

**Principals' leadership practices in promoting parental involvement in rural  
primary schools**

**By**

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Degree of Master of Education in the Discipline of Educational  
Leadership, Management and Policy, in the School of Education, College  
of Humanities**

**UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL**

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**Pietermaritzburg, South Africa**

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## DECLARATION

I, Sicelo Wiseman Mdingane, declare that

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- ii. This dissertation has not been submitted for any qualification or examination at any other University.
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This dissertation is submitted with\without my approval.

Signed: ..........

Date:...12 November 2022.....



16 March 2022

Sicelo Wiseman Mdingane (221064312)  
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Dear SW Mdingane,

**Protocol reference number:** HSSREC/00003919/2022

**Project title:** Principals' leadership practices in promoting parental involvement in rural primary school

**Degree:** Masters

### Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 09 March 2022 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

**Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.**

This approval is valid until 16 March 2023.

To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

All research conducted during the COVID-19 period must adhere to the national and UKZN guidelines.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours sincerely,



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**Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)**

/dd

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#### Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

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**INSPIRING GREATNESS**

## DEDICATION

This research report is dedicated to the following people:

- First and foremost, Almighty God, my creator who created me with spiritual capacity. Lord I adore you all the times and I am so grateful to have your spiritual intervention throughout the time of my studies up to this far.
- My parents (My late father, Mpayipheli Paulos Mdingane and Nomakhosi Mirriam Mdingane) for their parental contribution in inspiring me to become determined in everything in life.
- My siblings (Nomalungisa, Bukeka, Ntombifuthi, Mawethu, Phindiwe and Coceka) for their tolerance and understanding my challenges.
- My family (My wife, Zikhona, my son and daughter, Senyukelo and Ukhona Mdingane) for their tolerance and understanding my busiest moments.

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- iii. My wife, Zikhona Mdingane for her unconditional support, dedication and understanding during this project.
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- vi. Lastly, my research participants who shared such a valuable information taken from their daily practices and experiences in promoting parental involvement in their schools.

## **ABSTRACT**

This study explored the principals' leadership practices in promoting parental involvement in rural primary schools. This study was undertaken using the case study research methodology in five rural primary schools. The primary aim of the study was to examine how the principals performed their leadership in promoting parental involvement in their schools. The study was conducted in five rural primary schools with the principals chosen purposefully to be participants. This study adopted a qualitative research approach within the interpretive paradigm in understanding the principals' leadership practices in promoting parental involvement in primary schools. Literature was reviewed from international, African and national perspectives to gain insight into the study. Furthermore, the study was underpinned by two theories, they are Epstein's overlapping spheres of influence and invitational theory. Semi-structured interviews were used to generate qualitative data and thematic analysis was used in analysing the data. The findings revealed that there are still factors that support the principals' efforts and the inhibiting factors that inhibit the principals' efforts in promoting parental involvement. The findings revealed that school principals of the researched primary schools used numerous strategies to mitigate those factors that inhibit their efforts.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

<b>SGB</b>	School Governing Body
<b>SASA</b>	South African Schools Act
<b>PAM</b>	Personnel Administrative Measures
<b>NPO</b>	Non-Profit Organisation
<b>HIV</b>	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
<b>AIDS</b>	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
<b>SADTU</b>	South African Democratic Teachers Union
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organisation
<b>RSA</b>	Republic of South Africa
<b>HSSRC</b>	Human Social Science Research Committee
<b>USA</b>	United States of America
<b>DBE</b>	Department of Basic Education
<b>SCP</b>	School Community Partnership
<b>CMC</b>	Circuit Management Centre
<b>OVC</b>	Orphans and Vulnerable Children
<b>QLTC</b>	Quality Learning and Teaching Campaign
<b>SMT</b>	School Management Team
<b>LTSM</b>	Learning and Teaching Support Materials
<b>DH</b>	Departmental Head

