundance of local and international studies addressing poor family-school partnerships due socio-economic factors, cultural factors, racial and ethnic factors and political factors (Maluleke, 2014; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Lemmer, Van Wyk & Berkhout, 2010, Deslandes, 2009; Wong & Hughes, 2006, Rhodes & White Burkett Miller Center, 2012; Deslandes, 2009). However, there is inadequate literature which addresses the contribution of parental involvement in learners' performance in South Africa.

1.2. Problem statement

There is lack of parental involvement at rural primary schools in Alfred Nzo District of Bizana of the Eastern Cape province. Lack of parental involvement is believed to be caused by parents' low education level, lack the understanding of the roles they can play in enhancing the academic performance of their children (Sumida & Kawata 2021; Segoe & Bisschoff, 2019). According to Msila (2012) lack of parental involvement creates a barrier to providing quality education to learners in rural schools. Lumadi (2019) further declares that lack of parental involvement may also cause learners disciplinary problems that may lead to which leads to poor academic performance (Lumadi, 2019). Plessis and Mestry (2019) postulate that lack of parental involvement also happens because of parents' low level of education which plays a role in them not placing much value in their children's education. However, even those parents who serve in the school governing body do become inactive because of their poor literacy level (Paulynice, 2019; Paulynice, 2020). Therefore, this study explored the rural school principals and teachers' perceptions of the contribution of parental involvement in learner performance.

1.3. Rationale of the study

A number of authors who have conducted a study on parental involvement agree that parental involvement on learners' education positively influences learners' school achievement (Avnet et al., 2020; Garbacz, Zerr, Dishion, Seeley & Stormshak, 2018; Mata, Petro & Peixoto, 2018; Lumadi, 2019). It is therefore crucial for parental involvement to be promoted as it clearly improves the academic performance of learners. According to Bartolome, Mamat and Masnan (2020) teachers act as second parents to learners. For this reason, teachers' perceptions of parental involvement are crucial as teachers could play a pivotal role in building collaboration with parents. Learners are in the middle with the teacher and the parent on either side of the learner (Bartolome et al., 2020). This means that it is important for teachers and parents to work together for the benefit of learners (Dishion, Seeley & Stormshak, 2018).

The interest in conducting this study was stimulated by what I observed in a school where I am working. I have been a teacher for a good number of years and in my teaching career I have realised that some of the parents are not involved in their children's education. Parents are only called to school when their children have misbehaved. They are neither updated about their children's academic progress nor advised on how to assist their children in their academic lives because of their ever absence when they are called to attend school meetings.

Also, my school does have a policy on parental involvement which is not put into practice. The introduction of the policy acknowledges that parental involvement is essential in order for schools to function appropriately. However, parental involvement in the school does not go further than just the presence of this policy. One of the policy's aims is to promote communication between the educator, learner and parent. However, having been in the school for a period of five years, no communication has taken place between myself and parents. This highlights that the policy is only there for compliance purposes since it is never put into practice. Through this study, the researcher intends to investigate the reason behind this failure to implement parental involvement even when the school does have the policy which governs how parental involvement should be implemented.

1.4. Purpose and aims of the study

The purpose of this study is to explore rural school principals and teachers' perceptions of the contribution of parental involvement in learner performance. According to Shu (2019) there is a global attempt to promote collaboration between schools and families. Teachers have a huge role to play in this regard. Herban and Reinke (2017) concur with this idea by stating that perceptions of teachers are important in predicting student outcome. This is due to the fact that teachers are the ones that interact with learners mostly at school. It is for this reason that this study aims to focus on how principals and teachers of rural schools perceive the contribution of parental involvement in learner performance.

The role of school principals can determine the quality and level of communication that takes place between the school management and teachers and between the school and parents (Anastasiou & Papagianni, 2020). Therefore, this study explored rural school principals and teachers' perceptions of the contribution of parental involvement in learner performance aiming at:

- Understanding the experiences of principals and teachers of rural school in terms of parental involvement
- Identifying the challenges experienced by rural school principals and teachers regarding parental involvement.
- Establishing the strategies that can be used by rural primary school principals and teachers to enhance parental involvement.

1.5. Research question(s)

Main research question

- How do principals and teachers at rural primary school perceive the contribution of parental involvement in learner performance?

Sub-questions

The following sub-questions formed a base when addressing the main research question.

- What are the expectations of principals and teachers in rural school in terms of parental involvement?
- What are the challenges experienced by principals and teachers in rural school regarding parental involvement?
- What strategies can be used by rural school principals and teachers to enhance parental involvement?

1.6. Significance of the study

Numerous studies have been conducted on parental involvement throughout the world. However, research on parental involvement in the context of rural schools is still limited. This knowledge is important because rural schools face challenges that are unique to their environment (du Plessis & Mestry, 2019). This study will therefore add to the limited study of parental involvement in rural schools by paying more attention on the challenges experienced by rural schools regarding parental involvement and how such challenges could be alleviated.

In attempting to improve parental involvement by uncovering the challenges experienced by schools and teachers, it is important to contextualise the problems and their solutions thereof (Paulynice, 2020). This study will therefore benefit rural school teachers by coming up with parental involvement strategies that will consider their rural context. Such strategies would help them improve the implementation of parental involvement in their schools thus effecting the academic performance of their learners.

School principals also need to be empowered with strategies considering the kinds of parents they are dealing with in the rural context. For example, Sumida and Kawata (2021) posit that parents of children in rural schools have a low level of education. As a result, these parents are unable to provide enough support to their children's learning. Also, even parents who serve in the school governing body have limited knowledge of how to govern a school (Du Plessis & Mestry, 2019). These are some of the contextual factors that principals of rural schools have to deal with. These principals are not prepared by the department of education to deal with such

challenges. This study will therefore help principals of rural schools by advising them with strategies of how to involve parents from rural areas in their children's education.

This study will also help parents in rural areas by coming up with strategies on how they could be involved in their children's education in order to enhance the academic performance of their children. As Lumadi (2019) opines, parents need knowledge in order for them to fulfil their roles in their children's schooling. Due to the lack of this knowledge, parents lack the understanding of their contribution to their children's education (Paulynice, 2020). Much of the available knowledge does not help parents in rural areas because it does not consider their contextual factors. This study will therefore assist by providing strategies on how parents can be involved as well as the roles they can play in their children's education, taking into consideration their background.

Departmental officials have also not done enough to improve parental involvement in rural areas. The department of education does not provide training to teachers that enable them to understand and address poverty in rural schools (Tost, Spires & In, 2019). This could be due to the fact that research on parental involvement has not paid much attention on rural schools and the challenges they face. This study stands to benefit policy makers in the department of education by uncovering challenges experienced by rural schools in the implementation of parental involvement. This study also attempts to provide solutions to those challenges. This would enable policy planners to make use of the strategies suggested in this study on how to improve parental involvement in rural schools.

1.7. Preliminary literature review

1.7.1 Introduction

In this section, I present preliminary literature on involving parents in schools, barriers of parental involvement in schools and overcoming barriers of parental involvement in schools.

1.7.2 Involving parents in schools

Avnet et al. (2020) argues that the level of parental involvement has a direct influence on learners' academic achievement. In other words, learners are more likely to exhibit

a high level of academic achievement when their parents are more involved in their education. Furthermore, parental involvement can improve a learner's academic performance by reducing behavioural issues that may have a negative impact on learning (Lumadi, 2019). Lusse, van Schooten, van Schie, Notten and Engbersen (2019) concur this idea by stating that a constructive partnership between the school and the family contribute positively to a learner's academic performance and reduces other educational shortcomings irrespective of the family's socio-economic circumstances. Since children respect their parents, they are more likely to behave themselves, be motivated and more active in their studies if their parents are involved (Mata et al., 2018). This can definitely improve learners' academic performance as it will make them focus on their studies. On the other hand, parents' poor involvement can have a negative impact on learners' academic performance.

Parental involvement can also reduce absenteeism as well as other behavioural problems (Erdener & Knoepfel, 2018). This can definitely have a positive impact on learners' academic performance. If learners attend school on regular basis, they are not going to miss out on lessons and other school activities. In this way, their academic performance is more likely to improve.

1.7.3 Barriers of parental involvement in schools

Schools have experienced a number of challenges regarding parental involvement. One of such challenges is that parents do not attend school meetings. This is caused by the fact that parents are unable to get time off at work in order to attend such meetings (Redford, Huo & McQuiggan, 2018). This challenge is echoed by the study conducted by Yulianti et al. (2019). One of the interviewed parents indicated that if she leaves the farm where she is working in order to attend a school meeting, she will not get a full wage. Another challenge experienced by the schools in relation to parental involvement is that parents from low educational background feel that they do not have a role to play in their children's education because they have no educational experience. Such parents are unable to even help their children with homework (Yulianti et al., 2019).

The negative attitude of parents is also cited as another barrier to parental involvement (Aslan, 2016). This idea is concurred by Anastasiou and Papagianni (2020) in their interview with teachers that, parents are not aware of the limits regarding their involvement, they become so involved that they end up interfering in teachers' work (Anastasiou & Papagianni, 2020).

Another barrier to parental involvement is poor communication between the school and parents. Redford, Huo and McQuiggan (2018) argue that parents often do not receive any kind of communication from the school which invites their participation. This challenge is concurred to by Liang, Peters, Lomidze and Akaba (2020) in an interview which was held with a female parent. During this interview the parent complained that there was no sufficient communication between the school and parents. She further suggested that the school should update parents on what is being done at school and what is expected of them to do when children get home. Drawn from this data, it is explicit that parents are eager to be involved in their children's education, but they do not know how they should be involved. Even those parents who are well educated feel that they are not given opportunities to be involved in their children's education (Yulianti et al., 2019). This suggests that there is a need for schools to have a programme on activities that will engage parents in their children's education and communicate this programme with parents in order to give them an opportunity to participate in their children's education.

Lusse (2019) opines that schools tend to pay attention to negative issues of learners' behaviour that required parental control and their encouragement to be involved in the affairs of the school. Based on the fact that parents would only be called to schools once there are disciplinary issues pertaining to their children's misbehaviour or their transgression regarding school rules gives a negative impression of parental involvement to both parents and learners. There is nothing wrong in calling parents when there are disciplinary issues involving their children, but this should not be deemed as the only way that can be followed to encourage parents' involvement in schools. Parents should always be involved in all the matters that require their attention and also participate in the exercises of encouraging and motivating their children to perform better and to achieve quality learning outcomes (Avnet et al., 2019). The attitude of teachers also poses a challenge to parental involvement. Some

teachers see no value of involving parents in school activities (Liu, Sulaimani & Henning, 2020). For this reason, they fail to design activities that would involve parents in children's education. This is a clear sign that there is also a need to train teachers on the importance of parental involvement in their schools.

1.7.4 Overcoming barriers of parental involvement in schools

Suggestions have also been made on strategies that may improve parental involvement. Paulynice (2020) suggests that schools should schedule parents' meetings to discuss academic concerns in order to improve learners' academic performance. This would keep parents informed about their children's progress as well as challenges they experience at school. However, it could be a challenge for those parents who are unable to attend school meetings because of work commitment.

Kalayci and Ergul (2020) suggest that schools can improve parental involvement by communicating with parents via phone calls, emails, newsletters and setting up websites in order to enable parents to follow their children's academic progress. This could also be a solution to those parents who are unable to attend school meetings. It could provide them with an opportunity to participate in their children's education. However, some of the suggested strategies could be challenging for parents with limited educational experience. For example, some parents have no knowledge of emails and websites. These parents would not be able to track their children's progress if they can only do so via website. Nevertheless, the parents can make use of phone calls as it is also been listed as a strategy. This can happen after school hours because teachers are not available to receive phone calls when they are teaching.

According to Shivraj, Geller, Basaraba, Geller, Hatfield, and Naslung-Hadley (2018) another strategy to improve parental involvement is to encourage parents to work directly with their children at home. Schools are therefore advised to design activities and programmes which parents can use to engage children in learning activities at home. For example, playing cards could improve learners' performance in maths (Shivraj et al. 2018). On the other hand, Kim and Barrett (2018) argue that helping learners with homework does not always produce positive outcomes. This argument is supported by Mata et al. (2018) where it is stated that assisting learners with

homework and attending school activities do not result to the improvement of academic performance.

However, whether parental involvement produces positive or negative outcomes depends on the type of involvement and its aim. Parental involvement might produce negative outcomes if it is aimed at controlling the learner's behaviour. On the other hand, it may produce positive outcomes if it is aimed at encouraging the child to be autonomous (Kim & Barret, 2018). In the case of assisting a learner with homework, it may produce negative outcomes if a parent tells the child what to write because the child will not learn anything. In contrast, it can produce positive outcomes if the parent acts as a facilitator, allows the child to do the homework and only intervenes where the child is having difficulties by explain how to, instead of solving the problem for the child. This, therefore, means that whether assisting children with homework produces positive or negative outcomes depends on how it is done Kim and Barret, 2018).

Ghanney (2018) suggests that the Department of Basic Education should provide adult basic education in order to enable parents to read and write. This will build their confidence and enable them to be more involved in their children's education (Ghanney, 2018). Parents will also be in a better position to assist their children with homework. Schools are also advised to organise workshops in order to empower parents to be involved in their children's academic lives (Lumadi, 2019). This might be helpful to those parents who are eager to be involved but are in the dark with regards to how they could be involved.

The Department of Basic Education is also advised to organise workshops for teachers on the importance of parental involvement. This might help change teachers' attitudes towards parental involvement (Liu, Sulaimani & Henning, 2020). This would empower teachers to design activities and programmes that would involve parents on their children's education. Based on the information provided, it is evident that parental involvement does enhance learners' academic performance. However, on both international and South African literature there is limited research on parental involvement in rural schools. Therefore, this became a gap identified in literature that informed the purpose of this study.

1.8. Theoretical framework

Epstein's Theory of parental involvement was developed by Joyce L. Epstein in 1995 in order to explain different types of parental involvement activities (Epstein, 1995). This theory was a framework that I used in this study to explain how parents can be involved in their children's education. There are six types of parental involvement activities that are designed to build relationships between families and schools (Coady, 2019). These activities of parental involvement are parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making and collaborating with the local school community. All these parental involvement activities were used as the lenses through which this study will be guided.

1.9. Research methodology

1.9.1 Research paradigm

The study adopted interpretive research paradigm to explore rural school principals and teachers' perceptions of the contribution of parental involvement in learner performance. (Creswell, 2014). The aim of adopting interpretivism's paradigm was to understand the world from the participant's point of view (Bonache & Festing, 2020). This implies that knowledge is constructed when an individual interacts with their society and the objective is to understand the manner in which the individual perceives the world they interact with (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016).

1.9.2 Research approach

Qualitative research approach was adopted to explore rural schools' principals and teachers' perceptions of the contribution of parental involvement in learner performance (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). Qualitative data is in the form of words rather than numbers (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014:343; Williams, 2007:67). Through qualitative approach adopted for the study, I excavated meaning that contributed to theory development by proceeding inductively (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2007:447). Qualitative research approach was the model the I used to discharge the burden of proof on the logical organisation to allow the researcher to feel that whatever has been done in this research reach a valid conclusion (Miller & Brewer, 2003:262). Through qualitative approach I was able to understand how principals and teachers in rural schools perceive the contribution of parental involvement in learners' performance.

1.9.3 Research design

This study adopted a case study research design. Through the use of a case study research design, I was able to explore school principals and teachers' perceptions of the contribution of parental involvement in learner performance (Creswell, 2007; McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). Using case study design, I was able to collect detailed and in-depth data from principals and teachers of different schools (Creswell, 2007).

Nevertheless, there has been criticism against the case study design. Gustafsson (2017) argue that a case study can be expensive and time consuming. However, for this study, it is not about the longevity of the research process but its' worth to improve the practice. Therefore, I believed that through proper planning prevention of unnecessary time constraints and unplanned costs, the process of data collection could be advanced without hassles.

1.9.4 Research site and sampling

Nduna et al. (2022) regard the research sites often seen as places out there, utilised by the researcher to collect data. Sampling is regarded by Omair (2017) the choice of a certain number of research sites and participants to collect data, which is claimed to represent the general population. In this study I adopted a purposive sampling to identify and select individuals who are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with the phenomenon of interest. (Guetterman, 2015; Palinkas, Saldana, Choup & chamberlain, 2017; Sebidi, 2019). Purposive sampling, is regarded as judgemental sampling and non-random sampling in which the researcher uses a wide range of methods to locate all possible cases of a highly specific and difficult-to-reach population (Neuman, 2014). The participants selected included those that might offer contrary evidence, especially given the need for testing revived and revitalised explanations (Yin, 2011). The sampling for this study was intended to include four primary schools located in Alfred Nzo East District in Bizana of the Eastern Cape province. However, the fourth primary school withdrew from participating for this study in the dying hours of data collection. Participants included primary school principals and teachers. The total number of participants was 9.

1.9.5 Data collection techniques

Data in qualitative research is collected through field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings and memos (Palinkas et al., 2017). Data was also collected on site where participants experience the matter that is being researched with an aim of understanding participants' own expressions and accounts. (Creswell, 2007). The study adopted the use of face-to-face semi-structured interviews as data collection strategy.

1.9.5.1 Face-to face semi-structured interviews

According to Interviews Thompkins, Sheard and Neale, (2008:18) regard interviews as the “gold standard” qualitative research method. However, Kvale (2006) refers to interviews as a meeting where a reporter obtains information from a person or a meeting with another person to achieve a specific goal. Research interviews were used to explore the views, experiences, beliefs and motivations of participants on their perceptions of the contribution of parental involvement in learner performance on specific (Gill, Stewart, Treasure & Chadwick, 2008). This study adopted face-to-face semi-structured interviews to collect data from the principals and teachers in rural primary schools using pre-arranged questions. This undertaking assisted when organising the interview, unlike the unstructured interview where there is no organisation and end up consuming a lot of time (Gill et.al. 2012).

1.10 Data analysis

Data analysis is simply the process of converting the gathered data to meaningful information (Taherdoost, 2020). When analysing data for this study, I adopted data analysis strategy advocated by Creswell (2014) to analyse data for the study on rural school principals and teachers' perceptions of the contribution of parental involvement in learner performance. This strategy included: organising and preparing for data analysis, reading through all the data, coding the data, interrelating themes, interpreting the meaning of themes and validating the accuracy of the information.

1.11 Ensuring trustworthiness and credibility of the study

To ensure trustworthiness of this study, I adopted the following trustworthiness strategies as proposed by Anney (2014); Cope, (2014) and Moon et al., 2016) which are credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Credibility refers to the manner in which the views of the participants as well as the interpretation and presentation of such views is truthful (Anney, 2014). Transferability refers to the manner in which the findings of a certain study can apply in other settings or with other participants (Moon et al., 2016). Transferability refers to the manner in which the findings of a certain study can apply in other settings or with other participants (Moon et al., 2016). Dependability refers to the documentation of research processes with the aim of enabling someone who is not part of the study to be able to critique research procedures (Moon et al., 2016). Moon et al., 2016) defines confirmability as the extent to which a researcher can prove that data does not represent biased views of the researcher but the responses of the participants (Cope, 2014).

1.12 Ethical considerations

Research studies involves human participant (Fleming & Zegwaard, 2018). Therefore, it is important for a researcher follow all the required protocols that guarantees the safety of participants (Pillay, 2014). When this study was conducted, I ensured that I observed ethical considerations such as applying for an ethical clearance from the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria, requesting permission to conduct a research from the earmarked institutions to gain access, get informed consent from the participants, ensuring anonymity and confidentiality and explaining their rights to withdraw from the study ((Fleming & Zegwaard, 2018; Greaney et al., 2012).

1.13 Limitations of the study

The conclusions made were based on the information provided by a small sample of participants. This information might not give the researcher all the problems experienced by rural schools in terms of parental involvement. The conclusions and suggestions made by the researcher may not address all the issues faced by rural schools in the involvement of parents in their schools. However, the information given

by the small sample may give an idea of the problems faced by rural schools regarding parental involvement. Suggestions made could therefore be of benefit not only to the participants but to a larger population facing similar problems to those mentioned by the participants.

Another limitation to this study was that interpretations would be made on the perceptions of the participants only, not on facts. This means that I may get different responses if the same interviews were to be conducted with a different group of teachers. However, because the study focused on principals and teachers' perceptions, the responses given by the sampled participants do matter because they were based on their experiences.

The study was conducted with one cultural group. On the other hand, lack of parental involvement in rural schools may be influenced by cultural background. Conclusions of this study might be made based on the responses from one cultural setting. Even in such a case though, culture may not be the biggest contributor to lack of parental involvement in rural schools. However, other contributing factors investigated in this study might also be applicable in other cultures as well.

Lastly, this study was limited because participants were interviewed only once. Conclusions made were therefore based on this single interview. Interviewing participants more than once could have given me more information. Furthermore, my presence during the interviews might have had an impact on the information provided by the participants. Participants gave certain responses out of the awareness that the data information would be used for research purposes. Therefore, information provided might not have been a true reflection of their experiences and perceptions about parental involvement in their own settings.

1.14 Concepts clarification

1.14.1 Academic performance

Academic performance is the work that a person puts in in order to do well at school and can be measured through test scores (Paulynice, 2020).

1.14.2 Decentralisation

Decentralisation is a process of devolving some degrees of authority from the central government to the lower levels of administration and governance in order to give local tiers, more power in decision-making for service provision (Matete, 2022).

1.14.3 Learner

Learner refers to any person receiving education or obliged to receive education in terms of South African Act. (RSA, 1996b).

1.14.4 Parent

A parent is a guardian of a learner, the person entitled to the custody of a learners or a person who undertakes to fulfil the obligations of a guardian or a person holding full custody of a learner (RSA, 1996b). This implies that a parent can mean any legal caregiver responsible for caring for, and supporting, a learner.

1.14.5 Parental involvement

Parental involvement refers to the actions and behaviours shown by parents and guardians both at school and at home that are meant to facilitate the academic development of the child (Ray & Giraldo-Garcia, 2018).

1.14.6 Principal

“Principal is like a captain on a ship, he is the controller and determinant of where the ship will go and dock. The principal is the controller and determinant of what goals will be achieved and where the direction of the school he leads will move (Muspawi, 2020:164).

1.14.7 Rural school

The term rural school is vague to explain. However, in the context of this study it refers to schools that are located in remote areas that do not have access to basic resources and services.

1.14.8 School governing body (SGB)

School governing body is a parents’ structure that is responsible for school governance in term of section 16(1) of the South African schools Act (RSA, 1996b).

1.14.9 Teacher

A teacher is a person who delivers an educational program, assesses student participation in an educational program, administers or provides consistent and substantial leadership to an educational program (Lal, 2016:9).

1.15 Breakdown of chapters

The study is demarcated into five chapters which are outlined below.

Chapter 1

In this chapter, I introduce the study and provide the background regarding rural schools' principals and teachers' perceptions of the contribution of parental involvement in learner performance. I provide an international and national overview regarding the importance of parental involvement in schools. It is in this chapter that I discuss the problem statement, rationale the purpose and aims of the study, the rationale, significance of the study, the main research question and secondary research questions and the limitations of the study. I conclude by summarising the contents of the chapter.

Chapter 2

In chapter 2, I present literature review. I address the importance of parental involvement on learner performance, the forms of parental involvement that enhance learners' academic performance, the challenges of parental involvement in schools, strategies schools use to overcome challenges of parental involvement as revealed by scholars and academics globally. I also concentrate on the hypothetical backgrounds the lenses through which I adopted to guide, unfold and locate philosophies regarding the contribution of parental involvement in learner performance. Conclusion of the chapter is provided at the end of the chapter.

Chapter 3

In this chapter I pronounce the research methodology used in this study to collect data from the participants as well as the data collection strategies that were used to collect data. I also locate the research site and sampling, explain how the participants were selected, reasons for the choice of a particular method(s), trustworthiness and ethical

considerations of the study including letters of informed consent to the participants. I also provide a conclusion of the chapter.

Chapter 4

In chapter 4, I present, explain and analyse data collected following procedures that were used during face-to-face semi-structured interviews. Reports generated using different data collection tools from the primary school principals and teachers regarding their perceptions of the contribution of parental involvement in learner performance is outlined. The detailed description and analysis of each participant, group of participants is presented in the search for an in-depth understanding of the research question. A conclusion of the chapter is provided at the end of the chapter.

Chapter 5

In chapter 5, I summarise, draw conclusions, and provide recommendations for future studies in this area of research interest and provide concluding remarks for the chapter. A conclusion of the chapter is also be provided in this chapter.

1.16 Conclusion

Parental involvement has been a topical issue in many studies undertaken by scholars internationally and nationally. Parental involvement has been declared as having a direct influence to learners' achievement in schools because partnership between the school and the family contribute positively learner's academic performance and reduces other educational shortcomings irrespective of the family's socio-economic circumstances. Therefore, is pivotal for parents to network among themselves in order to assist parents with low educational background to understand and know how they can be involved in the children's education. This exercise should be spearheaded by the department of education since parents cannot do it on their own.

One of the alarming challenges experienced by parents in the quest for involvement in schools is their communication with the school. This suggests that schools should come up with a workable solution to the problem by coming up with the mechanisms that will grant parents an opportunity to participate in school affairs in order to avert situations of conflicts. However, some of the teachers devalue parents' involvement in schools due to confrontational situation they create in schools. Nevertheless, it is

pivotal to design training programmes that will encourage the involvement of parents in schools in order to guide and motivate them about their involvement in schools

In this chapter, I introduced the study and provided the background regarding rural schools' principals and teachers' perceptions of the contribution of parental involvement in learner performance. I provided an international and national overview regarding the importance of parental involvement in schools. It is in this chapter that I discussed the problem statement, rationale the purpose and aims of the study, the rationale, significance of the study, the main research question and secondary research questions and the limitations of the study

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore rural school principals and teachers' perceptions of the contribution of parental involvement in learner performance. In the previous chapter, I introduced the study and provided the background regarding rural schools' principals and teachers' perceptions of the contribution of parental involvement in learner performance. I provided an international and national overview regarding the importance of parental involvement in schools. In this chapter I also discussed the problem statement, rationale the purpose and aims of the study, the rationale, significance of the study, the main research question and secondary research questions and the limitations of the study. I concluded by summarising the contents of the chapter.

In this chapter, I examine literature that encompasses understanding of what other researchers have written about one's own area of research interest, gathering data to support or contest one's argument and writing about own discoveries (Sebidi, 2008). Literature review provides the understanding that a theory is a generalised statement of abstractions or ideas that asserts, explains or predicts relationships or connections between or among phenomena, within the limits of critical bounding assumptions that the theory explicitly makes (Kivunja, 2018). In relation to these submissions, literature review for the study was conducted to offer a theoretical background for the study, learning the breadth of research on a topic of interest; or answering practical questions by understanding what existing research has to say on the matter (Okoli & Schabram, 2010).

With literature review for this study I discuss four themes on parental involvement. The first theme focuses on the importance of parental involvement on learner performance. The second theme informs us about the forms of parental involvement that improve learners' academic performance. Challenges of parental involvement in schools will be examined in the third theme. In the last theme, I discuss the strategies that the schools use to overcome the challenge of parental involvement as revealed

by scholars and academics globally. I also concentrate on the hypothetical backgrounds the lenses through which I adopted to guide, unfold and locate philosophies regarding the contribution of parental involvement in learner performance. Conclusion of the chapter is provided at the end of the chapter.

2.2. Importance of parental involvement in learner performance

Parental involvement can be defined as actions that are performed by parents in partnership with teachers and other staff members with the aim of enhancing school achievement. (Kalayci & Ergul, 2020). According to Erol and Turhan (2018) parental involvement is important for the overall improvement of the quality of education. This means that collaboration between the school and the home does not only improve the child but the education system as a whole (Đurišić, & Bunijevac, 2017). According to Gulcan and Duran (2018) parental engagement includes parents' participation in the decision making of the school. The input brought by parents could therefore play a crucial role in the improvement of the education system as a whole (Epstein, 2018). Parents are knowledgeable in factors which may not be known by teachers and other school personnel. Such factors include children's background, socio-economic factors of parents as well as the culture of the area where the school is located (Đurišić, & Bunijevac, 2017).

Parental engagement also enhances children's attitude towards school (Anastasiou & Papagianni, 2020). Children whose parents are engaged in their education are likely to have a positive attitude towards education. According to Arce (2019) these children are less likely to display disruptive behaviours in the classroom. In a study conducted by Anastasiou and Papagianni (2020) teachers revealed that children with parents who are engaged in their education are known for displaying good classroom behaviour. These learners are also more likely to do well in their studies since they portray a commendable behaviour in class.

According to Avnet et al. (2019) teachers believe that parental involvement also improves school attendance in learners. Children whose parents are engaged in their education cannot absent themselves from school without a valid reason. Also, when there is collaboration between parents and the school, parents are able to call the school and report if the learner is going to be absent at school. Teachers are also able

to call the parent and enquire about the learner's whereabouts if the learner is absent without being reported. For this reason, learners cannot take chances and absent themselves from school. This benefit of parental involvement has also been echoed by Arce (2019) who stated that parental involvement results to a decrease in absenteeism. Absenteeism which is a huge challenge particularly in rural schools can therefore be curbed by establishing effective communication between the school and the home. Parental involvement thus reduces absenteeism as well as other behavioural problems (Erdener & Knoeppel, 2018). This can definitely have a positive impact on learners' academic performance. If learners attend school on regular basis, they are not going to miss out on lessons and other school activities. In this way, their academic performance is more likely to improve.

The engagement of parents in their children's education also results to the reduction of school dropout rate (Anastasiou & Papagianni, 2020). Since children are motivated to go to school when their parents are engaged in their studies, they are less likely to underperform at school (Paccaud et al., 2021). Children sometimes drop out of school because they face challenges that need both the school and the home to solve (Chikhungu et al., 2020). When there is no collaboration between the school and the home, such challenges may remain unresolved and children may end up dropping out of school (Paccaud et al., 2021). On the other hand, when parents and teachers work together, they can solve whatever problem the learner may be encountering (Hampden-Thompson & Galindo, 2017).

In a study conducted by Anastasiou and Papagianni (2020) one of the school principals revealed that when parents are engaged in their children's schooling, the school benefits as parents would support the mission and vision of the school. Once parents are involved in their children's schooling, teachers can have a better understanding of learners and in turn, parents can understand teachers and their children's academic lives (Liu, et al., 2020). For teachers to be able to get the best out of the learners, they need to understand learners' cultural and socio-economic backgrounds (Darling-Hammond, 2020). This will enable teachers to take these into consideration when interacting with learners. Also, cooperation between teachers and parents will enable parents to understand teachers better (Paccaud et al., 2021).

Parental involvement is also important for remote learning in times of the covid-19 pandemic (Lawrence & Fakuade, 2021). Across the globe, contact learning was suspended when the pandemic broke out early in 2020. In order to save the 2020 academic year, a number of countries resorted to remote learning. This kind of learning needed the intervention of parents especially on young children who were unable to access online lessons on their own. Parents had to provide smart phones or laptops with data and help learners to access online classes. In some cases, these remote classes were conducted on television and parents had to download and save the time table for these classes and remind their children to tune in to the relevant television channel for lesson when it is time.

Another benefit to parental involvement is that it reduces the achievement gap amongst learners (Ekinci-Vural & Dogan-Altun, 2021). Learners in the same class can achieve at different levels and there can be a huge achievement gap amongst them despite being in the same class and being taught by the same person under the same conditions (Antony-Newman, 2019). This may happen because some learners, especially those who are not performing to the required standards experience challenges at home that have a negative impact on their school performance (Khan et al., 2019). When parents are involved in their children's education, teachers can easily contact parents of those learners who are not doing well in their studies, identify the cause of their underperformance and look for the solution together with the involved learners (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017). This may result to the decrease of the achievement gap and those learners who have been underperforming can definitely improve on their academic performance.

Learners motivation to learn may be enhanced by parental involvement (Singh, 2020; Newman et al., 2019; Ekinci-Vural & Dogan-Altun, 2021). When parents are involved in their children's education and talk about schooling with their children, children become motivated to wake up and go to school and do well in their studies because they want to impress their parents. According to Singh (2020) this can also lead to high educational aspirations. Parents would push their children to perform to the best of their ability. Learners on the other hand would be motivated to perform well because they want to impress their parents.

Parental involvement may also lead to endurance and love for school (Paulynice, 2020). Children with parents who are involved in their education are more likely to stay longer at school than those with parents that are not involved in their education. According to Paulynice (2020) there is also a high possibility of these children finishing school. Since children trust their parents as their first and most important teachers, they are more likely to value their education if it is supported at home. These children are also likely to place a huge value on education even when they are grown-ups because they grew up under the teachings that education is vital. This was echoed in a study by Arce (2019) which revealed that most teachers who studied beyond the junior degree are people who were raised by parents who valued education. They therefore viewed education as more than a key to a better life but as a self-enriching activity as well.

According to Liu et al. (2020) parental involvement also leads to mutual respect and understanding between teachers and parents. When teachers and parents work together, they develop a sense of understanding and respect for each other. This can also prevent conflict between teachers and parents which are caused by misconceptions and misunderstanding between them (Paulynice, 2020). When there is collaboration between teachers and parents, they are likely to quickly solve whatever conflict that may arise between them because they understand each other and they have respect for one another.

Learners may benefit from parental involvement because they learn character traits such as respect for others, ability to communicate and make friends, listening skills as well as honesty (Erdener & Knoepfel, 2018). According to Bandura (1977) children sometimes learn through observation. Therefore, they may learn these character traits by observing the interaction that takes place between teachers and parents. According to Cheng and Chen (2018) parents are children's first teachers. Children also spend most of their time at school where they interact with teachers. For this reason, the interaction between teachers and parents is very crucial for children's development as teachers and parents are the most important people in their lives which they grow up looking up to. Learners' personalities can therefore be shaped by teachers and parents and their interaction is important in this regard.

A number of authors agree that parental involvement results to the improvement of academic performance in learners (Anastasiou & Papagianni, 2020; Gulcan & Duran, 2018; Avnet et al., 2019; Newman et al., 2019; Liu et al., 2020). A study conducted by Gulcan and Duran (2018) revealed that parental engagement has a direct influence on children's academic performance. In this study, children whose parents were recruited for involvement in their children's education as part of the study showed an improvement in their academic performance than those children whose parents were not invited for involvement in their children's schooling. However, this study does not give clarity on what kind of involvement led to the improvement of learners' academic performance. One of the teachers who participated in a study by Arce (2019) was also in agreement that parental involvement contributes to the improvement of children's academic achievement. The teacher revealed that there was a significant difference between learners whose parents are engaged in their schooling and those whose parents are not involved in their education. This reiterates the significance of parental involvement in enhancing learners' academic performance.

Avnet et al. (2020) adds that the level of parental involvement has a direct influence on learners' academic achievement. In other words, learners are more likely to exhibit a high level of academic achievement when their parents are more involved in their education. Furthermore, parental involvement can improve a learner's academic performance by reducing behavioural issues that may have a negative impact on learning (Lumadi, 2019). Lusse, van Schooten, van Schie, Notten and Engbersen (2019) concur this idea by stating that a constructive partnership between the school and the family contribute positively to a learner's academic performance and reduces other educational shortcomings irrespective of the family's socio-economic circumstances. Since children respect their parents, they are more likely to behave themselves, be motivated and more active in their studies if their parents are involved (Mata et al., 2018). This can definitely improve learners' academic performance as it will make them focus on their studies. On the other hand, parents' low involvement can have a negative impact towards learners' academic performance.

2.3. Forms of parental involvement to improve learners' academic performance

One of the basic activities that parents should be engaged in is to choose which school their children should go to (Gulcan & Duran, 2018). This may seem to be an easy task but parents have to consider a number of factors before they could make their choice. For example, they should consider the overall performance of the school because it reflects the level at which teaching and learning is taking place in the school. Schools that have been performing poorly year after year are viewed as schools where effective teaching and learning is not taking place for whatever reasons. On the other hand, high level of performance means there is effective teaching and learning taking place in that particular school.

After selecting the school for their children, parents should then provide their children with all their school needs. These include buying their children school uniform (Basil & Ndjuyé, 2019). According to Arce (2019) when children wear uniform and be smart, they go to school happy, prepared and feel valued. In addition to buying uniform, parents should also provide learning material to their children (Anastasiou & Papagianni, 2020). Basil and Ndjuyé (2019) add that these learning materials include pens and pencils, text or supplementary books, slates, counting devices, cards for letters and numbers as well as crayons. These materials may be used at home and can prepare the child for school. Facilities for sports and games have also been mentioned by Basil and Ndjuyé (2019) as other school related materials that parents should buy for their children. It has been claimed that children's participation in sports and games enhance the development of their fine and gross motor skills. It also increases their ability to socialise and make them feel part of a huge community.

Different scholars have also suggested other forms of parental involvement that may contribute to learners' academic achievement (Avnet et al., 2019; Lusse, 2019; Aykac & Msengi, 2019; Yulianti et al., 2019). One such activity is the networking among parents in order to help those who live in disadvantaged neighbourhoods and those with low educational background (Avnet et al., 2019). This activity may help those parents who do not know how to be involved in their children's education. They can learn more from knowledgeable and educated parents. However, this activity needs to be facilitated, either by schools or by the Department of Basic Education because

it would be difficult for parents to form communication networks on their own without anyone facilitating it.

Home visits have been identified as one of the forms of parental involvement by various scholars (Gulcan & Duran, 2018; Wright, Shields, Black & Waxman, 2018; Aykac & Msengi, 2019; Lusse, 2019). According to Aykac and Msengi (2019) the purpose of this activity is for the teachers to communicate what the school expects from parents and for parents to give feedback to teachers regarding their children's education. Since there is an outcry from teachers and school principals that parents do not attend meetings at school, home visits may be a solution in this regard. In a study conducted by Aykac and Msengi (2019) 70% of the principals who were interviewed support home visits. The participants revealed that home visits are a direct form of communicating with parents in an unofficial setting. In the same study a school principal claimed that he even gave incentives to the few teachers who conducted home visits in order to encourage others to take part in the activity. This was because this principal believed that home visits are the best way of communicating with parents. As a result, the number of teachers who took part in this activity increased.

Wright et al. (2018) alluded to the benefits of home visits. They believe that home visits build a good relationship between the teacher, the parent and the learner. They further added that home visits prepare other learners for a classroom and contribute to learners' academic achievement. However, there is no clarity on whether teachers visit homes for all children or they visit homes of those children they see a need to talk to their parents. For schools with an enrolment of 1000 learners or more, home visits may not be a possibility if teachers have to make time to meet parents of all these children separately. Also, home visits involve a sacrifice on the side of teachers since it is conducted after school hours or during weekends. Also, teachers may demand to be compensated for using their own time for a work-related activity. Others may even be reluctant to conduct home visits during their own time. The issue of transport costs for these home visits is another controversial matter. Teachers may demand reimbursement from the school if they use their own transport to conduct these home visits. This activity thus needs to be properly planned and agreed upon by all the involved parties for it to be carried out successfully.

Another form of parental involvement that parents can be engaged in is monitoring school work at home (Sahin, 2019). For every activity that learners do at school, be it writing notes, class works or tests, they take them home. Parents can monitor these activities to see how their children are performing at school. Sometimes parents check these activities to see if their children do go to school and attend classes as they leave home for school in the morning. According to Yulianti et al. (2019) parents can also help their children with homework in addition to monitoring their school work at home. Those parents with low educational level may seek assistance from others such as their children's older siblings or relatives since they may not understand the instructions and requirements of the homework (Yulianti et al., 2019). This activity should be one of the easiest to engage in as it requires interaction between parents and children when parents are free as they are sometimes held up at work and unable to participate in other activities (Redford et al., 2019).

Basil and Ndijuye (2019) declare that parents may also help their children at home by crafting a time table for them. Learners should have a clear guidance regarding what to do when they get home from school. This time table should consist of specific activities that the child is supposed to do before going to bed. These activities may include slots for homework, reading, free writing, etc. These activities should also be monitored by parents to ensure that they are completed. Parent networking which has been mentioned by Simweleba and Serpell (2020) may also be of help to those parents with low educational level. Since these parents may find it difficult to craft this time table, they may seek help from other parents who have children in the same grade as theirs. Parents with high educational experience may also help those who are uneducated in terms of giving them guidance on how to monitor these activities.

Kurt and Tas (2018) believe that parents play a very important role in motivating their children about the importance of school. Parents should there, fulfil this role in order to ensure that their children go to school motivated and with a purpose. Anastasiou and Papagianni (2020) have also added that when learners are highly motivated, they become more engaged in classroom activities. What is also noteworthy about this role is that it does not require a high level of education from parents. Parents need to know why they send their children to school. They can then communicate their motives to their children. When children are motivated to wake up and go to school daily, they

are more likely to do well in their studies and demonstrate a high level of cooperation with their teachers because they are inspired and know what they want to achieve when they wake up and go to school every day.

Parents may also be engaged at school by taking part in the school finances (Gulcan & Duran, 2018). This role is mostly associated with parents who have been elected to serve in the school governing body. The South African Schools Act 84 (1996a) states that the treasurer of the school governing body should be selected from the parent component. The treasurer is responsible for the signing of all cheques for the money that has to be withdrawn from the school's account. According to Gulcan and Duran (2018) parents may also take part in the school's budget. Schools normally hold annual general meetings towards the end of the year. In this meeting, the school's expenditure during the course of the year is discussed with parents. Parents can then ask clarity seeking questions on this expenditure or bring suggestions on how certain improvements can be made in the expenditure or make suggestions on how more funds may be raised in the form of donations.

Another tactic of enhancing parental involvement is the engagement of parents in the school's decision making (Aykac & Msengi, 2019; Sahin, 2019; Liu et al., 2020). Parents can take part in the school's decision making on issues such as employment of educators, and determining learning material and equipment including course books (Gulcan & Duran, 2018). The employment of educators is the responsibility of the school governing body. The chairperson of the school governing body is responsible for the signing of employment forms for educators (Employment of Educators Act, 1998). When the employment or promotion of an educator has to go through the process of interviews, the parent component of the school governing body is the majority (3 out of 5) in the panel that has to conduct the interviews. Parents' representation in the school governing body can also take part on decision making in issues such as the determination of school uniform and choosing elective subjects for their children (Gulcan & Duran, 2018). The choice of elective subjects can be done by each parent on behalf of the child, not by the school governing body.

Parents can also take part in their children's education by taking part in the identification and implementation of social activities (Gulcan & Duran, 2018; Redford

et al., 2019; Anastasiou & Papagianni, 2020; Bromley & Yazdanpanah, 2021). When the school wants to decide on the extra-curricular activities they want to implement, they may invite parents for their input. Parents know the activities that are of interest to their children better than teachers. Parents are also more likely to support their children on extra-curricular activities which they took part in their selection. According to Anastasiou and Papagianni (2020) these activities consist of sport and social activities. Parents take part in these activities by watching and supporting their children who take part in these activities (Bromley & Yazdanpanah, 2021).

Parents may also take part in designing the school curriculum as a way of being engaged in their children's schooling (Gulcan & Duran, 2018). It is not clear whether all parents who have children in that particular school should all take part in designing that school's curriculum or it should be done by the parent representation in the form of the school governing body. What is certain is that this task needs parents with high education level and skills of their own. The study conducted by Gulcan and Duran (2018) revealed that the curriculum that was designed with the involvement of parents was found to be more successful by the review committee. This could be due to the fact that parents are knowledgeable in cultural and socio-economic background of their children. They are then able to incorporate such things in the curriculum that is to be learned by their children. It may be easy for learners to understand this curriculum since it incorporates what learners learn from home and what they learn at school.

Schools may also involve parents in the schooling of their children by creating websites (Aykac & Msengi, 2019). Schools can then post updates on these websites for parents to login and view them. This activity would be of help to those parents who are unable to attend school meetings or school activities due to work commitment. School websites will enable them to view updates posted by the school whenever they get time. Schools may post the update on learners' academic performance per quarter and parents can view their children's performance without having to go to school as they complain that they do not have time to go to school.

Parents can also take part in parent-teacher conferences (Redford et al., 2019). In these conferences' teachers invite parents to school individually and discuss issues

that relate to their children's education (Gulcan & Duran, 2018). These meetings can be called on weekly or monthly basis (Liu et al., 2020). This activity may help towards building a solid partnership between parents and teachers as it involves face to face meetings between the two stakeholders. However, in a study conducted by Ekinci-Vural and Dogan-Altun (2021) teachers complained that parent-teacher conferences are time-consuming and the attendance of parents is always poor due to work commitment of parents. These parent-teacher conferences may also consume time that is supposed to be used for teaching and learning. For this reason, parent-teacher conferences need to be planned by all the stakeholders involved in order to ensure that they are carried out successful and do not interrupt teaching and learning.

Teachers may also be invited to school meetings on monthly basis (Anastasiou & Papagianni, 2020). In such meetings, parents may be updated about the overall functioning of the school. They may also have their input on how they wish the school to operate. According to Anastasiou and Papagianni (2020) parents may also be given updates on their children's academic performance in these meetings. However, this activity has received complaints from both teachers and parents. Teachers complain that the attendance of parents in such meetings is very poor (Redford et al., 2019). On the other hand, parents also complained that they do not get time off at work to attend school meetings (Aykac & Msengi, 2019). This activity has therefore been deemed a failure by both teachers and parents. However, both parents and teachers may have a discussion and reach a consensus on how this activity may be conducted successfully, taking in to consideration all the complains levelled against school meetings

According to Gulcan and Duran (2018) parents may also be involved in security issues and learner discipline. This role is specifically assigned to the school governing body which consists of parents with children that are enrolled in that particular school. According to the South African Schools Act 84 (1996) in consultation with the learners, parents and educators of a school, the governing body of a public school must adopt a code of conduct for the learners. The act further states that the code of conduct's aim must be to establish a disciplined and purposeful school environment. This is an indication that parents in the form of the school governing body are fully engaged in issues that pertain to the discipline of learners.

Ekinci-Vural and Dogan-Altun (2021) suggest that teachers may involve parents by sending bulletins and brochures to parents. This activity does not require the physical presence of parents at school. Parents may then use their free time to view these communications. Teachers state that they prefer the written format of communicating with parents instead of face to face meetings because parents do not attend face to face meetings and these faces to face meetings are time consuming (Ekinci-Vural & Dogan-Altun, 2021). However, this activity may not build good relations between teachers and parents because parents and teachers may not know each other facially since it does not involve face to face meetings. Teachers and parents will be strangers to one another if this is the only activity used by schools to communicate with parents.

Parents from low educational background can also be involved in their learners' education by encouraging their children, and showing confidence and interest in their educational experiences (Lusse, 2019). This could motivate the child to do better as parents also communicate aspirations with their children (Avnet et al., 2019). Yulianti et al. (2019) adds that this activity is mostly done during a dinner meal or during breakfast when the child is preparing to go to school. The significance of this activity is that it stimulates learners to work hard in their studies because they do not want to disappoint their parents who have high expectations on them. This is also one of the simple activities because it only requires a short period of time where a parent will communicate with the child while having a meal.

Promoting reading habits is another activity which is believed to be related to academic achievement (Yulianti et al., 2019). This activity could also depend on socio-cultural backgrounds of parents. For instance, Muslim parents engage their children in the activity of reading the Quran (Yulianti et al., 2019). Reading as one of skills that children are expected to acquire at school, practicing it at home can definitely improve their academic performance regardless of the type of text they are asked to read at home.

In addition to leaners practicing reading at home, Al-Fadley, Al-Holy and Al-Adwani (2018) have cited peer reading as another activity that parents may take part in. It is suggested that parents should read to their children at home from a very young age. There is no clarity on the type of genre that parents are advised to read to their

children. It is also well known that some parents cannot read and write. This activity may therefore pose a challenge to such parents. Nevertheless, older siblings or neighbours may also assist in this regard by reading for those children whose parents are unable to read. Al-Fadley et al. (2018) have postulated that children who were read to from a young age demonstrated interest in reading. This interest in reading may include reading for fun or reading for academic purposes. Due to the significance of this activity, parents should try by all means to ensure that their children are read to as often as possible from a young age.

According to Redford et al. (2019) parents may also play a role in their children's schooling by volunteering to participate in classroom activities. Teachers should therefore design classroom activities that will require the involvement of parents. However, there is no clarity on the kind of activities which would involve the participation of parents. This activity may also be problematic as parents are mostly not available to be at school. Due to work commitment, parents are unable to participate in their children's education, particularly in activities that require the physical presence of parents at school (Shu, 2019).

Some school principals claim that they have an open-door policy (Aykac & Msengi, 2019). They do not approach parents for their involvement or design school activities that would require the engagement of parents. Instead they expect parents to approach the school for any kind of assistance they may need. One of the school principals who took part in a study by Aykac and Msengi (2019) stated that he always avails himself to parents when they need help because he wants to keep them happy as clients. This kind of involvement is very passive as it shows that the school does not have a programme or activities planned for the involvement of parents. Also, parents may be reluctant to go to school when they are not invited as they would not know whether they are welcome to school. It is highly unlikely that parents would simply go to school without any communication.

From the forms of parental involvement that have been discussed above, it is worth noting that nothing has been said about collaboration with the community. According to the theory of parental involvement by Epstein (1995), collaboration with the community has been listed as one of the types of parental involvement. However,

from the reviewed literature, this type of involvement seemed to be lacking. A study conducted by Sahin (2019) shows that no collaboration with the community organisation took place in the schools where the study was conducted. Collaboration that took place was only between schools and parents. No explanation was given for the school's failure to collaborate with community organisation. In the context of rural schools, it should be noted that community organisations that schools may work with may not be available.

Parents become responsible for their children's schooling from the moment their children enter and register at school (Kiral, 2019). This responsibility continues throughout the child's school years. Parents should stop thinking that their responsibility only ends in registering their children at school and paying their school fees and other materials needed at school. They should know that it is important for them to monitor and support their children's education at home and communicate with teachers in order to get updates on their children's progress as this contributes positively to their children's academic performance.

Kiral (2019) also postulates that learning is not a school agenda. Parents should be made aware of this. They should know that their involvement in their children's education is key to the development of their children. The various activities of parental involvement discussed above give parents different options to be engaged in their children's schooling irrespective of their work commitment, language barrier, socio-economic and educational background. Parents should select the activities that are convenient for them and be part of their children's academic development. School principals as well as teachers should also use these suggested activities to invite parents for their participation in school activities for the development of their children and the education system at large. Milstead, Walters and Poats (2018) have added that school principals play a very key role in the implementation of parental involvement. For this reason, school principals should take the initiative to invite parents for their engagement in children's schooling.

2.4. Challenges of parental involvement in schools

Schools have experienced a number of challenges regarding parental involvement. One of such challenges is the use of autocratic leadership style by school principals

(Erol & Turhan, 2018). Principals who use this leadership style are not open to power sharing. Instead they want to make all the decisions regarding the governance of the school. A study conducted by Gulcan and Duran (2018) revealed that school principals are of the opinion that parents should not be involved in matters that are directly related to the management of the school. This is despite the fact that parental involvement in the decision making of the school is supported by policy documents in various countries. In this same study, some school principals do not think that the involvement of parents in school-related matters can make a significant contribution to education. Such opinions and beliefs are a huge hindrance to the implementation of parental involvement because school principals who hold such belief are less likely to establish collaboration with parents. Yet, school principals are major role players in the implementation of parental involvement since they have almost full control of what is happening at school.

The attitude of teachers is believed to be another barrier to parental involvement (Gulcan & Duran, 2018; Liu, et al., 2020). Some teachers see no value of involving parents in school activities (Liu et al., 2020). In a study conducted by Arce (2019) one of the teachers who participated stated that it is not her responsibility to make parents care about their children's education, instead it has to come from parents themselves. According to Anastasiou and Papagianni (2020) some teachers and school principals hold the opinion that the involvement of parents in school related matters undermine the teaching profession. Such attitudes are a clear illustration that some teachers make no effort to establish partnerships with parents since they do not believe that parents should be engaged in their children's education.

Some teachers are aware of the importance of involving parents in their children's education. However, some of those teachers believe that establishing partnerships with parents does not form part of their job description (Bromley & Yazdanpanah, 2021). This belief stem from the fact that there is no clear policy on what roles teachers are supposed to play in establishing partnerships with parents. This may lead to the conclusion that some schools do not take parental involvement seriously since they are doing nothing to establish collaboration with families (Shu, 2019). Policy makers should therefore give clarity on the role of teachers in the implementation of parental involvement.

According to Erol and Turhan (2018) school administrators do not take the initiative to ensure that parents are involved although they consider parental involvement to be a necessity. This challenge could be caused by the fact that there are no clear activities that schools should use in order to involve parents at school. Even teachers only give homework to children and nothing else because there is a lack of other documented examples of activities that can be used to engage parents in their children's schooling.

Lack of communication between the school and the home has been identified as another obstacle to parental involvement by Gulcan and Duran (2018). In a study conducted by Redford et al. (2019) some parents complained that there is no communication between them and schools. In this study, parents state that they do not know where to start even when they are interested in being engaged in their children's education. This challenge is concurred to by Liang, Peters, Lomidze and Akaba (2020) in an interview which was held with a female parent. During this interview the parent complained that there was no sufficient communication between the school and parents. She further suggested that the school should update parents on what is being done at school and what is expected of them to do when children get home. Drawn from this data, it is explicit that parents are eager to be involved in their children's education, but they do not know how they should be involved. Even those parents who are well educated feel that they are not given opportunities to be involved in their children's education (Yulianti et al., 2019). This suggests that there is a need for schools to have a programme of activities that will engage parents in their children's education and communicate this programme with parents in order to give them an opportunity to participate in their children's education. Shu (2019) postulates that even in cases where schools do communicate with parents, they do not use multiple communication channels. As a result, they are unable to reach out to all parents due to the use of limited communication methods.

Language barrier is another challenge to parental involvement linked to communication (Aykac & Msengi, 2019). Paulynice (2020) posits that some teachers do not speak the language that is spoken in the area where their school is located. English is therefore the only language they can use to communicate with parents. However, Al-Fadley et al. (2018) state that some parents are not educated and therefore could not read English despite the importance of English as the Lingua

Franca. In some cases, this happens to parents who are refugees and cannot speak the language that is spoken by the dominant group in the area (Bromley & Yazdanpanah, 2021). According to Arce (2019) this becomes a huge challenge as most schools do not have interpreters. As a result, communication between teachers and parents becomes a huge barrier.

Communication between teachers and parents becomes a challenge even when language is not an issue. According to Paulynice (2020) different social status between teachers and parents also pose a challenge to effective implementation of parental involvement. Parents feel intimidated by teachers who are of a different status from theirs. As a result, they find it difficult to form partnerships with them (Paulynice, 2020). According to Bromley and Yazdanpanah (2021) this difference in social status between teachers and parents can also cause misconceptions and misunderstanding between them. This may in turn result to a conflict that may hinder the involvement of parents in their children's education.

According to Gulcan and Duran (2018) some school principals view parental involvement as whistle blowing that reveals negative things that are happening at school. This means that parents are viewed as opponents who are involved in schools for the purpose of noting negative things taking place in the school. For this reason, some school principals do not want parents anywhere near the school as they view them as informers.

Parental involvement is sometimes seen as a cause of inconvenience in the functioning of the school (Gulcan & Duran, 2018). This is caused by the belief that other issues need experts to resolve and parents cannot be engaged in such issues. For example, some parents, particularly those with low educational experience cannot take part in issues such as subject choices of their children since they have no educational experience of their own. Even at the level of the school governing body, some parents are unable to take part in decision making of school governance despite the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 giving them the mandate to do so.

Parents' understanding of their parental involvement could also pose a challenge to their involvement. According to a study conducted by Erol and Turhan (2018) some parents understand their involvement as working with their children at home. These

parents see no need of building partnerships with schools and take part in school activities. This study has been echoed by Arce (2019) where parents revealed that their roles only occur at home and not at school. Parents who hold this belief may be the ones who are not responding to communication sent to them by teachers (Kalayci & Ergul, 2020). They do not even care to attend meetings at school even when they do have time to. This sentiment is echoed by Ekinici-Vural and Dogan-Altun (2021) who opine that some parents are reluctant to take part in their children's education as they believe that learning should take place at school and educating their children is the sole responsibility of the teachers. These parents may show no interest in helping their children with homework as they believe that school activities should only be done at school.

Another obstacle to parental involvement linked to parents' misunderstanding of their involvement is that parents do not know when their involvement can make positive or negative impact to their children's development (Polasek, 2021). Some parents become too involved that their involvement takes away their children's autonomy. Parents should therefore monitor the academic progress of their children and assist them only when necessary. They should guard against doing things for their children, instead they should allow their children to do things on their own and only intervene when children need help. For example, instead of doing homework for their children, parents should only monitor them and intervene only when they get stuck. In their interaction with teachers as well, parents should not make decisions on their children's behalf without consulting them first.

According to Shu (2019) parents are sometimes too busy to participate in their children's education. Due to work commitment, parents, especially those from low socio-economic class and low education level are too busy to participate in their children's education. On one hand, parents of high socio-economic status are likely to work flexible hours which can give them time to attend to their children's education and can easily transport themselves to school when they are invited (Gulcan & Duran, 2018). On the other hand, those of low socio-economic status are less likely to be involved due to inflexible working hours and are likely to have challenges with transport to school since they are not mobile (Gao & Xue, 2021).

Redford et al. (2019) have also mentioned inconvenient meeting schedules as another barrier to parental involvement. Parents meetings are not scheduled to accommodate working parents. As a result, parents are unable to attend meetings at school even when they want to since they are not given time-off at work to attend meetings at school (Newman, Northcutt, Former & Block, 2019). They only have time to drop their children to school in the morning, rush to work and come back to pick them up in the afternoon (Aykac & Msengi, 2019). This challenge is also echoed by the study conducted by Yulianti et al. (2019). One of the interviewed parents indicated that if she leaves the farm where she is working in order to attend a school meeting, she will not get a full wage. As a result, she has never attended a parents' meeting at school. In a study conducted by Aykac and Msengi (2019) some of the school principals who participated in the study revealed that they have tried to schedule meetings at different times in order to try and accommodate almost all the parents. However, this did not work as attendance remained poor. Alternatively, schools may use other forms of parental involvement as face to face meetings with parents do not seem to be effective.

According to Gulcan and Duran (2018) parental involvement also depends on parents' educational experience. Educated parents are more likely to be hands on in their children's education. Such parents are also likely to take the initiative themselves instead of waiting for the school to take the first step in involving them. On the other hand, parents with low educational experience are less likely to be involved. These parents are not even able to help their children with homework (Yulianti, Denessen & Droop, 2019). Other than helping with homework, some of these parents do not see themselves as valuable contributors to their children's education (Newman et al., 2019).

Teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards parental involvement are good determinants of the extent to which parental involvement takes place (Liu, Sulaimani & Henning, 2020). The belief that parental involvement is only about activities that take place at home is also held by teachers (Kalayci & Oz, 2018). Some teachers believe that parental involvement is only about parents assisting their children with homework and nothing more. Designing tasks that will require the assistance of parents is their only

responsibility regarding parental involvement. They do not believe that there should be any kind of communication or cooperation between them and parents.

Anastasiou and Papagianni (2020) opine that lack of teacher training on parental involvement is another barrier to parental involvement. The teaching qualification does not involve any module on parental involvement. In service training does not talk about parental involvement, yet teachers are expected to implement parental involvement once they become full-time employees without any policy document giving guidelines on how to go about involving parents in their children's schooling. As a result, teachers complain about the lack of activities that require the involvement of parents (Bartolome, et al., 2020). Additionally, Ekinici-Vural and Dogan-Altun (2021) postulate that teachers lack knowledge of how to plan activities that will involve parents. This is due to the fact that teachers are not trained and prepared for parental involvement. The department does not even organise single day workshops to train teachers on parental involvement.

Lusse (2019) opines that schools tend to pay attention to negative issues of learners' behaviour that require parental control. According to Aykac and Msengi (2019) due to lack of teacher training, teachers call parents to school only when negative behaviours manifest in the class room rather than calling them to discuss positive behaviours. For example, a learner would be asked to go home and bring a parent if there are disciplinary issues on the side of the learner. Sometimes a learner's parent would be called if the learner does not perform to the required standards. Based on the fact that parents would only be called to schools once there are disciplinary issues pertaining to their children's misbehaviour or their transgression regarding school rules gives a negative impression of parental involvement to both parents and learners (Anastasiou & Papagianni, 2020). There is nothing wrong in calling parents when there are disciplinary issues involving their children, but this should not be deemed as the only way that can be followed to encourage parents' involvement in schools. Parents should always be involved in all the matters that require their attention and also participate in the exercises of encouraging and motivating their children to perform better and to achieve quality learning outcomes (Avnet et al., 2019). Parents may have a negative attitude towards the school's invitation as they know that they are only invited to school when there is trouble.

Parents' limited knowledge on their involvement in their children's education and their roles thereof also hinder the implementation of parental involvement (Newman et al., 2019). This may be caused by the lack of training for parents on what parental involvement is, and what parents' roles are in relation to their involvement in school activities. Parents lack necessary skills and knowledge of how they could be involved in their children's education (Gulcan & Duran, 2018). As a result, parents are not clear on what their roles are pertaining to their engagement in school activities (Ekinci-Vural & Dogan-Altun, 2021). For this reason, some parents end up folding their arms and doing nothing to enhance their children's education because they do not know where to start.

Another issue that impedes the implementation of parental involvement is the unfriendly school climate which is unwelcoming to parents (Ekinci-Vural & Dogan-Altun, 2021). Some parents do make attempts to visit the schools and get updates regarding their children's academic performance. However, they do not feel welcome at school (Liu, et al., 2020). Parents are either made to wait for a very long period of time before they could be attended to, or the person who is attending to them does not portray a welcoming attitude towards them. Sometimes parents are not shown where to go when they enter the school gate. Parents who were interviewed by Paulynice (2020) have also complained about the school climate that is unwelcoming. This may be caused by the fact that such parents go to school on their own without an invite. When they get to school, no one is expecting them and no one knows who they are and what their purpose of being at school is. When this happens, parents may feel unwelcomed as they have not been accommodated in the programme of the school.

Family structures have also been cited as contributors to low parental involvement (Munje & Mncube, 2018). Some children live with grandparents who have not invested in their education. Most of these grandparents, especially those in rural areas are not educated and therefore, tend to put more value in farming rather than school because that is how they were raised. It is very difficult for such grandparents to take care of their children's educational needs. A school principal who participated in a study conducted by Munje and Mncube (2018) mentioned that extended family members such as grandparents cannot give love and support to children, something they can

only get from their biological parents. According to Thwala (2018) some learners live in child-headed households where they are taken care of by older siblings and survive on foster care grant. Basic needs such as food and safe shelter are sometimes a challenge to such households. It becomes even harder for these children's educational needs to be taken care of. Even in cases where uniform and other materials are bought using foster care grant and children are able to attend school, it is very difficult for the older siblings to be involved in other school related activities. They have to do all house chores and have no time to attend meetings at school or even monitor their younger siblings' school work at home.

Another barrier to parental involvement is the attitude of parents towards their involvement (Liu et al., 2020). Some parents think that being involved in their children's education means challenging the school staff, looking for negative things that are happening at school and making the jobs of teachers difficult. According to Gulcan and Duran (2018) some parents exert negative influence on school policy thus affecting the school climate negatively. Such attitudes could be the cause of the unwelcoming school climate that some parents complain about. Such a behaviour from parents may have given birth to the negative attitude that some teachers have towards parents.

A study conducted by Gulcan and Duran (2018) revealed that bad economic condition of parents is another stumbling block to parental involvement. Parents who struggle financially are more likely to exhaust their time trying to put food on the table rather than following up on their children's education since they have no permanent and well-paying jobs. According to Park and Holloway (2018) parents who live below the poverty line are less likely to be involved in their children's education. It is highly likely that these parents have no educational experience of their own. For this reason, they are less likely to be involved since they have no experience of what happens inside the school gates.

Teachers who participated in a study by Anastasiou and Papagianni (2020) complained of their work load as a barrier to parental involvement. Teachers, especially those who teach in rural schools have a duty load which is not flexible to allow time to focus on other issues such as parental involvement. For example, the

researcher was teaching twenty-four hours per week out of a total of twenty-seven and half with the smallest class having 47 learners and the biggest having 69 learners. The total number of learners he was teaching was 343 with only 3, 5 hours for free period in the whole week. In addition to teaching those learners he is expected to set formal and informal tasks, mark them and submit records of marks. For someone with a similar work load, it becomes difficult to focus on issues that are not directly related to teaching and learning such as parental involvement because of the pressure they work under.

Carelessness by parents has also been mentioned as another challenge to parental involvement (Paulynice, 2020). Some parents simply do not seem to care about their children's academic progress. Gulcan and Duran (2018) postulate that some parents hold the belief that educating the child is the sole responsibility of the school. Al-Fadley (2018) add that some parents simply do not care about the education of their children. They believe that their duty is only to pay the school fees where necessary, buy uniform and other resources that are needed by their children at school. As a result, they do not make time to at least get updates on their children's academic performance from school. Some parents do not even communicate with their children about school work and how they feel about school generally (Paulynice, 2020). They simply leave it to the teachers to do everything and expect their children to pass at the end of the year, having not cared to get updates on how they have been doing during the course of the year.

Arce (2019) has identified a conflict between teachers and parents as another challenging factor to parental involvement. According to Anastasiou and Papagianni (2020) this conflict is caused by contrasting views between teachers and parents regarding what parental involvement is and what role should each stakeholder play in the implementation of parental involvement. This is because the department of education in South Africa does not have a policy document which clearly defines parental involvement and stipulates the roles of teachers, parents and all other stakeholders involved in the implementation of parental involvement. This barrier has also been identified by Shu (2019) who has also highlighted that disagreements between teachers and parents are another cause of low parental involvement. As a

result of this conflict, teachers and parents fail to form the partnership which is needed for the implementation of parental involvement.

According to Appiah-Kubi and Amoako (2020) barriers to parental involvement are caused by the actions and inactions of the school. This means that the level of parental involvement that takes place in the school is determined by what schools do or fail to do. This means that the responsibility of ensuring effective parental involvement is placed on schools. Milstead et al. (2018) have also alluded to the significance of the roles played by school principals in the implementation of parental involvement. As accounting officers, school principals are responsible for everything that happens or fails to happen in the school, including parental involvement. Polasek (2021) opines that parents always look up to teachers to improve their children's education. As parents entrust teachers with their children's education, teachers should help parents with activities they may use with their children at home. Teachers should also take responsibility and the initiative for every collaboration that should take place between them and parents. Both school principals and teachers should take responsibility of the lack of parental involvement in their schools as it is caused by their inactivity.

2.5. Strategies principals and teachers can use to enhance parental involvement

One of the suggestions brought by Gulcan and Duran (2018) is that school principals should organise parents' meetings and involve parents in the school's decision making. In a study conducted by Redford et al. (2019) some parents complained that they received no communication from the school. The responsibility has therefore been placed on school principals to take the initiative and invite parents for participation in the school's decision making. School principals may also decide on the issues that may need the input of parents. In this way, parents would feel that they are part of their children's education. Also, parents would not be shocked when some issues are communicated to them as they would have been part of the meeting in which such decisions were decided.

2.5.1. Communication with parents

It has also been suggested by various scholars that schools must use various communication methods in order to reach out to parents (Gulcan & Duran, 2018; Shu,

2019; Arce, 2019; Kalayci & Oz, 2018; Aykac & Msengi, 2019; Liu et al., 2020). According to Shu (2019) schools must make use of available technologies such as websites in order to communicate with parents. According to Liu et al. (2020) schools must have websites and post updates in order to enable those busy parents to view these updates when they do get time and give feedback where necessary. Teachers must also make use of various communication methods such as phone calls, emails and sending newsletters (Kalayci & Oz, 2018).

Communication channels may also be devised by using text messages and social media posts to communicate with parents. Aykac and Msengi (2019) added that old methods such as parent envelopes and folder system may also be incorporated with the new methods in an attempt to reach out to parents. According to Arce (2019) communication amongst stakeholders must be improved by the school. This would prevent a situation where parents confront teachers when their children have not done well in their grades where parents would blame teachers for their children's failure. On the other hand, constant communication will keep parents updated on how their children are doing in their studies. In collaboration with parents, teachers may then devise means to help the child if he/she is not doing well in their studies.

MacPhee (2021) has also suggested that schools should reconsider their strict language policy that restrict communication between parents and the school to the school's language of instruction. Schools are advised to relax these policies for the sake of those parents who may not understand the language used by the school. For example, most South African schools use English as the language of teaching and learning. Some schools tend to use English when communicating with parents, forgetting that some parents cannot read English as Al-Fadley et al. (2018) cited. The suggestion made by MacPhee (2021) implies that schools must use the language spoken in the community when sending communication such as newsletters and messages to the parents. This will enable easy communication between the school and the home. School principals and teachers should also do away with code mixing in meetings with parents because this causes communication breakdown. Schools may also have a translator if necessary so as to ensure that parents understand what is being said to them. In this way, parents will not have difficulties in responding to communication sent to them by the school since they understand what is being said.

According to Gulcan and Duran (2018) schools must increase the family's awareness of their involvement. Parents should be made aware that their support for their children's education is a necessity. Parents should also be made aware of the significance of their involvement (Liu et al., 2020). Parents are more likely to be engaged in their children's education if they are aware that their involvement may contribute to the academic achievement of their children. Those parents who claim that they do not have time to participate in their children's schooling may devise means to be engaged even if they would not be physically present at school. Sujarwo, Kusumawardani, Prasetyo and Herwin (2021) add that parents should be made aware that the school alone cannot fulfil all the needs of the child. As a result, parents would know that their lack of involvement is hampering the development of their children. This awareness will drive them to be part of their children's academic lives.

Gulcan and Duran (2018) recommend that the roles of parents must be clarified. Basil and Ndijuye (2019) add that parental involvement should be a policy-based intervention. In other words, there should be a government policy which clearly stipulates what parental involvement is and what roles parents should play in their children's schooling. Schools may then develop their own policies which govern the involvement of parents which should be aligned with the departmental policy. School principals may then invite parents and inform them how they would want them to support their children's education. One of the issues raised by Arce (2019) as a challenge to parental involvement is that there are conflicting perceptions between teachers and parents regarding parental involvement. These conflicting perceptions are caused by the fact that there is no clarity on the roles of parents regarding their engagement in their children's education. Such contrasting perceptions may be avoided if roles are clearly stipulated in the departmental and school policies because parents would stick to their roles which do not interfere with the jobs of the teachers and smooth functioning of the school.

Another suggested strategy for the improvement of parental involvement is that school principals and teachers must communicate directly with parents instead of writing them letters (Gulcan & Duran, 2018). This suggestion stems from the fact that parents do not respond to letters. Aykac and Msengi (2019) also added that there should be face to face meetings between teachers and parents. Paulynice (2020) believes that

schools should schedule parents' meetings to discuss academic concerns in order to improve learners' academic performance. However, it has also been claimed by teachers and school principals that parents do not attend meetings at school when they are invited due to work commitment (Liu et al., 2020). This proves that physical meetings between parents and teachers are a problem. Schools should therefore make use of other communication methods to engage parents.

However, Liu et al. (2020) have also suggested teachers to have a list of family contacts in order to keep parents updated on what is happening at school. Having contacts of every family would enable teachers to update parents specifically about their children instead of giving them a general update about the school. Teachers may also quickly contact parents whenever the need arises when they have the contact details of all parents. This seems to be an easier way of communication as it does not require parents to go to school. This method of communication does not require the use of technology. It only uses cell phones and nowadays every household has a basic cell phone. For this reason, parents from low socio-economic background and low educational level are also accommodated in this method of communication, unlike websites that need laptops or smart phones and internet access which some people do not have access to.

2.5.2. Leadership styles

Gulcan and Duran (2018) have also advised that teachers and school principals must adopt a democratic leadership style instead of an autocratic leadership. This implies that they must change this notion of thinking that they are responsible for all the decisions that have to be taken regarding the running of the school. They must know that the engagement of parents and their input are also significant since they know their children from birth and throughout their growth and development. One of the challenges to parental involvement according to Erol and Turhan (2018) is that school principals are using an autocratic leadership style. They are reluctant to include parents as stakeholders in decision making. They make all the decisions, including those that require the input of parents. A change in this attitude may result to the improvement of parental involvement.

According to Sahin (2019) another strategy that may lead to the improvement of parental involvement is that the department of education must establish community projects that will enable parents to collaborate with other educational organisations outside the school. This is because, from Epstein's six types of parental involvement, collaboration with the community seemed to be lacking (Sahin, 2019). This could be due to the fact that community organisations that are school related are limited, particularly in rural areas. The department of education is therefore advised to establish school related community organisations that parents may collaborate with. The rural communities must also be taken into consideration when doing this task.

Another strategy that may improve parental involvement is that the department of education in collaboration with institutions of higher learning must establish in-service training for the teachers (Anastasiou & Papagianni, 2020). A study conducted by Ekinici-Vural and Dogan-Altun (2021) revealed that teachers lack knowledge of how to plan activities that may engage parents at school. At times, teachers do want to engage parents but they lack knowledge of how to go about engaging parents in school. In-service training will give them ideas regarding the types of activities they may use in order to build partnerships with parents. This is because they would be knowledgeable on the roles that parents may play in their children's education. Alternatively, the Department of Basic Education is advised to organise single day workshops for teachers on the importance of parental involvement. This might help change teachers' attitudes towards parental involvement (Liu, Sulaimani & Henning, 2020). This would also empower teachers to design activities and programmes that will involve parents in their children's education.

2.5.3. Parent-learner collaboration

Avnet et al. (2019) have suggested that parents should socialise with their children at home about school. They should communicate aspirations, achievements and values. These exercises would enable children to work hard at school in order to fulfil the discussed aspirations. Parents should also have conversations with their children at home about how they are doing at school and how they feel about school (Aykac & Msengi, 2019). This would give learners a chance to talk about the challenges they

may be experiencing at school and parents may help them overcome such challenges before they could have a negative impact on their academic performance.

According to Kalayci and Oz (2018) when parents and children communicate about school at home, an effective learning environment is created. This environment is necessary for learners to perform to the best of their abilities in their studies. According to Shivraj, Geller, Basaraba, Geller, Hatfield, and Naslung-Hadley (2018) schools are advised to design activities and programmes which parents can use to engage children in learning activities at home. For example, playing cards could improve learners' performance in maths (Shivraj et al. 2018). On the other hand, Kim and Barrett (2018) argue that helping learners with homework does not always produce positive outcomes. This argument is supported by Mata et al. (2018) who stated that assisting learners with homework and attending school activities do not result to the improvement of academic performance.

However, whether parental involvement produces positive or negative outcomes depends on the type of involvement and its aim. Parental involvement might produce negative outcomes if it is aimed at controlling the learner's behaviour. On the other hand, it may produce positive outcomes if it is aimed at encouraging the child to be autonomous (Kim & Barret, 2018). In the case of assisting a learner with homework, it may produce negative outcomes if a parent tells the child what to write because the child will not learn anything. In contrast, it can produce positive outcomes if the parent acts as a facilitator, allows the child to do the homework and only intervenes where the child is having difficulties by explain how to, instead of solving the problem for the child. This, therefore, means that whether assisting children with homework produces positive or negative outcomes depends on how it is done (Kim & Barret; 2018).

2.5.4. Parents training

It has also been suggested that training of stakeholders may also contribute to the improvement of parental involvement (Kalayci & Ergul, 2020). This would enable the stakeholders to understand what parental involvement is, its significance and what role each stakeholder should play in the implementation of parental involvement. However, 72% of the teachers who took part in a study that was conducted by Kalayci and Ergul (2020) were of the view that both teachers and parents need to be trained

on parental involvement. The remaining 28% believed that it is only the parents who need to be trained since they were the ones who were not responding to communication sent to them by teachers. This study shows that both teachers and parents need to be trained on parental involvement for it to be implemented effectively. Bartolome et al. (2020) concur this suggestion by opining that both teachers and parents need to be trained on technology use so that communication amongst them will be easy and quick.

According to Shu (2019) schools should establish programmes that suit parental involvement. Although some parents may not be available to participate in these programmes due to work commitment, those who are able to participate must be given something to do. This suggestion has been echoed by Liu et al. (2020) who suggested that teachers must design outdoor activities that require the involvement of parents. These may include sport activities where parents will participate as spectators. The presence of parents in such activities is crucial as it would be a sign of unity between the school and the home. Children would also be motivated to perform well in such activities as they would want to impress their parents who are there to give them support.

2.5.5. Parent-teacher teams

It has also been suggested that schools must build parent-teacher teams in order to build capacity (Arce, 2019). These teams would empower both teachers and parents and build a strong bond for the two stakeholders whose collaboration is very crucial for the academic performance and overall development of learners. According to Bromley and Yazdanpanah (2021) this will also establish mutual respect between teachers and parents. Teachers and parents would also get the chance to discuss learners' needs in these meetings and sort out the challenges that may be experienced by either teachers or learners during teaching and learning. According to Gulcan and Duran (2018) these teams would also build trust between schools and homes. This trust may also help in avoiding misconceptions and misunderstanding that lead to a conflict between teachers and parents.

Aykac and Msengi (2019) further suggest that school principals should establish a strong cooperation with parents and establish a conducive school atmosphere for

parental involvement. Parents have complained of the school climate which seemed to be unwelcoming (Ekinci-Vural & Dogan-Altun, 2021). As a result, they could not go to school as they felt unwelcome. Establishing a conducive school climate is a huge step in encouraging parents to participate in their children's schooling.

According to Arce (2019) one of the things that schools should do in order to establish a welcoming atmosphere is to have a good and well-conditioned reception or waiting room for parents. When parents are still waiting to be attended to, they should not feel abandoned. According to Hornby in Aykac and Msengi (2019) a parent-friendly school climate encourages parents to be engaged in their children's education. Schools should therefore strive to create a welcoming school climate in order to spark interest from parents to be engaged in their children's education

2.5.6. School policies

Gulcan and Duran (2018) have also suggested that parents should have knowledge of policies that determine their rights in terms of parental involvement. Indeed, parents should be made aware that schools are not doing them a favour by involving them in the school's decision making and other issues but it is their right to be involved in such issues. The department of education should find a way of making parents aware of the school policies. Some of the school principals are reluctant to involve parents in school activities, therefore they don't involve parent in policy crafting and implementation. If this happens, parents would know that they have the right to be involved in decision making of the school. When they are not included, some parents may question this. They may also demand to be included since they would be aware that it is their right to be part of the decision-making of the school.

2.5.7. Adult basic education

Ghanney (2018) suggests that the Department of Basic Education should provide adult basic education in order to enable parents to read and write. This will build their confidence and enable them to be more involved in their children's education (Ghanney, 2018). Parents will also be in a better position to assist their children with homework. Schools are also advised to organise workshops in order to empower parents to be involved in their children's academic lives (Lumadi, 2019). This might be

helpful to those parents who are eager to be involved but are in the dark with regards to how they could be involved.

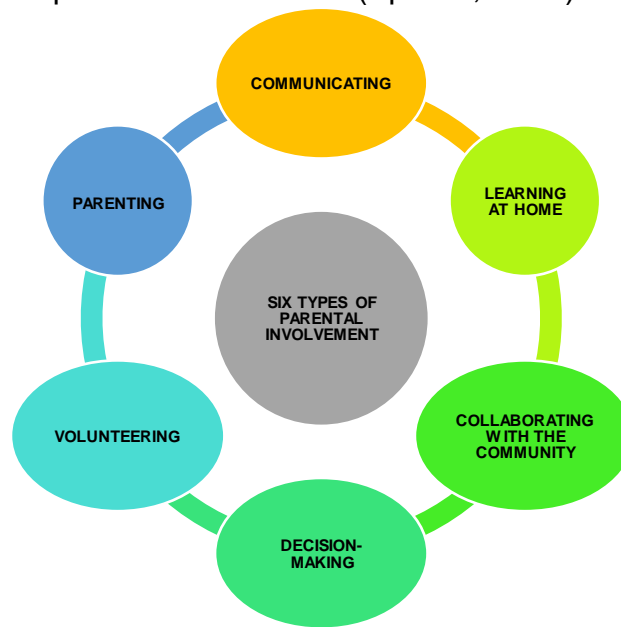
Based on the information provided, it is evident that parental involvement does enhance learners' academic performance. However, on both international and South African literature there is limited research on parental involvement in rural schools. Consequently, a gap identified in literature that would inform the purpose of this study.

2.6. Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework is the “blueprint” for the entire study. It served as the guide on which to build and supported your study, and also provided the structure to define the philosophical, epistemological, methodologically, and analytically approach for the entire study (Grant & Osanloo, 2015) posit that theoretical framework is based on an existing theory in a field of inquiry that is related and/or reflects the hypothesis of a study. They further declare that, it is a blueprint that is often ‘borrowed’ by the researcher to build his/her own house or research inquiry. It serves as the foundation upon which a research is constructed (Adom, Hussein & Agyem, 2018). However, Kivunja (2018) argue that the theoretical framework is the structure that can hold or support a theory of a research study. The study adopted Epstein Theory of parental involvement as its theoretical framework.

Epstein's Theory of parental involvement was developed by Joyce L. Epstein in 1995 in order to explain different types of parental involvement activities (Epstein, 1995). This theory was used as framework to guide the explanation on how parents can be involved in their children's education. There are six types of parental involvement activities that are designed to build relationships between families and schools (Coady, 2019). These activities of parental involvement are parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making and collaborating with the local school community. All these parental involvement activities were used as the lenses through which this study was guided. See figure 2.1 below.

Figure 2.1: Theory of parental involvement (Epstein, 1995).



2.6.1 Parenting.

Parenting or child rearing promotes and supports the physical, emotional, social, and intellectual development of a child from infancy to adulthood. Parents know their children's educational aspirations and how to drive them to success (Kemal, 2011). Therefore, schools have a responsibility to draw them together in order to enhance their academic performance (Epstein, 1995). In a school situation teacher act as the second parents for all the children in a school. However, these teachers should make sure that they are in contact with the biological parents in order to support physical, emotional, social and intellectual development of school children through the information gathered from the biological parent (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017).

2.6.2 Communication

For this study communication refers to the sharing of information between the school and the parents. According Epstein's (1995) it is important for the school to maintain communication with parents by way of using different methods of communication such as phone calls, newsletters, reports, memos and even summons. Parents in turn can provide teachers with information regarding their children health and educational history (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017). However, Chase and Valorose (2019) indicate that others modern forms of communication such as WhatsApp and Facebook can be used to update parents about school activities.

2.6.3 Volunteering.

This refers to an exercise whereby a school uses an open school gate system to allow the parents to offer their free services to the school in the activities such as patrols, fundraising, school maintenance, cleaning and offering of security services for the school (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017). The schools should therefore design activities and programmes that will encourage parents to volunteer. These may also include curricular and extra-curricular activities.

2.6.4 Learning at home.

Learning at home refers to planning the learning activities for learners that will involve parent's assistance and that will also empower parents to support their children with school work while they are at home. According to Epstein (2018) this would make parents to have more positive attitude towards the school and its staff, and confidence in assisting their children with homework, by being involved with their education.

2.6.5 Decision making.

This focuses on parents' involvement in the school's decision making (Epstein, 2009). This includes the election of parents on the School Governing Body. Parental roles include participating in decision making in areas of the subject choices of their children, crafting policies for their school such as learners' code, utilisation of funds and planning of extra-mural activities (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017).

2.6.6 Collaboration with community:

This refers to working in partnership with the community. The school should always through the delegated powers of the SGB inform the community about what is happening in a school. The school can also tailor the parents' programmes in the community that could improve the learning skills of learners. Through the guidance of the school, the community can also be given latitude to design joined tuition programmes where the community together with the school work together to enhance learners' academic performance. However, Clarke (2007) asserts that schools' function best when parents and the community are active in making decisions and have a sense of ownership of the school.

2.7. Conclusion

Parental involvement leads to mutual respect and understanding between teachers and parents. When teachers and parents work together, they develop a sense of understanding and respect for each other. Different scholars have suggested that activities such as networking among parents to help those who live in disadvantaged neighbourhoods and those with low educational background may help those parents who do not know how to be involved in their children's education. This suggests that there is a need for schools to have a programme of activities that will engage parents in their children's education and communicate this programme with parents in order to give them an opportunity to participate in their children's education. However, Lack of communication between the school and the home has been identified as another obstacle for effective to parental involvement.

In chapter 2, I presented literature review. I addressed parental involvement in learner's performance, the activities of parental involvement that may enhance learner's academic performance, the challenges to parental involvement in schools, strategies to enhance parental involvement as revealed by scholars and academics globally. This chapter also concentrated on the hypothetical backgrounds the lenses through which this study adopted to guide, unfold and located philosophies regarding the contribution of parental involvement in learner performance. In the next chapter, I discuss the methodology and methods followed in conducting this study.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

3.1. Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore rural school principals and teachers' perceptions of the contribution of parental involvement in learner performance. In the previous chapter, I discussed four themes on parental involvement. The first theme focused on the importance of parental involvement in learner performance. The second theme informed us about the forms of parental involvement that improve learners' academic performance. Challenges of parental involvement in schools were examined in the third theme. The last theme discussed the strategies that the schools use to enhance parental involvement as revealed by scholars and academics globally. I also concentrated on the hypothetical backgrounds the lenses through which I adopted to guide, unfold and locate philosophies regarding the contribution of parental involvement in learner performance. Conclusion of the chapter was provided at the end of the chapter

In this chapter I pronounce the research methodology used in this study to collect data from the participants as well as the data collection strategies that were used to collect data. I also locate the research site and sampling, explain how the participants were selected, and reasons for the choice of a particular method, trustworthiness and ethical considerations of the study including letters of informed consent to the participants. I also provide a conclusion of the chapter.

Research methodology is theory of how an inquiry should proceed. It involves analysis of the assumptions, principles and procedures in a particular approach to inquiry (Mafuwane, 2011). Research methodology is the path through which researchers need to conduct their research. It shows a path through which these researchers formulate their problem and objective and present their results from data obtained during the study period (Sileyew, 2019). Methodology is also regarded as a variety of methods used in educational research to collect data to be used as a basis for inference and interpretation, for explanation and prediction (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018).

3.2. Research paradigm

Aliyu, Singhry, Adamu and Abubakar (2015) view paradigm as a set of basic beliefs that deals with ultimate or first principles. However, Neuman (2014:96) suggest that in general, “a scientific paradigm is a whole system of thinking, including basic assumptions, the important question to be answered or a puzzle to be solved, the research technique to be used and the example of what good scientific research is like. Guba and Lincoln (1994:108) regard research paradigm as the collective set of attitudes, values, beliefs, procedures and techniques that create a framework of understanding through which theoretical explanations are formed.”

Research paradigm consists of ontology, epistemology and axiology (methodology). Ontology is the study of the categories of things that exist or may exist in some domain (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2008). Ontology asks a question what is the form of nature and reality. Epistemology is “the basis of knowledge, in nature and forms, how it can be acquired and how it can be communicated to other human beings. It is the nature of the relationship between the knower or would be knower and what can be known” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994:108). The epistemology answers a question what is the basic belief about knowledge (Aliyu et al., 2015). Axiology or methodology is thus the study of methods and is concerned with how the researcher go about finding out what he/she believes can be known (Aliyu et al., 2015).

The epistemological claim for this study reflects the interpretive theoretical paradigm. Interpretivism paradigm holds the belief that knowledge is socially constructed (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017; Turyahikoyo, 2021). Different social realities are constructed by considering different factors such as cultures, times, as well as circumstances (Alharahshev & Pius, 2020). As a result, interpretivists do not believe in a single shared reality (Gemma, 2018). Rehman and Alharthi (2018) add that in interpretivism, truth and reality are created rather than discovered. This implies that reality is created by people as they interact with their surroundings rather than discovered by the researcher. This means that the researcher has to interact with people through methods of data collection in order to gain reality. Also, this reality may vary from one society to the next. This concurs with the submission made by Kumatongo and

Muzata (2021) who opine that access to knowledge is only through social interaction since this knowledge is also constructed socially.

The purpose of adopting interpretivists paradigm for this study was to understand the subjective world of human experience (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). In other words, the perceptions and experiences are regarded as the important source of reality by interpretivists. Turyahikoyo (2021) as well as Kumatongo and Muzata (2021) posit that those who believe in interpretivism view knowledge as subjective, contextual and based on the understanding and experiences of the people. As interpretivism assumes that knowledge is subjective, reality differs from one individual to the next, depending on factors such as time, culture, context, etc. This enables the researcher to take into consideration factors such as aspects of human behaviour based on the experiences of research participants.

Interpretivism does not believe that reality is objective, it is more focus on idealism and rationalism which assumes that knowledge and reality are based on people's thoughts (Turyahikoyo, 2021). The goal is therefore, to interpret people's thoughts and the meaning they make of the context (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). This suggests that the researcher should focus on understanding the view point of the research participants and interprets those viewpoints when conducting a research.

According to Creswell (2007) researchers who assign to interpretivism aim at getting a deeper understanding of the phenomenon in its unique context instead of trying to generalise the base of understanding for the entire population. They reject knowledge established as foundation base shared as universal law (Alharahshev & Pius, 2020). This is because the aim is to understand individuals' perceptions and experiences rather than already established universal laws (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). However, researchers should try and avoid the biasness of studying people and events with their own interpretation (Turyahikoyo, 2021).

Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) postulate that a single phenomenon may have multiple interpretations rather than a single reality that can be determined through the process of measurement. In an instance where there are different interpretations about one phenomenon, the existence of multiple realities is recognised bearing in mind that different researchers bring different perspectives to the same issue, instead of

choosing one interpretation over others as the correct one (Rehman & Alharthi, 2018). Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) add that one of the characteristics of the research conducted within the paradigm of interpretivism is that there is a belief in multiple realities that are socially constructed. For this reason, under no circumstances should certain interpretations be preferred over others. Instead they should all be accepted as they are. Alharahshev and Pius (2020) add that interpretivism does not believe in universal laws that can be applicable to everyone.

Alharahshev and Pius (2020) I also adopted the interpretivism paradigm to gain an in-depth understanding of certain contexts such as cross-cultural studies (Alharahshev & Pius, 2020). However, I was more sensitive to the meaning and understanding of individuals. I was therefore enabled to acknowledge the differences in the context of the research taking into consideration the given circumstances as well as participants involved.

Rehman and Alharthi (2018) state that people assign meaning and names to social phenomena as they interact with people and their social surroundings. Therefore, my purpose was to understand individuals' interpretations of the social phenomena they interact with. Also, the social phenomena should be understood from the perspective of the participant than that of the researcher (Rehman & Alharthi, 2018). Data collected following this approach was mostly verbal, using qualitative methods and was audio or video-recorded. Methods of collecting data included open-ended interviews, observations, field notes, personal notes and documents (Rehman & Alharthi, 2018).

On the other hand, there has been some criticism levelled against the interpretivism paradigm. One of such criticism is that it cannot yield theories that could be generalised to larger populations (Rehman & Alharthi, 2018). This means that research findings cannot be generalised to other populations since the context and individual experience would be different. This criticism has also been highlighted by Cohen, Marion and Morrison (2011) who claim that results cannot be generalised to other people and context. Alharahshev and Pius (2020) suggest that due to its subjective rather than objective approach, the research outcomes of the interpretivism paradigm are more likely to be affected by the researchers' own interpretations and beliefs. This illustrates that the interpretivist paradigm leaves a lot of room for

biasness. According to Rehman and Alharthi (2018) the interpretivism paradigm lacks objectivity. This is because it focuses more on participants' perceptions and interpretations as source of reality.

Interpretivism paradigm chosen for this study was based on the foundation of investigating teachers' perspectives of the contribution of parental involvement in learner performance. I believed that the study was aligned to this paradigm since the aim was to understand the perceptions of principals and teachers regarding parental involvement. Adopting this paradigm enabled me to understand parental involvement from the perspectives and experiences of principals and teachers regarding parental involvement in their own contexts.

3.3. Research approach

A qualitative research approach was used for the study based on the premise that I was intending to put an emphasis on the collection of data on naturally occurring phenomena. Qualitative research approach is defined as the study of the nature of the phenomena, their contextual appearance and the manner in which they are perceived (Busetto, Wick & Gumbinger, 2020). This implies that in qualitative research, the phenomenon is studied in its natural occurrence and the context in which it appears. However, this concurs with the notion made by Ezer and Aksut (2021) who postulate that in qualitative research, facts and events are examined within their natural environment in an in-depth manner. Qualitative research approach is also defined as by Kalman (2019) as the study of cases, phenomena, social situations as well as people in a naturalistic manner and in their natural settings. The choice of an approach for this study was informed by my philosophical assumptions the brought to the study and the nature of the research problem I am addressing (Creswell, 2014).

According to Kalman (2019) the purpose of conducting qualitative research is to describe the meaning ascribed to participants' experiences of the world. This means that qualitative research approach may be used to study people's perceptions and experiences. Ezer and Aksut (2021) add that the aim of qualitative research is to study a certain part of social life and to understand perceptions and experiences of individuals and societies. Qualitative research is also aimed at developing an understanding of the meaning and experiences of human lives and their social world

(Kalman, 2019). Qualitative research approach is also necessary as some research questions cannot be answered using quantitative methods alone (Busetto, Wick & Gumbinger, 2020).

Data in qualitative research is collected in the form of words rather than numbers (Kalman, 2019; McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). As a result, I was allowed to get detailed information on the subject under study by using data collection tools such as interviews and observations (Ezer & Aksut, 2021). For qualitative research to be carried out successfully, I adopted research qualities such as flexibility, creativity and inquisitiveness (Kalman, 2019). Waite (2014) adds that qualitative researchers need to have essential skills field work methods, or data collection techniques as well as thinking and writing skills. Kalpokaite and Radivojevic (2019) opine that qualitative research is learned best by taking decision and making mistakes. This suggests that qualitative research is learned through practice in which the researcher is actively involved in the study and should treat mistakes as the learning curve.

Through qualitative approach adopted for the study, I wanted to excavate meaning rather than in quantitative research approach that contributes to theory development by proceeding inductively (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2007). Qualitative research approach is a holistic approach that involves discovery that is described as an effective unfolding model that occurs in a natural setting that enables the researcher to develop a level of detail from high involvement in the actual experiences (Williams, 2007). Qualitative research approach was the model I used to discharge the burden of proof on the logical organisation in order to feel that whatever has been done in this research reached a valid conclusion (Miller & Brewer, 2003). Through qualitative approach I was also able to understand how teachers in rural schools perceive the contribution of parental involvement on learners' performance.

3.4. Research design

I adopted a case study design for this study. Creswell (2007) defines a case study design as a qualitative approach in which detailed and in-depth data is collected is collected in the process of exploring a bounded system or bounded systems over time. Kristine and Evans (2019) further explain that a case study explores a phenomenon that is time and space bound. This means that in a case study research design, the

researcher focuses on a particular phenomenon in a specific context and time. However, Palic, Vignal, Halier, Stanton and Radder (2015) postulate that a case study design is an investigation of a phenomenon in its real-life context.

A researcher who applies or intends to apply this research design should ensure that they select an insight-stimulating case or cases for their study (Akhtar, 2015). The types of cases to be selected may differ in sizes and may involve one individual, several individuals or a group of people (Creswell, 2007). A case study research design studies the matter in all its dimensions and implications and may involve the exploration of a matter through one or more cases within a bounded structure (Akhtar, 2015). This enabled the researcher to get enough data about the person, group of people or units.

According to Montes-Rodriguez, Martinez-Rodriguez and Ocana-Fernandez (2019) a case study research design is mostly used in educational research. The sources of information for a case study design include interviews, observations, documents, audio-visual material, etc. Here, the subject matter is studied qualitatively and covered in all its aspects. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2014) a case study allows the researcher to explore a case over time using in depth data collection which involves a number of sources of information. This allowed me to gain a lot of information about the topic under study.

This research design was used to explore the rural schools' principals and teachers' perceptions of the contribution of parental involvement in learner performance. Using this design, I was able to collect detailed and in-depth data from principals and teachers of different schools (Creswell, 2007). This detailed information provided me with a better understanding of how school principals and teachers from different settings perceive parental involvement.

Nevertheless, there has been criticism against the case study design. Baxter and Jack (2008) in Gustaffson (2017) argue that a case study can be expensive and time consuming. For this study it is not about the longevity of the research process, but about its worth to improve the practice. The researcher believes that through proper planning prevention of unnecessary time constraints and unplanned costs, the process of data collection can be advanced without hassles.

3.5. Research site and sampling

Rai and Thapa (2016) define sampling as the technique of selecting a small group as a representative of a large population. Sampling is used by researchers to select individuals or a large group of people from a pre-determined population to serve as participants in the study as per the aims and objectives of the study (Sharma, 2017). Sampling is often used when the population targeted for the study is very broad (Rai & Thapa, 2016). Sampling is therefore used because in such a case it becomes impossible to conduct the study with every individual in the identified population or universe (Sharma, 2017).

There are different types of sampling techniques and one of them is purposive sampling or judgemental sampling (Rai & Thapa, 2017; Tongco, 2007) which was chosen for this study. In purposive sampling, research participants are chosen because they are expected to provide unique and rich information that was valuable to the study (Etikan, Musa & Alkassin, 2016). Participants are selected deliberately because of the qualities they possess (Rai & Thapa, 2016). According to Campbell, Greenwood, Prior, Shearer, Walkem, Young, Bywaters and Walker (2020) purposive sampling is also regarded as the strategy used to identify cases that uses limited resources more effectively. This claim is supported by Sebidi (2019) who suggests that purposive sampling is a technique widely used in qualitative research for identification and selection of information-rich cases for the most effective use of limited resources.

Purposive sampling is also referred to as judgemental or subjective sampling because selecting the sample is solely dependent on the subjective judgement of the researcher (Rai & Thapa, 2016). The researcher is the one who makes judgement on the qualities that he/she wants from the people who are selected as participants in the study. As a result, Rai and Thapa (2016) believe that the role of the researcher is very important in purposive sampling. The researcher has to ensure that he/she selects participants that are most likely to provide information that is appropriate and useful to the study (Campbell et al., 2020).

It is crucial for the researcher to be clear on the characteristics and qualifications that the participant should have in order to be selected for the study (Tongco, 2007). The

researcher should decide on what makes suitable participants and what makes an informant not to be suitable for the study. Sharma (2017) adds that it is of utmost importance for the researcher to be sure of the required skills and knowledge from participants when doing purposive sampling because irrelevant participants renders the data worthless and invalid. This decision should be taken based on a variety of criteria set by the researcher which should include special knowledge and experience on the research topic as well as willingness to participate in the study (Rai & Thapa, 2016).

The willingness and availability of the selected participants is emphasised by Palinkas et al. (2017) who posit that purposive sampling also depends on whether the selected individuals are available and willing to participate in the study. The goal is to select participants with characteristics that are of interest to the researcher and that enables the researcher to get the information to be used in answering the research question (Gentles, Charles & Ploges, 2015). Based on the aims and objectives of the study, specific types of people may have unique and crucial information about the topic under study and were therefore be to be included in the sample (Campbell et al., 2020). I aimed to get participants who were willing to participate in the study and who could provide a useful information because of the knowledge and experiences they have on the under study (Etikan, Musa & Alkassin, 2016).

A number of scholars have alluded to advantages of purposive sampling (Sharma, 2017; Etikan, Musa & Alkassin, 2016; Rai & Thapa, 2016; Andrade, 2021 & Tongco, 2007). According to Tongco (2007) the strength of purposive sampling lies in its intentional bias. In other words, the fact that participants are selected by the based on the characteristics and qualifications set, is the actual strength of this sampling technique. As a result, purposive sampling provided me with justification to make generalisation from the sample that was being studied (Sharma, 2017). However, generalisation could only be made to the population defined by the sample selection criteria (Andrade, 2021).

According to Tongco (2007) another advantage of purposive sampling is that it is more efficient than random sampling when it is used appropriately. This is due to the fact that the random member of the population may not be as knowledgeable in the topic

as the expert participant who has been selected purposefully. For this reason, purposive sampling consumes less time and is less expensive (Rai & Thapa, 2016). Etikan, Musa and Alkassin (2016) add that purposive sampling is quicker and cheaper compared to probability sampling. Another advantage of purposive sampling is that it only studies individuals of the population that are of interest and are deemed to be useful by the researcher in terms of providing expert knowledge that would help in answering the research question.

Purposive sampling also has some disadvantages. One of its disadvantages is that it leaves a lot of room for biasness. (Rai & Thapa, 2016). Tongco (2007) adds that purposive sampling can be biased because participants may be chosen out of the researcher's convenience or from recommendations by knowledgeable people. The fact that the decision on who should be selected and the characteristics or qualities they should have is made solely by the researcher is also a disadvantage which can lead to a lot of biasness.

According to Tongco (2007) interpretation of results in purposive sampling is only limited to the population being studied. This means that generalisation cannot be made for other populations that were not sampled for the study. Andrade (2021) adds that the more purposive the sample is, the more limited external validity becomes. However, in spite of these limitations, Tongco (2007) indicates that purposive can still provide vigorous and reliable data which can still be valid for other studies. Tongco (2007) further added that the study conducted using purposive sampling may be repeated for confirmation in a different population still employing a non-probability method in order to form the basis for a theory.

According to Rai and Thapa (2016) purposive sampling can be divided into seven different types which are as follows; maximum variation sampling, homogenous sampling, typical case sampling, extreme or deviant case sampling, critical case sampling, total population sampling as well as expert sampling. This study adopted expert sampling. Rai and Thapa (2016) state that expert sampling is used when the research study needs information from people with certain expertise. These people may be individuals who are specialists in a particular field and the study requires their expert knowledge needed to answer the research question.

The rationale behind the selection of this sampling technique was that I wanted to select individuals who would provide rich information on their experiences and perceptions of parental involvement. This sampling technique was also chosen because it was relevant to this study as this study needed people with expert knowledge regarding parental involvement in rural schools. Four primary schools located in the rural areas of Alfred Nzo East district in Bizana in the Eastern Cape province were selected as sites for collecting data based on their locality as well as their academic performance. From the four primary schools, two were those that their overall school performance has been poor for the past five years and two were those that their performance had been excellent for the past five years.

Participants that were selected for the study were school principals and school teachers. Selection of principals was based on their experience as managers of primary school principals for at least five years. All the teachers selected had at least three years teaching experience in the primary school selected to participate in the investigation. One principal and two teachers were selected from each of the schools in the rural areas of Alfred Nzo East District in Bizana in the Eastern Cape Province. The total number of participants was 12.

3.6. Data collection techniques

According to Tongco (2007) data collection is very important in research because data is meant to contribute to a better understanding of the theoretical framework. For this reason, selecting an appropriate data collection and appropriate participants is very important particularly since no amount of data analysis can compensate for data that has been collected improperly (Etikan, Musa & Alkassin, 2016). This means that a mistake of using an inappropriate data collection technique or that of collecting data from inappropriate participants cannot be corrected no matter how well that data has been analysed. Therefore, researchers have to make sure that they select data collection methods and participants that are relevant to the research question.

Data in qualitative research is collected through field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings and memos (Palinkas et al., 2017). Data is also collected on site where participants experience the matter that is being researched with an aim of understanding participants' own expressions and accounts. (Creswell, 2007). For data

collection of this study, I used face-to-face semi-structured interviews as data collection tool.

3.6.1. Face-to face semi-structured interviews

Mojtahed, Baptista-Nunes, Tiago-Martins and Peng (2014) define an interview as a technique whereby a series of questions are used to gather information about a phenomenon under study from selected individuals. According to Bearman (2019) an interview is one of the methods commonly used to gain a deeper understanding of human experience. Qualitative interview could either be structured, semi-structure or unstructured (Creswell, 2007). The study adopted the semi-structured interviews. According to Doody and Noonan (2013) semi-structured interviews are characterised by the use of pre-arranged questions and the researcher is allowed to ask clarity-seeking questions in additions to these pre-arranged questions. Ilovan and Doroftei (2017) add that a semi-structured interview is a data collection method in which the researcher asks participants a range of pre-determined questions that are open-ended in nature. As a result, the direction of the interview is determined by participants since the researcher asks probing questions based on the responses given by participants (Stuckey, 2013).

According to Gill, Stewart, Treasure and Chadwich (2012) individual face-to-face semi-structured interview comprise of a number of key questions which help the interviewer to focus on the area to be researched. Face-to-face semi-structured interviews also allow for the diversion by either the interviewer or interviewee in order to get more details about the issue under study (Gill et al., 2012). The interviewer can ask follow up questions in order to probe the interviewee for more information about the issue under study or the interviewee can deviate from the question in order to give more information about the topic under study (Adams, 2018).

When analysing data obtained from semi-structured interviews, researchers compare participants' responses by item (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). However, the use of probing questions in semi-structured interviews could also be a problem for novice researcher. Doody and Noonan (2013) state that novice researchers may not know when to probe the answers given by participants in order to get more information. As

a result, they may end up missing out on the rich information they may get from asking these probe questions.

Face-to-face semi-structured interviews are often a good choice when the researcher wants to get every individual's knowledge and experience in a group (Adams, 2018). They also offer participants' freedom in their responses since their responses would not be influenced by what is said by other participants. Semi-structured interviews could either be carried out face to face or telephonically (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). I adopted face-to-face semi-structured interviews. One of the advantages of conducting face-to-face interviews was that the interview situation was given a structure by my presence and enabled me to capture both verbal and non-verbal communication (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). I was also able to capture non-verbal communication such as body language, facial expression. In this way, communication between myself and participant is optimised (Irvine, Drew & Sainsbury, 2013). This allowed me to collect rich data for analysis thus enhancing the validity of the study (Doody & Noonan, 2013). Additionally, I was also able to notice any discomfort or unease from the participant and provided emotional support to the participants when it was needed (McIntosh & Morse, 2015).

Individual face-to-face semi-structured interviews' flexibility allowed me for more explanation (Gill et.al, 2012). The use of face-to-face semi-structured interview also provided me with an opportunity to ask more probing questions when participants did not give specific or clear information about the topic under study. It also allowed participants to be free and give more information about the issue that is under discussion. The latitude given to participants to freely explain themselves allowed me to discover some important information which was not thought of previously (Gill et.al, 2012).

Face-to-face semi-structured interviews also have some disadvantages. For example, McIntosh and Morse (2015) postulate that face-to-face semi-structured interviews are too costly in terms of money and time. This disadvantage was identified by Adams (2018) who adds that this type of interview is time consuming because it requires the researcher to prepare, set up and conduct the interviews. All these processes need a

lot of time on the side of the researcher. Also, researcher may incur a lot of costs when travelling to meet participants one-by-one and conduct the interviews.

Conducting face-to-face interviews may be disadvantageous in that the physical presence of the researcher may affect participants and the responses they provide (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). For example, participants may feel inhibited when they have to respond to sensitive questions face-to-face. As a result, participants may end up giving more socially acceptable answers than giving answers based on their knowledge and experiences (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). On the other hand, they may give more conventional answers when given a self-administered questionnaire (Adams, 2018). This implies that the physical presence of the researcher during the interview may be a threat to the participant and may elicit distorted responses.

For the study, I used face-to-face semi-structured interviews to gather information from the principals and teachers. These interviews were conducted in their respective schools. A schedule for questions was pre-arranged by the researcher and open-ended questions about participants' experiences and opinions of parental involvement were asked to allow the participants to interact with the researcher (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Data collected from the participants was audio-recorded and field notes were taken to serve as a back-up information provided by participants and noted in the researcher's journal (Creswell, 2007).

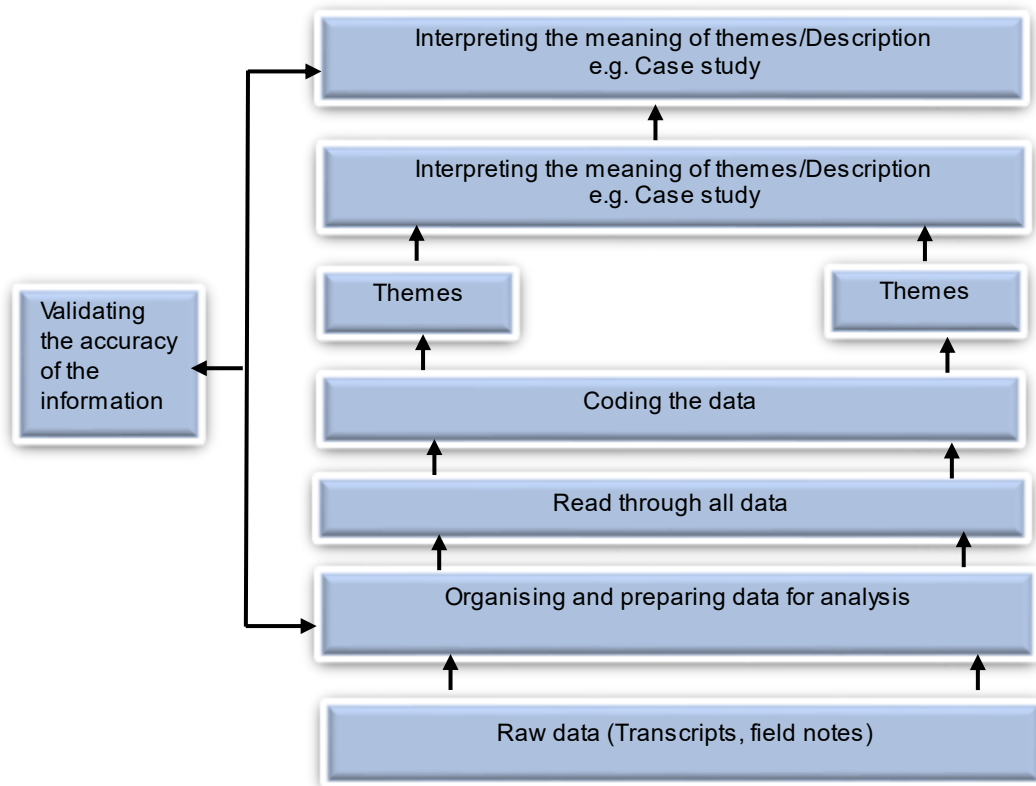
I chose this data collection strategy for this study based on the understanding that I would have an opportunity to use pre-arranged questions that will guide the responses of the interviewee (Gill et.al. 2012). This also helped me to organise the interview, unlike the unstructured interview where there is no organisation and end up consuming a lot of time (Gill et.al. 2012).

3.7. Data analysis

I adopted data analysis strategy advocated by Creswell (2014) to analyse data for the study on rural school principals and teachers' perceptions of the contribution of parental involvement in learner performance. The aim of adopting qualitative data analysis was to reduce the all-embracing data to advance its description and explanation towards theory generation. Data analysis for the study followed data analysis procedure as advocated by Creswell (2014) where data was organised, read

through, coded, themes generated, themes interpreted and data was validated for the generation of theory. Figure 3.1 below explain how data analysis for this study was conducted.

Figure 3.1: Data analysis in qualitative research: Creswell (2014)



3.7.1. Organising and preparing data for analysis

During this stage of data analysis, I organised the data by bringing together the raw data from face-to-face semi-structured transcripts, and field notes. I then transcribed the audio recorded information from the face-to-face interviews. Data transcription refers to the process of transferring spoken information into written text (Mackey & Gass, 2012). When transcribing data, I took note of the body language as well as delivery utterances of the participants because they also had meaning (Flick, 2014). For instance, whispering could mean that the information that the participant is giving is sensitive (Flick, 2014). I also took note of non-verbal gestures when transcribing data and also made use of the field notes that were recorded during the process of data collection. The second step after transcribing data was coding. According to Flick

(2014), data coding is the process of organizing the information into categories and labelling or coding these categories.

3.7.2. Reading through all the data

After organising data according to its categories, I read through the data chronologically with an aim of reflecting on its overall meaning. When performing this exercise, I was interested in attaining the general impression presented by the participants, the tone of their ideas, the general impression, the depth and the credibility of the data provided. Throughout this process I jotted notes to record the general thought presented by data.

3.7.3. Coding the data

I engaged in coding by classifying the information according to the aims and objectives of the study. The classified information was assigned themes or labels according to the aims and objectives of the study.) During the process of data coding, data was also reduced and only the information that related to the research question was coded (Flick, 2014). I also focused only on the information that was related to the research question and left out irrelevant details because participants were allowed flexibility to reveal all the information they had about the topic under study.

3.7.4. Interrelating themes

I used the coding process to generate a description of the setting and themes for analysis. Description involved a detailed rendering of information about participants and events in a setting.

3.7.5. Interpreting the meaning of themes

At this stage I described and presented the themes using a narrative passage to convey the findings of the analysis. Description was in the form of a sequence of events and the comprehensive discussion of the overall themes complete with sub-themes, specific illustrations, multiple perspectives from participants and citations.

3.7.6. Validating the accuracy of the information

For validation of the accuracy of the data, I made an interpretation of the findings by asking the questions about the lessons learned to capture the crux of the knowledge and comparing the findings with the information assembled from literature. By so doing I was confirming past data or to deviate from it.

3.8. Trustworthiness of the study

It is very important to establish confidence in the research findings and ensure that the findings are genuine (Anney, 2014). To ensure that trustworthiness and credibility of the study are realised, I made sure that findings that came from the participants were not influenced by any personal interests (Anney, 2014). To maintain trustworthiness of the study, I also adopted trustworthiness strategies as proposed by (Anney, 2014; Cope, 2014; Moon et al., 2016) which are credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

3.8.1. Credibility

Credibility refers to the manner in which the views of the participants as well as the interpretation and presentation of such views is truthful (Anney, 2014). This was done through “member checking” which refers to verifying the findings with the participants (Cope, 2014). To ensure credibility for the study, after transcribing and interpreting data, I shared the research findings with the participants for them to confirm that data presentation and interpretation was a true reflection of their original ideas. They were also given opportunity to reveal if data they have provided has been misrepresented and correct such misrepresentations. In this way, there was an assurance that the research findings and interpretation of such findings reflected the ideas of participants and were not influenced by my beliefs and biasness.

Credibility of the study was also ensured through triangulation (Anney, 2014). According to Cope (2014), triangulation refers to the use of several sources to draw conclusions. Anney (2014) has identified three stages of triangulation. For the study, I employed a variety of sources in the literature review to research about parental involvement. This exercise ensured exposure to ideas and debates of different researchers from different backgrounds about parental involvement. For this reason,

conclusions drawn from the literature review was based on a variety of sources that have been consulted.

The second stage of triangulation was the use of different data collection methods to gather information (Anney, 2014). This proposed study used face-to-face semi-structured interviews as a data collection strategy. This ensured that interpretations and conclusions made from the research findings were based on data collected in different ways. The aim for engaging in this exercise was to establish whether the same pattern occurs repeatedly or not (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014).

The final stage of triangulation was methodological triangulation (Anney, 2014). This refers to the gathering of information from people of different backgrounds or experiences. This was applied in the study by gathering information about parental involvement from school principals and teachers. The aim was to establish whether school principals and teachers have similar or different ideas and attitudes about parental involvement. This ensured that conclusions made from findings were drawn from experiences of participants from different backgrounds, that is, the people who manage schools (principals) and those who deal mostly with learners (teachers).

3.8.2. Transferability

Transferability refers to the manner in which the findings of a particular study can apply in other settings or with other participants (Moon et al., 2016). In simple terms, it refers to the extent in which people who were not part of the study can make meaning of the research findings and can relate these findings to their own experiences (Cope, 2014). I used purposeful sampling to ensure that transferability was achieved. This means that participants were chosen purposefully according to their experiences and backgrounds. In this way, there was a high possibility that people of the same experience and background can also relate to the findings.

3.8.3. Dependability

Dependability establishes the manner in which research findings are consistent over time and similar conditions (Anney, 2014). It also refers to the documentation of research processes with the aim of enabling someone who is not part of the study to be able to critique research procedures (Moon et al., 2016). To ensure dependability

of the study, I discussed all the methods of collecting and analysing data with the supervisor. This enabled me to establish whether proper research processes have been followed throughout the process of the proposed study (Moon et al., 2016).

3.8.4. Confirmability

(Moon et al., 2016) defines confirmability as the extent to which a researcher can prove that data does not represent biased views of the researcher but the responses of the participants. Cope (2014) suggests that this could be done by quoting the responses of the participants. I achieved this by having some quotations of participants' responses when analysing data. The aim was to ensure that what was analysed and interpreted were the actual ideas of participants not the viewpoints of the researcher. I also applied member checking in order to give participants an opportunity to verify if the data provided represented their thoughts (Anney, 2014).

3.9. Ethical considerations

Ethics are the crucial values, morals and duties that a researcher must follow in order to protect the participants in the study (Pillay, 2014). It is very important for the researcher to obtain endorsement before they could conduct research that involves human participants (Fleming & Zegwaard, 2018). Before going to the field to collect data, firstly I applied for an ethical clearance from the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria (Greaney, Sheehy, Heffernan, Murphy, Mhaolrunaigh, Hoffernan & Brown 2012). This procedure ensured that the study follows all the required protocols that guaranteed the safety of participants.

One of the principles that I followed when collecting data from research participants is to request for access, get informed consent, ensure anonymity and confidentiality of the data to be collected and inform participants about their rights to withdraw from the study (Cohen et al., 2018; Creswell, 2014; Neuman, 2014; Pillay, 2014).

3.9.1. Gaining access

To gain access to the research setting, I wrote letters to request a permission to conduct a research to Alfred Nzo East district in Bizana in the Eastern Cape Province. Letter requesting permission were also written to the affected primary schools in the

district. The letters dispatched fully explained the aim of the study and the ethical considerations I was going to observe. The registration letter for the academic year 2022 and the ethical clearance letter accompanied the requisition document.

3.9.2. Getting informed consent

Informed consent entails informing participants about the kind of information they are supposed to provide, how it will be collected and what it will be used for (Fleming & Zegwaard, 2018). I provided this information to all the participants. They were then aware of what they were agreeing to even before the data collection process started. Informed consent also involved obtaining a signed consent from participants in which they agreed to participate in the study after they have been informed about the aims and procedures to be followed during the study (Fleming & Zegwaard, 2018). For the study I provided a document to participants explaining the aims and procedures of the study. At the bottom of the document, participants were required to sign an agreement to participate in the study after having read the aims and procedures of the study. However, this was by no means a commitment of any kind by the participants. Participants were free to withdraw their participation in the study despite signing the consent form.

3.9.3. Ensuring anonymity and confidentiality

Through the letters of informed consent and letters requesting permission to conduct a research submitted to the participants, I assured participants that the information they would provide during the interviews would remain anonymous and confidential and that none of the information they provided would link them to the study either verbally or through writing (Pillay, 2014). To follow to the research ethical standards of protecting participants' rights to confidentiality, I used pseudonyms to refer to participants instead of mentioning their real names (Pillay, 2014). However, participants were also informed about the importance of not discussing the information provided during the interviews (Greaney et. al., 2012).

3.9.4. The right to withdraw from the study

Letters of informed consent also involved informing participants that participation in the study was free and voluntary (Pillay, 2014). Furthermore, participants were allowed to withdraw their participation from the study without providing reasons and this also involved withdrawing any information that was already been provided by the participants for the study (Greaney et. al., 2012). I guaranteed the participants verbally and in writing their right to withdraw from the interviews and the freedom to react if they consider them offensive, misguided, irritating and inconsiderate (Cohen et al. 2018)

3.10. Conclusion

In this chapter I pronounced the research methodology used in this study to collect data from the participants as well as the data collection strategies that were used to collect data. I also located the research site and sampling, explained how the participants were selected, and reasons for the choice of a particular method, trustworthiness and ethical considerations of the study including letters of informed consent to the participants. In the next chapter, I present, analyse and interpret the data as well as presenting the findings of this study.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1. Introduction

This study was about rural school principals and teachers' perceptions of the contribution of parental involvement in learner performance. In the previous chapter, I pronounced the research methodology used in this study to collect data from the participants as well as the data collection strategies that were used to collect data. I also located the research site and sampling, explained how the participants were selected, and reasons for the choice of a particular method, trustworthiness and ethical considerations of the study including letters of informed consent to the participants. I also provided the conclusion of the chapter.

In chapter 4, I present, explain and analyse data collected following procedures that were used during face-to-face semi-structured interviews. Reports generated using different data collection tools from the primary school principals and teachers regarding their perceptions of the contribution of parental involvement in learner performance is outlined. The detailed description and analysis of each participant was presented in the search for an in-depth understanding of the research question. A conclusion of the chapter is provided at the end of the chapter.

4.2. Schools profiles

All schools that were involved in this study are located in circuit 3 of Alfred Nzo East district in Eastern Cape Province. The villages servicing these schools with learners are remote, traditional and fragmented.

4.2.1. Profile for school A

School A belonged to quintile 2 and it had an enrolment of +- 400 learners with 17 teachers of which two were those that have been employed by the SGB. Most of the parents of this school were illiterate and worked in the nearby farms. The school did not have a hall and proper kitchen where learners are fed. There were only two computers in the school which were used by the principal and the school administrator. The internet connection in this school was very poor. The school had three blocks and

one administration block. The desks were enough to be used by all the learners but old and worn-out. The school was well fenced.

4.2.2. Profile for school B

School B also belonged to quintile 2 and had 23 teachers and had recently been renovated. It housed +650 learners from the village and nearby villages. It had four blocks and a spacious administration block. There were three computers that were used by the principal, deputy principal and the school administrator. Internet connection in this school was not available. The desks in this school did not equal the number of the learners. Some of the desks were makeshift. The school was surrounded by an old barbed wire fence and had two gates, one in the South and one in the East.

4.2.3. Profile for school C

School C was a very small school with 256 learners and 8 teachers. It also belonged to quintile 2. There were three school blocks but one was not used. The school was having two computers used by the principal and the administrator. There was no internet connection. School desks were enough to be used by all the learners in school. Water in the school was stored in a JOJO tank which was next to the kitchen, a small shack made of old corrugated iron sheets. There was no fence around the school.

4.3. Profiles of participants

From the sampling of four selected primary schools as data collection sites mentioned in chapter 3, I managed to collect data from only three of them. The principal of the fourth school agreed that I could collect data from her school, but later withdrew her school's participation. Only three schools agreed to participate in the study. The participants were made up of three school principals one drawn from each school and two teachers drawn from each school. Therefore, participants who participated in this study were nine.

From the three schools sampled, nine participants were involved in the interviews. Observing the ethical requirements of this study and for the reasons of confidentiality

and to protect the participants and the schools' identities, schools were given codes and participants were given pseudonyms. The school principals were referred to as PA-PC. Teachers were given pseudonyms and referred to as TA1 and TA2; TB1 and TB2; TC1 and TC2 respectively.

Table 4.1 below presents the profiles of the participants drawn from different primary schools who were involved in the face-to face semi structured interviews for the study. Table 4.2 presents the abbreviations for the qualifications of participants who were sampled for this study.

Table 4.1: Profiles of the participants

Participants codes	Race	Gender	School	Quintile	Qualifications	Teaching Experience (years)
PA	African	Male	Primary	2	PTD and BA	25
PB	African	Female	Primary	2	PTD and ACE and B.Ed. (Hons)	23
PC	African	Male	Primary	2	B.Ed. (GET) and B.Ed. (Hons)	12
TA1	African	Male	Primary	2	B.Ed. (GET)	13
TA2	African	Female	Primary	2	B.Ed. (GET)	17
TB1	African	Female	Primary	2	PTD, ACE	22
TB2	African	Male	Primary	2	B.Ed. (GET)	19
TC1	African	Male	Primary	2	B.Ed. (GET) B.Ed. (Hons)	8
TC2	African	Female	Primary	2	B.Ed. (GET) B.Ed. (Hons)	6

4.3.1. Profiles for principals

All the principals are qualified to manage the primary school. All their schools are located in rural setting and categorised under quintile 2, which meant that they are

very poor and depending on the grant allocation from the department of education. Their experience as principals ranges from 12 to 25 years. They have all attended institutions of higher learning and their qualifications range from Primary Teachers Diploma (PTD) to Bachelor of Educations Honours B.Ed. (Hons). As principals, they are also responsible for teaching different grades in their schools as required by the department of education.

4.3.2. Profiles for teachers

Teachers who have been involved in the interviews for this study are all qualified to teach in primary school. Their experience in teaching ranges between 6 to 22 years. They have all been trained as teachers and their qualifications range from Primary Teachers Diploma (PTD) to Bachelor of Educations Honours (B.Ed. Hons). As teachers they are responsible for teaching different grades in schools where they are employed. Table 4.2 presents the abbreviations for the qualifications of participants who were sampled to participate in this study.

Table 4.2: Key for Qualifications of school principals and teachers interviewed

ACE	Advanced Certificate in Education
BA	Bachelor of Arts
B.Ed. (GET)	Bachelor of Education in General Education and Training
B.Ed. (Hons)	Bachelor of Education Honours
PTD	Primary Teachers Diploma

4.4. Data presentation

Participants that I purposively selected to be interviewed in this study were nine. Their selection was based on the common characteristic that they were primary schools located in rural area and categorised under quintile 2. All the participants were interviewed at their schools after working hours. Similar interview schedule was followed to maintain consistency when I ask the interview questions. Through the consent of the participants, I used an audio recorder to record the deliberations that

occurred in all our interview sessions. With Table 4.3., below I present the themes and sub-themes of groups of the data that I produced from the interviews with principals and teachers related to the research questions. I group the data into two sections, comprising of the data from interviews. I then presented the data in its respective themes and sub-themes according to the table 4.3 below.

Table 4.3: Research questions, themes and sub-themes

Research questions	Themes	Sub-themes
Main research question: How do principals and teachers in rural school perceive the contribution of parental involvement in learner performance?		
What are the expectations of principals and teachers of rural school in terms of parental involvement?	Theme 1: Assistance from the parents.	Sub-theme 1: Frequency of communication with the school.
		Sub-theme 2: Parents visibility at school.
		Sub-theme 3: Parents assistance to the learners
What are the challenges experienced by principals and teachers in rural school regarding parental involvement?	Theme 2: Parental involvement challenges in rural schools	Sub-theme 1: Attendance by parents.
		Sub-theme 2: Illiterate grandparents/guardians.
		Sub-theme 3: Work commitments.
What strategies can be used by principals and teachers in rural school to enhance parental involvement?	Theme 3: Enhancing parental involvement in schools.	Sub-theme 1: Parents' meetings
		Sub-theme 2: Advocacy for parental involvement.
		Sub-theme 3: School celebration functions.

4.5 Data analysis from interviews

Data analysis for this study adopted is qualitative research as advocated by Creswell (2014). The main aim of data analysis was to give meaning to the data (Cohen et al., 2018). During data analysis, I organised the data, read through it, coded it, generated

themes and interpreted themes for the generation of theory. The following are the data collected from the interviews with principals and teachers.

4.4.1. Theme 1: Assistance from the parents

4.4.1.1. Sub-theme 1: Frequency of parents' communication with the school

According to Đurišić and Bunijevac (2017) families and schools communicate with each other in numerous ways. Schools send home notes and flyers about important school events and activities. Parents give teachers information about their children's health and educational history. When the participants were asked about parents' frequency of communicating with the school this is how they responded:

PA: *"Well, that is a very good question. Eeh, some of the parents do communicate with us and engage us with the learning problems they see from their children. However, some would just be quiet as if they do not have children attending school. Those who do not communicate with the school, would only communicate with us when there is a serious misconduct that has been committed by their children and this is very bad."*

PB: *"This is our serious concern, parents do not bother to inform us about what their children are going through at their different homes. When we, as a school realise that there is a problem with the child and contact the parent, the parent would still come after a very long time to attend the problem."*

However, PC continue to mention:

"The contemporary parents are different from those parents we used to have in the past who were mindful. As I am talking with you now, we are sitting with a problem of a learner who is epileptic and this has been happening since she was in grade 3 now is in grade 5 but the parent did not bother to communicate her condition with us and never came to school when she was called to attend the matter."

Teachers also added:

TA2: *"Eeh, it is our expectation that when we have sent a message to the parents either through a letter or any other form of communication the parent should avail himself or herself to school to assist us with the problem we have identified. We also*

envisage that parents should assist the school in areas of fundraising or sourcing resources for the school. Our policy is clear on that, but really this is not showing up.”

TB1: *“Last week, as I am speaking, we have requested parents through our different forms of communication such as flyers, letters and messages because we are having cell phone numbers for all of them in our database, to assist the school with printing papers because our school doesn’t have enough funds. Not a single parent has responded.”*

TC1: *“Our school policy is promoting that parents should communicate with the school. However, parents in this school do not communicate with us. They are only visible at school to talk to the principal when they have to complain about how the school is mismanaging school funds and causing chaos about how poor the school is managed.”*

Shezi (2012) posits that parental involvement in education has well documented benefits for students, parents and teachers. However, it appeared from participants’ narratives that parents’ involvement in schools leaves much to be desired. Even though their policies are promoting freedom of speech and communication, parents refuse themselves to be involved in the affairs of the school, even when they are given a chance to do so. Parents’ communication with the school in terms of the submission made by the participants is very poor. The worst part is that, even when the parents have been issued with communiques by the school to attend their children problems they do not respond. These appeared to the principals and the teachers that parents do not care about the education of their children, instead complain about the school management issues such improper management of school and school funds causing chaotic situation for the school.

4.4.1.2. Sub-theme 2: Parents visibility at school.

When asked about the parents’ visibility in school, this is what the participants said:

PA: *“Well, parents’ visibility is very important for proper functioning of a school. Their visibility gives a sense of collegiality in the management of a school and that is what is enshrined in our school visitation policy. The only parent you will see from time to time here at school is the chairperson of the SGB. You know, as parents I think once in a while you must visit the school to see what is happening.”*

PC: *“I have been encouraging parents to visit the school in order to make sense of what is happening here because this is also captured in our school policy. The intention of school visitation is among others to see how their children are taught, play and fed. Very few parents would come but as for many they don’t even see the need. This is really bad.”*

Complementing what PC mentioned, PB said:

“As school we have adopted an open gate policy where each and every parent is allowed to visit the school at any time to ask question about how the school is functioning, progressing and performing. However, parents do not take an advantage. The only time when they become visible is when they are here to collect report cards and don’t even bother to ask any questions after the receipt of the cards.”

TB1 also lamented;

“As teachers we always encourage learners to extend invitation to the parents to come and see how things are done here at school to avoid some of the questions that they would have regarding the management of the school. Normally the answer we receive from learners would be “What the teachers would be doing when we are at school? When is their space to operate? Let them do their own work, we have ours as well.”

TA1 added;

“It’s true sir, that parents do not want to see themselves at school because they think that it is a space for educated people and that educated people have all the solutions to the problems that are emerging in a school. They therefore excuse themselves from visiting the school leaving everything to be sorted by the SMT and the teachers.”

Similarly, TC1 mentioned;

“I have contact numbers of all the parents of the learners in my class and they also have mine. I always send them messages to inform them about their importance of being at school even if not invited. What happens is that only fifty percent would respond and promise to do as requested but fail dismally to comply.”

In support of TC1, TC2 submitted;

“Parent visibility here at school is a nightmare. There are so many things here at school that parents more especially those who are not working can come and assist the school with. Remember we are having a problem of late coming, bullying during the feeding of learners and other disciplinary problems. You know when children see their parents regularly at school they change their behaviour and this can assist.”

Accounts from the interview revealed the evidence of parent invisibility in schools. It emerged from the participants’ submissions that schools do have policies that allow parents to visit schools at any time when they feel like doing it. The objective of this endeavour is for parents to make sense of what is happening with their children, how are they taught, fed and relating to their teachers. One other issue relating to the visibility at schools is to make sense of the problems that are experienced by the school, how the school is managed and how they can assist in solving its problems. Participants highlighted parents’ visibility as measure to assist schools’ control and mend children’s behaviour. In support of this submission, Anastasiou and Papagianni (2020) posit that parental engagement enhances children’s attitude towards school. Children whose parents are engaged in their education are likely to have a positive attitude towards education and that these children are less likely to display disruptive behaviours in the classroom. However, participants revealed that parents’ visibility in schools is very poor where some parents see no need to visit schools since schools are meant for educated people who must know how to deal with problems in their situation in the way they were taught. Hence only few parents do visit schools when they are invited.

4.4.1.3. Sub-theme 3: Parents assistance with the learners

When the participants were asked about how parents assist them with their children, they lamented.

PA: *“Well, some do, some do not. We are experiencing a handful of parents who are engaged in their children’s’ education. You give a learner a homework to be assisted at home, a learner comes to school with undone homework. You write a letter to a parent to ask why the homework is not done, you get no response.”*

PC: *“Yeah, some of the parents do not care to hear what the school says about their children’s progress and challenges, they just not respond. Parents in our school are*

too busy to attend to the education issues of their children. They would provide numerous reasons such as not having money for transport, work and issues of attending funerals.”

TA1: *“What a question, well, we always engage parents about their children behaviour here at schools. For an example yesterday, we had a case of a grade 7 learner who was found smoking dagga. We called a parent and luckily, she came. When presenting this matter to her, she denied that it was her child who did that even when she was presented with evidence. We expect parents to assist us to remedy this kind of misbehaviour not to side with their children.”*

TC2: *“Since I was a teacher at this school, some of the parents who I know, never availed themselves for their children on one-on-one sessions. We are having learners here who cannot read and write. When we call their parents to come and join forces with us, they refuse. So, this is a problem to us as teachers.”*

TB2 added,

“We are sitting with a problem of poor school attendance by some of the learners. Parents of these learners are not assisting us to curb the problem, instead they exacerbate it. When they realise that the learners did not come to school for a good number of days, when he/she comes back would be accompanied by a letter informing that he/she was sick without even providing the sick note from the doctor.”

Absence of parents in education of their children negatively affect children’s development in health status, daily behaviours, and in-school performance (Mao, Zang, & Haifeng-Zhang, 2020). Submissions made by participants revealed that schools in rural areas are not assisted by parents to make sure that learning becomes effective for their children. Participants narrated that parents do not engage and assist the learners do their school work, hence learners underperform. It also emerged that parents do not give account for the failure of their children to do school work. It was also revealed that some of the parents instead of assisting their children to mend their behaviours in school, they condone them by protecting their children even when they have transgressed the rules.

4.4.2. Theme 2: Parental involvement challenges in rural schools

4.4.2.1. Sub-theme 1: Attendance of meetings by parents.

A common outcry from school principals and teachers who participated in the interviews was the poor attendance of parents' meetings. Participants were asked about challenges of parental involvement in their schools and this is what they said:

PA: *"The SMT, SGB and teachers are trying their utmost best to invite parents to all the meetings that are organised here at school, but only few parents attend. There is one group of parents that discourages parents to attend meetings. Remember, this group belongs to a particular political party that want to render the school dysfunctional."*

PB: *"Parents in our school are trying their utmost best to attend the meetings organised by our school. We are using almost anything to make sure that they attend although their attendance is unsatisfactorily, but at least we have fair attendance."*

PC: *"To be honest with you, we have a serious challenge of parental involvement in our school. The only full house attendance that we experience is only for the SGB members and few parents especially for those learners in grade 7. Parents do not attend the parents' meetings even when a meeting notice was issued long before the meeting has to be attended."*

Teachers interviewed in this study had this to say in their response to the question:

TA1: *"Yeah, as teachers we are organising meetings with the parents through WhatsApp, SMS's and written notices. I think this is politicised. When the former principal was still a manager of this school we never had problems of poor attendance of meetings by parents. Now of late is worse."*

TB2: *"Our leadership is hands-on, when coming to organise parent meetings. They go to the media, use posters, issue out notices and also do loudhailer to announce the meeting. Through all these, parents are able to attend our meeting even though is not in their good numbers."*

TC2: *“Surely, I want to blame the way management is handling this issue of parental involvement. We must be involved as teachers’ to be able to influence parents to attend school meetings. Well what can we do? We are led.”*

Narratives provided by participants signalled poor attendance of parents’ meetings except for PB and TB2 who, because of the effort they put in organising parental meetings are registering fair attendance of parents. However, poor attendance of parents’ meetings as outlined by the participants are attributed to poor organisation of the meeting, parental excuses even when meetings were long known to them, political interference in the affairs of the school as well as ignorance from the parents. From these submissions it can be inferred that the main challenge faced by rural schools regarding parental involvement is poor cooperation of parents.

4.4.2.2. Sub-theme 2: Illiterate grandparents/guardians.

Reacting to the question, school principals and teachers indicated that children staying with grandparents who are illiterate and cannot assist children with their school work is a great challenge when they mentioned:

PA: *“Yeah, some parents are not here, they are staying in Durban so the kids are staying with grandmothers who are illiterate, they cannot read and write, when you give a child a homework they come back with the response that my grandmother doesn’t know the school work.”*

PB also reacted;

“As much as the parent may be illiterate, the parent may find it difficult to give full support because of lack of resources, maybe it happens that the parent does not have a smart phone and is not informed about the topic.”

Teachers also had this to say:

TB2: *“We have a serious problem with children who are not staying with their biological parents. For example, there is a child who is staying with her grandparents, a very good learner. Last week she was absent the whole week. The grandmother does not have a cell phone so I contacted the neighbour and I was informed that the child together with the grandmother are not around.”*

TC1: *“Nowadays children give birth at a very young age then end up leaving their children with grandparents to find a job far away. Then you try to meet with the grandmother and you find that the grandmother is an alcoholic at times she cannot come to school and she would end up sending someone else. That makes it difficult to deal with parents about challenges faced by the learners.”*

TA1: *“With learners it is difficult, some of the grandparents or guardians cannot read and write. Well, when I follow up the learners staying with their grandparents, you would find that they were not assisted. They would say, my grandmother/guardian said she does not know this and why should she be involved in school work when she is not a learner, and refer back the learner to the teachers to assist her.”*

TA2: *“Challenges of parental involvement in some cases can be attributed to parents’ ill-health whereby you find that the parents are working far and the child is in the care of this sick parent who cannot assist the child with his school work and who cannot also go to school.”*

It emerged from the narratives submitted by participants that parental involvement in schools is a challenge. As indicated by PA and TC1 biological parents leave their children with the grandparents to seek job opportunities far away from their homes and as such leave the children in lurch without any assistance with their school work because of illiteracy level of their grandparents or guardians as articulated by PB. However, one other issue that contribute to poor parental involvement has been mentioned to be the abuse of alcohol by grandparents where they would not have time to accommodate school work for the child. Additionally, to this challenge, is the parent, grandparent or guardian’s ill-health that may impede him/her to either assist the child with school work or go to school when invited to address particular education issues of the child.

4.4.2.3. Sub-theme 3: Work commitment

Another challenge highlighted by participants from the interviews was that of parents who are unable to attend to their children’s educational needs as a result of work commitment and this is what participants said:

PA: *“Sometimes parents choose to neglect their children’s school work and to participate in their children’s education because of excessive engagement in their work responsibilities, forsaking assistance they should render to their children.”*

PB: *“The reluctance of parents to involve themselves where maybe a parent comes home very late, tired and does not give enough time to the child and the child ends up having to go to somebody else or one of the classmates to get assistance, yet the parent is there but the parent does not give him or herself time to assist the child.”*

PC: *“Some of the parents are taken weeks and months by their work commitments leaving the children with the siblings to take care of them. You know, you will find that siblings don’t even ask about their work, what is happening at school even the challenges that they are experiencing at school.”*

TB1: Added to say,

“Well, when a child is staying with a parent who is working and cannot give her attention to the child’s school work, it really become a burden in the learning process of the child.”

This challenge was also highlighted by TC2 who said:

“Sometimes the parent is working so she is unable to attend to her child’s problems at school because she has to go to work and, you know our jobs are not the same, some parents would think that if they absent themselves at work, they might lose their jobs.”

Narratives from the submission made by participants reveal that working parents especially those who are working few hours late do not have enough time to assist their children. PA and PC agreed that parents who are always engaged in extensive work-related travelling, working overtime, attending a series of workshops would always have a challenge in assisting their children with school work. However, TC2 alluded that some parents are afraid to request leave from their employers because of fear to lose their jobs. However, PB alluded that parents who are working find it difficult to assist their children with school work because of having long distances they are travelling to and from home and late arrival at their homes whereby when they

leave for work, they leave the children asleep and even when they return from work they find them asleep as well.

4.4.3. Theme 3: Enhancing parental involvement in schools.

Organisation of parents is viewed as one of the strategies that schools must use in order to enhance involvement of the majority of parents in the education of their children and decision-making in the affairs of the school. Regarding how parent involvement can be enhanced, this is how participants responded:

4.4.3.1. Sub-theme 1: Parents' meetings

PA: *"Well, according to SASA, parents' meetings should be organised on quarterly basis and that is what we are doing. Apart from discussion of issues relating to school governance, we always explain to parents the importance of attending such meetings." Apart from this legislation, as a school we have crafted a policy that encourages parents to be involved."*

TA1: *"As a school we also organise parents on quarterly basis to give parents feedback on the performance of their children. Although the attendance is not good but the few are getting excited about how we engage them in their children school work."*

PC: *"Organising meetings for parents is compulsory and we do it four times in a year. However, even if we don't have policy that is guiding parents to attend curriculum meetings, teachers engage parents from time to time in such meetings. Although not well attended, I have seen an improvement in their attendance registers."*

PB: *"Well, as dictated by South African Schools Act, it is compulsory to organise meetings to plan for the school budget, and give parents financial reports. We also organise learner and parent-teacher meetings where learners' progress is discussed with the parents. Overall, although not doing well, but will soon have majority of parents attending."*

TC2: *"Although we are organising meetings for the parents, we are not always successful more especially in curriculum related meetings. Parents do not attend as they were called unlike when attending SGB meetings."*

TB2: *“We engage parents in meetings which are scheduled quarterly and this exercise is led by us by individually issuing notices to the parents to attend. At first, we had minimal number of parents attending but ever since we have explained to the parents that they are not the ones who will provide answers to the comments we are making, the number of attendees is gradually increasing and the performance of learners is also improving.”*

The submissions made by the participants revealed that parental meetings are being organised irrespective of the challenges encountered. The South African Schools Act section 18(2)(a) and (b) dictates that SGBs must organise parents’ meetings at least once every school term and also the meeting with the parents, learners, educators and other staff of the school at least once a year, However PA, PB and PC agree that legislation is dictating that they should organise parents’ meetings. PC continues to indicate that in their case these meetings are sectional, some organised by SGB for governance issues whereas others by the class teachers to address curriculum issues. These submissions were also substantiated by TA1, TC2 and TB2 who articulated that they organise parents’ meetings on quarterly basis to give parents feedback and to collect report cards. However, as mentioned by TB2, PB and PC attendance of meetings by parents was gradually improving in their schools.

4.4.3.2. Sub-theme 2: Advocacy for parental involvement.

In terms of advocacy on parental involvement, this is how participants narrated:

PA: *“Due to poor attendance of parental involvement in our school, I have made it my obligation to sensitise parents in the community about the importance and the need to be involved in the education of their children. When there are gatherings such as funerals and community imbizos, I always request a slot in the gatherings to talk about how parents can be involved at school.”*

PB: *“Well, it is a good idea to do the advocacy because some of the parents, more especially in rural villages like ours do not know about the role that they must play in a school because of illiteracy factor. During the church conferences and traditional village meetings, I am always given a chance to talk about school development issues and that is where I also bring in the discussion relating to parental involvement.”*

TC2: *“Members of the SGB have been requested and assigned by the school the responsibility of sharing their knowledge regarding parental involvement with their counterparts when attending their social meetings and social ceremonies. This is assisting because parents are beginning to visit, communicate and assist the school whenever their assistance is required.”*

TB1: *“Yeah, the best way is to use media such as radio to talk about it because many parents get attracted to hear information from the radio than physically from an individual. Last week we requested a slot from the community radio station for a talk show about parental involvement. The advert that was made through the radio about us going to be on air, attracted many people to listen to the programme.”*

PC: *“Media is very important in our case for advocating parental involvement in our school. Nowadays people are busy and always have something to do rather than sitting down and listening to a person talking. We use social media, radio and our school website for those who have access to deliver our messages.”*

Yulianti, Denessen, Droop and Veerman (2022) assert that school leaders and teachers are two important agents within the school organisation to promote parental involvement. Narratives presented by the participants revealed that principals and teachers are engaging in parental involvement advocacy to involve parents to participate in school activities. It was asserted that the exercise is done by using different methods of attracting their attendance. PB alluded that during their church conferences and village traditional meetings there would be SGB members assigned to sensitise parents about their involvement in school and the need to do so. However, PA suggested sharing the information in the community during the funerals and imbizos. In support of PB, TC2 mentioned that social meetings and social ceremonies are occasions where his school always conduct advocacy on parental involvement. PC indicated that the school uses social media, radio and the website to advocate for parental involvement. Complementing what PC mentioned, TB1 mentioned that they use radio talk shows to alert parents about their role in school. According to Kankam and Attuh (2022) radio is an influential instrument to drive the distribution of development information to the communities. TB1 further explained that in her thinking

this was the best method to use for parental involvement in school because parents are able to be reached wherever they are.

4.4.3.3. Sub-theme 3: School functions and celebrations.

Principals and teachers can enhance parental involvement directly by reaching out to parents themselves and indirectly via teacher invitations to participate in different school events (Yulianti, Denessen, Droop & Veerman, 2022). To establish whether principals and teachers are involved in school celebration functions, this is what the participants mentioned:

PB: *“Well, together with the SGB, we always invite parents to participate in any celebration that is held here at school. Those who come do come. Last month we were celebrating the last quarter academic performance of the learners and awarding them certificates. Parents came in numbers to celebrate with their children and the occasion was electrifying.”*

PC: *“This is a practice in our school. At the end of this year we organised a farewell function for the grade 7 learners and parents were invited and had attended. Some of the parents were even asked to come and perform a traditional dancing for the learners. You know it was awesome.”*

TB1: *“Yeah, here at school we have a committee that directly deals with celebrations of our school events. A committee called entertainment committee. During the month of September, we celebrated Heritage Day where all the parents in the community were invited to come and display and show their learners their different traditional and cultural outfits and the value they attach to them.”*

In support of what TB1 said, PA added:

PA: *“We are living in a remote village that is highly regarding its tradition and culture. One of the most important obligations of the school is to enculture learners at the early age in order to understand their different cultures. We normally organise traditional events to be attended by parents here at school and other interested community members.”*

TC1: *“Celebrating important functions here at school without parents is like throwing a party to yourselves as teachers. We had 70 years school centenary last year and all the former students of this school as well as parents were invited to participate in the event. Some went to an extent of the history of the school which some of us did not know. From the experiences, learners, parents, teachers and other community members benefited a great deal.”*

In terms of the submissions made by participants celebrating functions in schools is an occasion of enjoyment and celebration which promotes learners and parents’ social interaction and harmony towards attaining better learner performance. Participants’ submissions complement the suggestion made by Dewildea, Kjørvenb and Skrefsrud (2021) that events celebration in schools respond to the call for diverse and inclusive initiatives to facilitate learning, belonging, and cohesion in schools. However, there are different events, celebrations, and functions that are organised by schools to enhance parents’ involvement in schools. To enhance parents’ involvement, they invite parents to join in the celebration of learners’ academic performance when they are awarded certificate. Some of the schools go to an extent of requesting parents to perform their traditional dances during such occasions. Calendar days such as Heritage days are also celebrated whereby parents are invited to display their traditional attire in order to sensitise learners about the value of their traditions. Some of the schools celebrate their school centenaries whereby all the former students of the school and the parent community are invited to participate.

4.5. Summary of the findings

School principals and teachers who took part in the interviews expressed a number of concerns regarding parental involvement. When asked about the assistance they get from parents, they complained about parents’ lack of cooperation. They expected parents to visit the school from time to time to talk about the challenges that their children experience at home which can affect their academic performance. Parents were sometimes invited to school to discuss health and academic challenges that teachers had identified from their children. However, parents never came to school even when they were invited to come. Some participants also mentioned that some children were unable to read and write and when they invited parents of those children

to come to school, parents never came. Schools also allowed parents to be visible at school to get an update on the academic performance of their children but parents did not come school. Parents were only coming to school when report cards would be issued.

When asked by the assistance that parents are expected to give to their children. Principals and teachers mentioned that they expected parents to assist their children with homework. However, this was also not happening as teachers would witness that most children do their homework on their own without the assistance of parents.

Participants were also asked about the challenges they encounter in terms of parental involvement. A common challenge in all the schools that took part in the study was poor attendance of parents' meetings. Participants complained that parents were not attending meetings at school even when they had been issued with a notice a long time prior to the date of the meeting. Participants from one school mentioned political interference as one of the reasons for poor attendance as she mentioned that there was a group of people who belonged to a particular political organisation who were influencing parents not to attend parents' meetings at school.

Illiteracy of grandparents was also cited as another obstacle to parental involvement. Participants mentioned that most learners in their schools are staying with grandparents who are illiterate. Such grandparents are reluctant to go to school to discuss the academic progress of their grandchildren as they believe that only teachers are responsible for their grandchildren's schooling. Such grandparents are not even able to assist children with homework as they have no educational experience of their own.

Participants also mentioned work commitment of parents as another challenge to parental involvement. Due to the demands of their jobs, most parents in rural areas come back from work late and tired. As a result, they are unable to assist their children with school work. Even when invited school to discuss academic and behavioural challenges of their children, they are unable to take a leave from work and go to school, out of fear that they might lose their jobs. They end up sending neighbours to represent them when they are invited to school.

When asked about what could be done to enhance parental involvement, participants cited parents' meetings which are mandated by the South African Schools Act. Although they complained about poor attendance in such meetings they still believed that such meetings may still be used to improve parental involvement.

Advocacy was also point out as another exercise that can be used to enhance parental involvement. Schools used various platform to advocate for parental involvement. They mentioned platforms such as radio stations, funerals, community gatherings, church conferences, school websites as various methods that schools may use to advocate for parental involvement.

Schools also used functions and celebrations to enhance parental involvement. One of the participants mentioned that their school had a committee called entertainment committee which was specializing in organizing such functions. They had functions such as farewells for grade 7, Heritage Day celebrations, awarding of academic performance etc. Parents would be invited in such functions to perform traditional dance. Attendance was also a challenge in such events because parents were not coming in numbers.

4.6. Conclusion

This study was about rural school principals and teachers' perceptions of the contribution of parental involvement in learner performance. In this chapter, I presented, explained and analyse data collected following procedures that were used during face-to-face semi-structured interviews. Reports generated using different data collection tools from the primary school principals and teachers regarding their perceptions of the contribution of parental involvement in learner performance was outlined. The detailed description and analysis of each participant is presented in the search for an in-depth understanding of the research question.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1. Introduction

This study was about rural school principals and teachers' perceptions of the contribution of parental involvement in learner performance. In chapter 4, I presented, explained and analysed data collected following procedures that were used during face-to-face semi-structured interviews. Reports generated using different data collection tools from the primary school principals and teachers regarding their perceptions of the contribution of parental involvement in learner performance was outlined. The detailed description and analysis of each participant was presented in the search for an in-depth understanding of the research question. A conclusion of the chapter was provided at the end of the chapter.

In chapter 5, I examine, summarise and report the discussion of the findings from the research sub-questions or rural school principals and teachers' perceptions on the contribution of parental involvement in learner performance. I also outline recommendations for parental involvement in rural primary schools and recommendations for further research in the study.

The main research question that I posed in this study was:

- How do principals and teachers at rural school perceive the contribution of parental involvement in learner performance?

The following sub-questions were posed to assist in answering the main research question:

- What are the expectations of principals and teachers of rural school in terms of parental involvement?
- What are the challenges experienced by principals and teachers in rural school regarding parental involvement?
- What strategies can be used by principals and teachers in rural schools to enhance parental involvement?

5.2. Reflection of the research journey

My research journey started in 2021. The first phase of my research journey consisted of the development of a research proposal which was presented in a mock defence and later the actual defence. I consulted both national and international literature in order to write the research introduction, background, literature review and methodology of the proposal. It took me a period of six months to complete the research proposal which was defended online in August 2021 to the defence panel of the University of Pretoria, faculty of education in the department of education management and policy studies. I then applied for an ethical clearance from the institution after the successful defence of the research proposal. The clearance was granted in February 2022.

I applied for permission from the Alfred Nzo East district office and identified schools to access participants. The criteria for choosing participants was to select four primary schools that are based in rural areas. From each of the primary schools, four principals who have a management experience of three years and above as principals were chosen to participate in the face-to-face semi-structured interviews. Two teachers from each of the selected schools were also chosen to take part in the focus group interview. However, one of the selected schools withdrew in the last minutes. I was then left with three schools where three principals and six teachers took part in face-to-face semi-structured interviews. I completed collecting data in May of 2022 and immediately started analysing it to write chapter four.

5.3. Summary

In this section of the study, I present the summary of the study undertaken to explore the perceptions of school principals and teachers of rural schools regarding the contribution of parental involvement in learner performance specifically at primary schools of circuit 3 of Alfred Nzo East District in the Eastern Cape Province in South Africa. This section also presents a detailed summary of the entire study.

In chapter 1, I introduced the study and provided the background regarding rural schools' principals and teachers' perceptions of the contribution of parental involvement in learner performance. I provided an international and national overview

regarding the importance of parental involvement in schools. It was in this chapter that I discussed the problem statement, rationale the purpose and aims of the study, the rationale, significance of the study, the main research question and secondary research questions and the limitations of the study. I concluded by summarising the contents of the chapter.

In chapter 2, I presented literature review. I addressed the influence of parental involvement on learner's performance, the activities of parental involvement that enhance learner's academic performance, the challenges to parental involvement in schools, strategies to improve parental involvement as revealed by scholars and academics globally. I also concentrated on the hypothetical backgrounds the lenses through which I adopted to guide, unfold and locate philosophies regarding the contribution of parental involvement in learner performance. Conclusion of the chapter was provided.

In chapter 3, I pronounced the research methodology used in this study to collect data from the participants as well as the data collection strategies that were used to collect data. I also located the research site and sampling, explain how the participants were selected, reasons for the choice of a particular method(s), trustworthiness and ethical considerations of the study including letters of informed consent to the participants. I also provided a conclusion of the chapter.

In chapter 4, I presented, explained and analysed data collected following procedures that were used during face-to-face semi-structured interviews. Reports generated using different data collection tools from the primary school principals and teachers regarding their perceptions of the contribution of parental involvement in learner performance were outlined. The detailed description and analysis of each participant was presented in the search for an in-depth understanding of the research question. A conclusion of the chapter was provided.

5.4. Research findings

The major research findings of the study are discussed on the basis of the three research sub-questions mentioned in 5.1 above.

5.4.1. Findings with regards to research sub-question 1: *What are the expectations of principals and teachers of rural schools in terms of parental involvement?*

The first discussion of the findings is based on the expectations of principals and teachers of rural schools in terms of parental involvement. The aim is to understand the expectations of school principals and teachers regarding parental involvement. To answer this question, data was collected through face-to-face semi-structured interviews. Data collected from the interviews revealed that principals and teachers expect parents to frequently communicate with the school in order to be kept abreast of what is happening in their children's education. This finding concurs with Aykac and Msengi (2019) that parents should also communicate with the school about the learning problems that their children encounter.

However, there was an outcry from all the participants that parents do not communicate with the school as frequently as they are expected to. They do not even respond to letters sent to them by the schools. They hold the belief that school related problems should be solved by educated personnel such as teachers. This finding is supported by Ozmen et al. (2016) who mention that healthy communication between teachers and parents is not always possible, and this creates numerous negative barriers on learner performance.

Participants in the study also revealed that parents should be visible at school from time to time. This will enable the parents to see how their children are taught fed and play. This would also bring a sense of collegiality between parents and teachers. Parents are expected to visit the school once in a while voluntarily without having to be invited. This finding is supported by Boulanger (2022) that parents should voluntarily come to school to meet the teacher with no prior formal appointment. Furthermore (Boulanger, 2019) declares that through their visibility parents would be able to ask the questions of how the school is functioning and how their children are behaving.

Finding 1: *Principals and teachers in rural schools expect parents to frequently communicate with the school, to be visible at school and to help their children with school work. However, this is not achievable as most parents in rural areas are not*

educated and cannot help their children with school work. Long distances that parents have to travel between home and school is another factor that is prohibiting parents from being visible at school.

5.4.2. Findings with regards to research sub-question 2: *What are the challenges experienced by principals and teachers in rural schools regarding parental involvement?*

The second discussion of the findings is based on the challenges experienced by principals and teachers in rural schools regarding parental involvement.

Narratives from participants revealed that parental involvement is a challenge in rural public schools. This finding concurs with the findings of the study conducted by Sibanda (2021) that Parental involvement in South African schools has been primarily limited to paying school fees. Challenges to parental involvement was discovered that is due to lack of communication between the home and the school, work commitment of parents, inconvenient meeting schedule, family structure and bad economic condition of parents. In concurrence with the views of Đurišić and Bunijevac (2017) that there is poor attendance of parents' meetings, even when parents are notified a long time before the date of the meeting. In some cases, this is caused by political interference in the affairs of the school whereby there is sabotage towards the current school principal by a section of parents who belong to a particular political organisation. Poor attendance of parents' meetings is also caused by poor planning of meetings by the school.

Illiteracy of grandparents or guardians has been identified as another challenge to the implementation of parental involvement. Most children in rural areas are staying with grandparents because their parents are away from home for work purposes. Most of these grandparents cannot read and write. This finding concurs Athiemoolam and Kwayiyo (2022) that most of the, most of the learners are raised by their grandparents, who do not have sufficient academic knowledge to assist their grandchildren. As a result, they are unable to help their grandchildren with school work. In some cases, these grandparents are not informed about the topic and do not have smart phones with data to research on the topic. Some grandparents are unable to attend to their

grandchildren's problems at school due to ill-health and sometimes alcoholism. They end up sending neighbours to school when they are invited.

Work commitment of parents has been identified as another challenge to the implementation of parental involvement. This finding concurs with Letswalo (2023) findings that some parents come home late and tired, they are unable to pay attention to their children's education. Some parents have children under the care of older siblings due to work commitment of parents. Some parents are afraid to absent themselves from work in order to heed a school's invite out of fear that they might lose the job.

Finding 2: *School principals and teachers in rural schools are trying their utmost best to involve parents in their schools. However, their efforts are impeded by factors such as poor attendance by parents, illiteracy of grandparents and guardians as well as work commitment of parents.*

5.4.3. Findings with regard to research sub-question 3: *What strategies are employed by principals and teachers in rural schools to enhance parental involvement?*

According to Kalayci and Oz (2018); Aykac and Msengi (2019) and Liu et al. (2020), schools may employ a number of strategies in order to enhance parental involvement. For example, schools may use various modes of communication in order to reach out to all parents. Schools may also enhance parental involvement by bringing awareness to parents on their roles in their children's education, communicate face to face with parents instead of sending them letters, have programmes that suit the involvement of parents and include parents in the decision making of the school. The department of education may also enhance parental involvement by providing training to all the stakeholders that need to be involved in the implementation of parental involvement.

In concurrence with the reviewed literature, participants also mentioned similar strategies as a way of enhancing parental involvement. One way of enhancing parental involvement is to organise at least one meeting per quarter in order to give parents feedback on the academic performance of their children and to give a financial report to parents. Teachers also organise one-on-one meetings with parents in order

to give report on the academic progress of their children. SGB meetings are also organised

Advocacy is another strategy used by rural schools to enhance parental involvement. School principals use gatherings such as funerals and community meetings (imbizos) where school principals would request a slot and talk about the importance of parental involvement. Other school principals use church conferences and community radio stations to talk about parental involvement. Members of the school governing body are also assigned the responsibility to educate other parents about the importance of parental involvement.

Schools in rural areas also enhance parental involvement by organising school celebration functions such as awarding of academic performance, grade 7 farewell at the end of each year. Parents are invited to come and perform traditional dance in such functions. Schools also invite parents to display their traditional attires during heritage celebration in September. One of the primary schools celebrated 70 years centenary and parents and former students were invited to be part of the celebration. Schools also have a committee called entertainment committee which organises and plans for school celebration functions.

Finding 3: *As a way of enhancing parental involvement schools employ strategies such as organising parents' meetings, advocacy and organising school celebration functions.*

5.5. Recommendations of the study

The study was anchored in the interpretivism paradigm using a case study to explore the perceptions of rural school principals and teachers of the contribution in learner performance. A case study provided me with an in-depth exploration of data from multiple perceptions. Grounded on the data collected regarding the phenomenon under study, numerous recommendations and propositions were made.

5.5.1. Recommendations with regards to research sub-question 1: *What are the expectations of principals and teachers at rural schools in terms of parental involvement?*

This study recommends that the department of education must provide clear guidelines and regulations in terms of how primary schools should go about implementing parental involvement, focusing on all parents not only those who are serving in the school governing body. In so doing, the department must also take into consideration the rural context of other parents where by most parents are not educated with low economic status. When doing this, the department should also provide examples of school activities that may require the engagement of parents in addition to those activities that require the engagement of parents at home such as homework and other assignments/ projects done at home.

Recommendation 1: *This study recommends that school principals and teachers must be provided with guidelines and activities of parental involvement by the department of education regarding the implementation of parental involvement. The department of education only regulates the engagement of parents who are serving in the school governing body. As a result, those parents are always engaged in school activities as their roles are clearly outlined in the SGB policy document. On the other hand, those parents who are not serving in the SGB have no policy that regulates their involvement. This study therefore recommends that the department of education must also have a policy that regulate the involvement of all parents.*

5.5.2. Recommendation with regard to research sub-question 2: *What are the challenges experienced by principals and teachers in rural schools regarding parental involvement?*

School principals and teachers in rural primary schools are trying their utmost best to involve parents in their children's education. However, as revealed in the interviews, they are faced with numerous challenges in trying to implement parental involvement. Parental involvement in rural schools is impeded by factors such as poor attendance of parents' meetings, illiteracy of grandparents or guardians staying with learners as well as work commitment of parents. This study therefore recommends that the department of education should provide training to all parents as it is doing with those who are serving in the school governing body. With those who are serving in the school governing body, the department at district level would organise a one-day training for newly-elected members of the SGB at the beginning of each SGB term. A similar

training may be conducted for all other parents where the district department of education would invite parents to each school, visit the school and conduct training to all parents. Conducting the training at schools where their learners are attending would minimise transport costs for parents as they would have to travel to the nearby schools. This training would curb the challenge of poor attendance by parents as it would enrich them with knowledge of their importance in the proper functioning of the school. Training would also shed light on the illiterate grandparents and guardians regarding the value they may add in their grandchildren's education despite their illiteracy. This would also end the perception that school related problem may only be solved by educated people such as teachers. Providing training to parents may not solve all problems associated with parental involvement but may go a long way in minimising them.

Recommendation 2: *This study recommends that the department of education should provide basic training to all parents and enlighten them on the importance of their involvement in the education of their children.*

5.5.3. Recommendations with regards to research sub-question 3: *What strategies are employed by principals and teachers in rural schools to enhance parental involvement?*

Parental involvement is regarded as one of most pivotal factors that contribute to the academic achievement of learners. Cooperation between teachers, parents and learners can make it easy to solve problems that affect children's academic performance. However, due to lack of knowledge from all the involved stakeholders, effective implementation of parental involvement, particularly in rural schools still leaves a lot to be desired. This study recommends that empowering stakeholders with knowledge of parental involvement should start with education students at institutions of higher learning. Institutions of higher learning should develop a module of parental involvement to make it compulsory for students studying towards teaching at any level of their studying. Institutions do have modules for educational psychology, inclusive education and school management. The same thing should be done with parental involvement as well. This would equip students with knowledge on parental involvement and its challenges even before they complete their qualification. As a

result, they would be in a better position to implement parental involvement successfully once they become employed as teachers.

Recommendation 3: *This study recommends that parental involvement should be done as a compulsory module at institutions of higher learning by prospective teachers at undergraduate level in order to acquire knowledge that will enable them to better implement parental involvement with success.*

5.6. Recommendations for future research

The objective of the study was to explore rural school principals and teachers' perceptions of the contribution of parental involvement in learner performance. The study focused on how parental involvement can be implemented effectively in the rural primary schools of the Eastern Cape Province. The study was limited to circuit 3 of the Alfred Nzo East District and only school principals and teachers were selected to be participants in the study. The district has 230 schools and 186 of them are primary and junior secondary schools. Had all these schools been represented, more data would have been collected on the principals and teachers' experiences of parental involvement as so many schools are likely to have varying experiences and perceptions on the topic. Also, if parents have been selected as participants in the study, a different perception of parental involvement may have been gained. However, conducting this research gave a scope of the shortcomings and challenges of parental involvement in rural schools. It is therefore significant for future studies on parental involvement to focus on the perceptions and experiences of parents in rural areas. This study also recommends that future studies on the topic of parental involvement also pay special attention to comparison between the academic performance of children whose parents are involved in their education and the academic performance of those whose parents are absent in their academic lives in order to gain an insight on whether parental involvement affects academic performance.

5.7. Concluding remarks

The objective of the study was to explore the perceptions of rural school principals and teachers regarding the contribution of parental involvement in learner performance. The most important parts of the study were discussed in chapter 5 which included the summary, findings and recommendations of the study. The research

questions were answered from data collected through literature review and face-to-face interviews, and conclusions on the topic under study were made. According to the responses from the participants, parents should be visible at school from time to time in order to get an update on their children's academic progress, see how their children are fed, taught and play.

Principals and teachers were also experiencing numerous challenges regarding parental involvement as most participants complained about poor attendance of parents' meetings, illiteracy of grandparents staying with learners and work commitment of parents.

From the major findings and conclusions, I have drawn up the following recommendations to resolve the above-mentioned challenges.

- Policy makers should develop a policy guideline that regulates the involvement of parents in their children's education. This should be done for all parents who have children at schools, as it is done to those who are SGB members.
- The Eastern Cape department of education should regulate parental involvement for parents who have learners in quintile 1 and 2 schools as they are the most disadvantaged ones.
- The department of education at district level should capacitate all stakeholders that are involvement in the implementation of parental involvement, taking into consideration the socio-economic and educational background of most parents in rural areas.
- Institutions of higher learning should introduce a compulsory module on parental involvement for teaching students.

5.8. Conclusion

In chapter 5, I examined, summarised and reported the discussion of the findings from the research sub-questions or rural school principals and teachers' perceptions on the contribution of parental involvement in learner performance. I also outlined recommendations for parental involvement in rural primary schools and recommendations for further research in the study.

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Appendix A: Requesting permission from the district to conduct a research



Faculty of Education
Fakulteit Opvoedkunde
Lefapha la Thuto

P.O. Box 551

Bizana

4800

29 April 2022

The District Manager
Eastern Cape Department of Education
Bizana
4800

Dear Sir/Madam

APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I Mzolisi Njiva a student at the University of Pretoria, currently studying for a Master of Education degree, hereby kindly request for permission to conduct the study titled “Rural school principals and teachers’ perceptions of the contribution of parental involvement in learner performance” in your circuit. The purpose of this study is to understand how principals and teachers of rural schools perceive parental involvement and to determine the challenges experienced by rural schools regarding parental involvement in primary schools of Circuit 3 in Alfred Nzo East District of Eastern Cape province. Bearing in mind that you have the right to reject this research study, I am hoping that you will accept my request. In an event that my request is successful, I would kindly request a signed letter permitting the study to be conducted in your circuit.

Four schools of Circuit 3 in Alfred Nzo East District of Eastern Cape province are purposively sampled. One principal and two teachers from each of the four sampled school will be selected as participants. Principals are requested to participate in a face-to-face semi structured interview and teachers will be required to participate in a focus group interview. The total number of participants in the focus group is eight. All

interview sessions will be tape recorded for transcription at a later stage by the researcher. As a researcher, I will ensure that covid-19 regulations such as wearing of masks, sanitising and keeping a distance of 1,5 metres in between participants are adhered to. The interview process will be limited to 35 minutes per session.

The researcher will also request for documents such as SGBs policy documents, copies of minutes of meetings with parents, registers used during the parents' meetings and schedules for parents' meetings held at school. The documents will be analysed in order to understand how parental involvement is implemented in the schools.

In order to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of participants in the study, I will make use of pseudonyms. All participants have the right to withdraw their participation at any stage of the study. Participants are also at liberty not to answer questions they are not comfortable with. In an event that a participant withdraws, data collected from that specific participant will be destroyed. During the course of the study, I will assume the role of a researcher. Participants are welcome to share anything regarding the study with me as the researcher.

Participants have the right to choose to participate and the right to choose not to participate in the study. However, participation in this study may equip principals and teachers with strategies of how to improve parental involvement in rural schools.

Member checking will be conducted in order to ensure that the correct data is collected and correctly interpreted. This refers to the verification of data by participants. After transcribing and interpreting data, the researcher will send it to the participants in order for them to confirm that data presentation and interpretation is a true reflection of their original ideas. They will also be given opportunity to reveal if data they have provided has been misrepresented and correct such misrepresentations. Participants will have access to data they have provided only. The supervisor of the study will have access to everything regarding the study including data collected from all participants.

We also would 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. 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.

DECLARATION

Principal investigator

I, **Mzolisi Njiva** declare that the statements above are true and to the best of my knowledge. I promise to submit the copy of my dissertation to the Eastern Cape Department of Education upon completion of this study.

Signature _____

Date: _____

Supervisor

I declare that **Mzolisi Njiva** is a Masters student in Education enrolled with the University of Pretoria. The researcher is aware of the conditions for conducting a research in education. I will ensure that a copy of the completed Masters in Education Degree is submitted to the Eastern Cape Department of Education without fail.

Full names of supervisor: Dr Diatleng Sebidi (SD)

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix B: Requesting permission from the SGBs to conduct research



Faculty of Education
Fakulteit Opvoedkunde
Lefapha la Thuto

P.O.BOX 551

Bizana

4800

12 May 2022

The School Governing Body chairperson

.....

Dear Sir/Madam

APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN YOUR SCHOOL

I Mzolisi Njiva a student at the University of Pretoria, currently studying for a Master of Education degree, hereby kindly request for permission to conduct the study titled “Rural school principals and teachers’ perceptions of the contribution of parental involvement in learner performance” at your school. The purpose of this study is to understand how principals and teachers of rural schools perceive parental involvement and to determine the challenges experienced by rural schools regarding parental involvement in primary schools of Circuit 3 in Alfred Nzo East District of Eastern Cape province. Bearing in mind that you have the right to reject this request, I am hoping that you will accept my request to conduct this study in your school. In an event that my application is successful, I would kindly request a signed letter permitting the study to be conducted at your school.

Four schools of Circuit 3 in Alfred Nzo East District of Eastern Cape province are purposively sampled. From four schools, one principal and two teachers from each sampled school will be selected as participants. Principals are requested to participate in a face-to-face semi structured interview and teachers will be required to participate in a focus group interview that will consist of eight members. All interview sessions will be recorded for transcription purposes by the researcher. Due to covid-19 regulations

each interview will be limited to 35 minutes per participant. As a researcher, I will ensure that covid-19 regulations such as wearing of masks, sanitising and keeping a distance of 1,5 metres in between participants are adhered to. You will be notified of the time and date of the interview. The interview process will be limited to 35 minutes per session.

The researcher will also request for documents such as SGB's policy documents, copies of minutes of meetings with parents, registers used during the parents' meetings and schedules for parental meetings held at school. The documents will be analysed in order to understand how parental involvement is implemented in schools.

In order to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of participants in the study, I will make use of pseudonyms.

All participants have the right to withdraw their participation at any time. Participants are also at liberty not to answer questions they are not comfortable with. In an event that a participant withdraws, data collected from that specific participant will be destroyed. During the course of the study, I will assume the role of a researcher; participants are welcome to share anything regarding the study with me as the researcher.

Participants have the right to choose to participate and the right to choose not to participate in the study. However, participation in this study will equip principals and teachers of rural schools with knowledge of the challenges faced by rural schools regarding parental involvement and how to overcome such challenges.

Member checking will be conducted in order to ensure that the correct data is collected and correctly interpreted. This refers to the verification of data by participants. After transcribing and interpreting data, the researcher will send it to the participants in order for them to confirm that data presentation and interpretation is a true reflection of their original ideas. They will also be given opportunity to reveal if data they have provided has been misrepresented and correct such misrepresentations. Participants will have access to data they have provided only. The supervisor of the study will have access to everything regarding the study including data collected from all participants.

We also would like to request your permission to use data collected at your school, confidentially and anonymously, for further research purposes, as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria. 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.

Yours sincerely

Student: Njiva M.

Signature: _____

Student number: 21685780

Mobile number: 083 979 4412

Email address: njivamzoli@gmail.com

Supervisor: Dr Diatleng Sebidi (SD)

Signature: _____

Mobile number: 082 220 5715

Email address: sebidi.sd@up.ac.za

Co-supervisor: Prof. Maitumeleng Nthontho

Signature: _____

Email address: Maitumeleng.nthontho@up.ac.za

Appendix C: Requesting permission from the principals to conduct research



Faculty of Education
Fakulteit Opvoedkunde
Lefapha la Thuto

P.O.BOX 551

Bizana

4800

12 May 2022

Dear principal

.....

Dear Sir/Madam

APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN YOUR SCHOOL

I Mzolisi Njiva a student at the University of Pretoria, currently studying for a Master of Education degree, hereby kindly request for permission to conduct the study titled “Rural school principals and teachers’ perceptions of the contribution of parental involvement in learner performance” at your school. The purpose of this study is to understand how principals and teachers of rural schools perceive parental involvement and to determine the challenges experienced by rural schools regarding parental involvement in primary schools of Circuit 3 in Alfred Nzo East District of Eastern Cape province. Bearing in mind that you have the right to reject this request, I am hoping that you will accept my request to conduct this study in your school. In an event that my application is successful, I would kindly request a signed letter permitting the study to be conducted at your school.

Four schools of Circuit 3 in Alfred Nzo East District of Eastern Cape province are purposively sampled. From four schools, one principal and two teachers from each sampled school will be selected as participants. Principals are requested to participate in a face-to-face semi structured interview and teachers will be required to participate in a focus group interview. The focus group interview will consist of eight members in total. All interview sessions will be tape recorded for transcription purposes at a later

stage by the researcher. As a researcher, I will ensure that covid-19 regulations such as wearing of masks, sanitising and keeping a distance of 1,5 metres in between participants are adhered to. You will be notified of the time and date of the interview. The interview process will be limited to 35 minutes per session.

The researcher will also request for documents such as SGBs policy documents, copies of minutes of meetings with parents, registers used during the parents' meetings and schedules for parental meetings held at school. The documents will be analysed in order to understand how parental involvement is implemented in schools.

In order to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of participants in the study, I will make use of pseudonyms.

All participants have the right to withdraw their participation at any stage of the study. Participants are also at liberty not to answer questions they are not comfortable with. In an event that a participant withdraws, data collected from that specific participant will be destroyed. During the course of the study, I will assume the role of a researcher; participants are welcome to share anything regarding the study with me as the researcher.

Participants have the right to choose to participate and the right to choose not to participate in the study. However, participation in this study will equip principals and teachers of rural schools with knowledge of the challenges faced by rural schools regarding parental involvement and how to overcome such challenges.

Member checking will be conducted in order to ensure that the correct data is collected and correctly interpreted. This refers to the verification of data by participants. After transcribing and interpreting data, the researcher will send it to the participants in order for them to confirm that data presentation and interpretation is a true reflection of their original ideas. They will also be given opportunity to reveal if data they have provided has been misrepresented and correct such misrepresentations. Participants will have access to data they have provided only. The supervisor of the study will have access to everything regarding the study including data collected from all participants.

We also would like to request your permission to use data collected at your school, confidentially and anonymously, for further research purposes, as the data sets are

the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria. Further research may include secondary data analysis and using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality

Please feel free to contact any of the stakeholders of the study listed below should you have any questions or concerns regarding the study.

Yours sincerely

Student: Njiva M.

Signature: _____

Student number: 21685780

Mobile number: 083 979 4412

Email address: njivamzoli@gmail.com

Supervisor: Dr Diatleng Sebidi (SD)

Signature: _____

Mobile number: 082 220 5715

Email address: sebidi.sd@up.ac.za

Co-supervisor: Prof. Maitumeleng Nthontho

Signature: _____

Email address: Maitumeleng.nthontho@up.ac.za

Appendix D: Letter of informed consent for principals



Faculty of Education
Fakulteit Opvoedkunde
Lefapha la Thuto

Private Bag X 551

Bizana

4800

12 May 2022

Dear Sir/Madam

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH

I Mzolisi Njiva a student at the University of Pretoria, currently studying towards a Master of Education degree, hereby kindly request for permission to conduct the study entitled “Rural school principals and teachers’ perceptions of the contribution of parental involvement in learner performance” with you. The purpose of this study is to understand how principals and teachers of rural schools perceive parental involvement and to determine the challenges experienced by rural schools regarding parental involvement at circuit 3 of Alfred Nzo East District in the Eastern Cape.

I kindly invite you to take part in this study as a participant in the face-to-face semi structured interview process. Participation in the study is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw your participation at any time. All the interview sessions will be tape recorded for transcription purposes by the researcher at a later stage.

As a researcher, I will ensure that covid-19 regulations such as wearing of masks, sanitising and keeping a distance of 1,5 metres in between participants are adhered to. You will be notified of the time and date of the interview. The interview process will be limited to 35 minutes.

In order to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of participants in the study, I will make use of pseudonyms. This means that your name will never be revealed anywhere in the study. You are also at liberty not to answer questions you are not comfortable with.

In an event that you withdraw your participation in this study, data collected from you will be destroyed.

You are welcome to share anything regarding the study with me as the researcher. You have the right to choose to participate and the right to choose not to participate in the study. However, participation in this study will equip you with knowledge of the challenges faced by rural schools regarding parental involvement and how to overcome such challenges.

Member checking will be conducted in order to ensure that the correct data is collected and correctly interpreted. This refers to the verification of data by you. After transcribing and interpreting data, the researcher will send it to you in order for you to confirm that data presentation and interpretation is a true reflection of your original ideas. You will also be given the opportunity to reveal if data you have provided has been misrepresented and correct such misrepresentations. You will have access to data you have provided only. The supervisor of the study will have access to everything regarding the study including data collected from all participants.

Bearing in mind that you have the right to reject this research study, I am hoping that you will accept my request. In an event that my request is successful, I would kindly request you to sign the consent form in order to participate in the study.

We also would 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. 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.

Please feel free to contact any of the stakeholders of the study listed below should you have any questions or concerns regarding the study.

Yours sincerely

Student: Njiva M

Signature: _____

Student number: 21685780

Mobile number: 083 979 4412

Email address: njivamzoli@gmail.com

Supervisor: Dr Diatleng Sebidi (SD)

Signature: _____

Mobile number: 082 220 5715

Email address: sebidi.sd@up.ac.za

Co-supervisor: Prof. Maitumeleng Nthontho

Signature: _____

Email address: Maitumeleng.nthontho@up.ac.za

Appendix E: Letter of informed consent for teachers



Faculty of Education
Fakulteit Opvoedkunde
Lefapha la Thuto

Private Bag X 551

Bizana

4800

12 May 2022

Dear Sir/Madam

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH

I Mzolisi Njiva a student at the University of Pretoria, currently studying towards a Master of Education degree, hereby kindly request for permission to conduct the study titled “Rural school principals and teachers’ perceptions of the contribution of parental involvement in learner performance” with you. The purpose of this study is to understand how principals and teachers of rural schools perceive parental involvement and to determine the challenges experienced by rural schools regarding parental involvement at circuit 3 of Alfred Nzo East District in the Eastern Cape.

I kindly invite you to take part in this study as a participant in the face to face interview process. Participation in the study is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw your participation at any time. All the interview sessions will be tape recorded for transcription purposes by the researcher at a later stage.

As a researcher, I will ensure that covid-19 regulations such as wearing of masks, sanitising and keeping a distance of 1, 5 metres in between participants are adhered to. You will be notified of the time and date of the interview. The interview process will be limited to 35 minutes per session.

In order to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of participants in the study, I will make use of pseudonyms. This means that your name will never be revealed anywhere in the study. You are also at liberty not to answer questions you are not comfortable with.

In an event that you withdraw your participation, data collected from you will be destroyed.

You are welcome to share anything regarding the study with me as the researcher. You have the right to choose to participate and the right to choose not to participate in the study. However, you may benefit by gaining knowledge of the strategies to improve parental involvement in rural schools.

Member checking will be conducted in order to ensure that the correct data is collected and correctly interpreted. This refers to the verification of data by you as the participant. After transcribing and interpreting data, the researcher will send it to you in order for you to confirm that data presentation and interpretation is a true reflection of your original ideas. You will also be given opportunity to reveal if data you have provided has been misrepresented and correct such misrepresentations. You will have access to data you have provided only. The supervisor of the study will have access to everything regarding the study including data collected from all participants.

Bearing in mind that you have the right to reject this research study, I am hoping that you will accept my request. In an event that my request is successful, I would kindly request you to sign the consent form in order to participate in the study.

We also would 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. 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.

Please feel free to contact any of the stakeholders of the study listed below should you have any questions or concerns regarding the study.

Yours sincerely

Student: Njiva M

Signature: _____

Student number: 21685780

Mobile number: 083 979 4412

Email address: njivamzoli@gmail.com

Supervisor: Dr Diatleng Sebidi (SD)

Signature: _____

Email address: sebidi.sd@up.ac.za

Co-supervisor: Prof. Maitumeleng Nthontho

Signature: _____

Email address: Maitumeleng.nthontho@up.ac.za

Appendix F: Informed consent form for principals and teachers



Faculty of Education
Fakulteit Opvoedkunde
Lefapha la Thuto

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I, _____ agree to participate in the research conducted by Mr Mzolisi Njiva with me. My participation is voluntarily. I am also aware that I have the right to withdraw my participation at any time should I wish to do so, and my decision to withdraw will not be held against me.

I understand that my daily duties will not be disturbed, and I grant the researcher permission to use some of my off-duty hours.

I understand that my identity and that of my school and all that I will say in this research activity will remain anonymous and confidential.

I also understand that I will be expected to provide written and oral comments on the draft report of the interviews

I am aware that permission for me to take part in this study will be secured from the Alfred Nzo East District office and University of Pretoria.

I grant permission that the research activities may be tape-recorded for research purposes and understand that these will be stored safely.

I have received contact details of the researcher and supervisor should I need to contact them about matters to this study.

Participant full name and signature

Name: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Appendix G: Interview schedule for principals and teachers


 Faculty of Education
 Fakulteit Opvoedkunde
 Lefapha la Thuto

Interview questions

Good day and welcome to this interview session. This interview intends to understand how parents are involved in your school. Participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw at any time. You have the right not to answer questions if you are not comfortable with them. Feel free to ask anything about this interview

Participant: Mr X		Date: _____
Participant rank:		Time: _____
School: School A-C		
No	Questions	Response
1	How often does the school engage parents in the affairs that need their attention?	
2	How does your school encourage parents to be involved in their children's education?	
3	What forms of communication does the school use to communicate with parents?	
4	Do you as a school have activities that compels engagement of parents and how are they organised?	
5	Which activities has the school designed for learners that require the involvement of parents at home?	
6.	How does the school invite parents to volunteer in school activities?	
7.	What policies does the school have to encourage parental involvement?	
8.	How does the school capacitate parents regarding their roles in their children's education?	
9	How are parents involved in the decision making of the school and how often does that happens?	
10	How does the school engage the community in its programmes?	
11	What challenges does the school encounter regarding parental involvement?	
12	What could be done in order to solve such challenges?	