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

### 1.1 Introduction

This study explored certain principals' leadership practices in supporting parental involvement in rural primary schools in the uMzimkhulu community of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. It also sought to examine the factors that supported or inhibited principals' efforts in promoting parental involvement in rural primary schools. Numerous scholars (Alhumam, 2021; Bhengu & Svosve, 2019; Yulianti, Denessen, Droop & Veerman, 2020) highlight the view that, school principals have a crucial role to play in promoting parental involvement in schools. Such a view is based on the fact that these scholars regard principals as having responsibility to ensure parental involvement. Rurality and education are also viewed by various scholars as having common dynamics in this regard (Bhengu & Svosve, 2019; Du Plessis & Mestry, 2019; Hlalele, 2014; Msila, 2012; Myende & Nhlumayo, 2020), and these researchers highlight the fact that, it has an impact on parental involvement in education. This is the first chapter of the dissertation, and it serves as an introduction that outlines this study. In that regard, this chapter highlights the background to the study. It includes the statement of the problem, the aims and the motivation behind the study, its significance, the research questions, and the rationale for the study. The chapter also clarifies the concepts and the structure of the dissertation and concludes with a chapter summary.

### 1.2 Background to the study

South Africa is a developing country and vast areas are characterised by rural communities which lack many resources that are available in their urban and suburban counterparts (Hlalele, 2014). School principals in rural schools have the responsibility of promoting and sustaining the involvement of parents in children's education (Du Plessis & Mestry, 2019). Myende and Nhlumayo (2020) in their interpretive, qualitative study, assert that school leaders have to develop their empowerment and take note of the new ways of communicating with all parents about what parents are expected to do. After 28 years of democracy in South Africa, there is still a lack of parental involvement in rural primary schools although it is of vital importance in sustaining learning (Munje & Mncube, 2018). Before 1994, most parents in South Africa

were not encouraged to play a part in their children's schooling (Hlalele, 2014). After 1994, parental involvement was given more attention by the South African democratic government through the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 (henceforth, SASA), which guarantees the provision for parents to play their crucial role in their children's learning (Republic of South Africa [RSA], 1996). The democratically elected school governing bodies (SGBs) were introduced in 1997; however, to date, there is still an unfortunate situation in this regard, in that parental involvement lags behind, especially in some rural communities. Rurality in South Africa is still harming the education system (Du Plessis & Mestry, 2019). Poverty in most of the African states is touted as leading to a lack of parental involvement in sustainable learning (Hlalele, 2014). The problem I have noticed in my community is that there is an undesirable situation in schools because the parents do not seem to be playing their role in the education of their children. Scholars such as Msila (2012) and Hlalele (2014) posit that schools in rural areas fall far below the poor urban schools in terms of a home-school relationship. The benefit of having effective parental involvement at school is its interconnection with learners' achievements (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017).

Numerous studies by several scholars such as Harwood, Knight, Thrower and Berrow (2019), Davis-Kean, Tang and Waters (2019), Boonk, Gijsselaers, Ritzen and Brand-Gruwel (2018) and others have indicated that there is a positive relationship between parental involvement in their child's learning and child's performance. This new trend requires more effective and innovative leadership strategies in order to improve parental involvement in rural schools. This is crucial, given the numerous findings which have highlighted many advantages of parental involvement on learner performance. Regrettably, researchers such as Llamas and Tuazon (2016), Ntekane (2018) and Child Trends (2018) observed a declining trend in parental involvement in the education of their children. Similar sentiments were later echoed by the Minister of Basic Education in South Africa, Mrs Angie Motshekga (2020), who lamented the growing decline in parental involvement in their children's education, particularly in poor rural communities.

It is against this background that Du Plessis and Mestry (2019) and Hlungwane (2021) argue that more effective and innovative leadership strategies are required to curb this unfortunate decline in parental involvement so that learner performance can be enhanced. The Minister of Basic Education, Angie Motshekga (2020) also pointed out that the lack of parental involvement was one of the main reasons why there was school violence and low academic

standards in South African urban and rural schools. More effective and innovative leadership practices are required for improving parental involvement in rural schools because as Manamela (2015) and Nthakyo (2016) observe, most parents do not live with their children on account of having migrated to other places in search of work or, in some cases many learners live with grandparents and / or guardians. Though the Schools Act places an obligation on parents to play a crucial role in their children's learning, most parents do not take this legislative provision seriously (Motshekga, 2020). Even reliance on the existence of school governing bodies (SGBs) does not in itself constitute sufficient parental involvement for the improvement of learner performance in schools. The call for effective leadership practices that lead to the involvement of all parents in their children's education and / or learning needs therefore has to be intensified (Yulianti, Denessen, Droop & Veerman, 2020). It is against this background that this study sought to explore ways by which principals can promote parental involvement in rural schools. The study also explores factors that inhibit the principals in promoting parental involvement in rural schools.

The Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM) determined by the Minister of Basic Education in terms of the Educators' Employment Act of 1998 (RSA,1998) stipulates the core duties of principals which include being responsible for meeting with parents to discuss learners' progress and their conduct. It further asserts that principals need to involve themselves in community activities, especially those that are related to education. According to Hlalele (2014), schools need to apply new strategies so as to implement South African policies such as the PAM document and SASA to improve the dynamics of education in rural parts of South Africa. Numerous scholars (Ates, 2021; Yamamoto, Holloway & Suzuki, 2016; Yulianti et al., 2020) are of the view that if strong home-school partnerships are created, parents are likely to enhance learners' academic performance which in turn benefits the school. Principals need to understand and adhere to these policies in order to benefit the school in terms of parental involvement (Mncube & Munje, 2018). This study sought to explore the leadership practices of the five rural primary school principals in promoting parental involvement in their schools.

This study also sought to examine the factors that support or inhibit the principals of the five selected rural primary schools in the uMzimkhulu Circuit, in promoting parental involvement in their schools. The study also examined the ways in which principals mitigate those factors that inhibit their efforts in promoting parental involvement in their schools. Issues of rurality

were considered in understanding how primary schools in rural areas differ when they are compared to their counterparts in the urban areas. The uMzimkhulu Circuit where the study was conducted is a rural area, therefore, it was of interest to understand how the conditions of rurality affected the leadership practices of the school principals in promoting parental involvement in their schools. As Du Plessis and Mestry (2019) argue, rural schools are facing undesired challenges including little parental interest in their children's schooling.

### **1.3 Statement of the problem**

School principals are expected to be innovative and effective in their leadership approaches and strategies towards promoting parental involvement so as to help improve learners' performance (Rapp & Duncan, 2012). School principals, in their capacity as leaders of schools, should formulate action plans and strategies that help improve parental engagement and increase the number of parents who actively participate and involve themselves in their children's learning development (Ates, 2021). According to Yulianti et al., (2020), school principals and educators have a significant role to play in promoting parental involvement in schools as organisations. This will then enable school principals to realise the potential benefits of increased parental involvement in school activities such as learning, attendance, good behaviour and, more importantly, improvement of learner performance. Ntekane (2018) posits that school management that effectively enhance parental involvement ensure the achievement of high learner performance. Innovative and creative leadership styles and approaches are idealistically important against the background of declining levels of parental involvement. Unfortunately, most principals are not innovative and creative enough as evidenced by the continuous downward trend in terms of parental involvement in school activities and the learning needs of their children (Du Plessis & Mestry, 2019). The lack of adequate parental involvement complicates the principals' and teachers' ability to impart knowledge and guide the learners alone without the support and involvement of the parents (Hlalele, 2014). This consequently affects learners' performance as the lack of parental involvement impedes sustainable learning. According to Matsepe and Maluleke (2019), South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU) reveals that, rural school principals complained that most parents did not even come to collect progress reports, attend school open days and simply did not do enough to help their children with homework as some of the assessment tasks need to be done at home with the help of the parents. This demonstrates that school principals are not doing

enough to promote parental involvement in the schools and this has negatively affected learners' morale and performance. Learners' performance in the rural primary schools which fall under the uMzimkhulu Local Municipality is amongst the lowest in the Harry Gwala District Municipality and this may be attributed to low levels of parental involvement in this area.

If this problem of poor parental involvement is not urgently attended to by school principals, learners' performance will continue to decline and lead to social ills (Munje & Mncube, 2018). This negative trend of unsatisfactory levels of parental involvement will surely be detrimental to the future and academic progress of rural learners. At worst, the lack of parental involvement may lead to increases in school violence, wayward behaviours, continued poor performance and failure by learners to progress to secondary schools. The focus on rural schools is particularly important given that these schools are the most disadvantaged in terms of parental involvement and many other learning resource challenges hence they require more focused attention (Hlalele, 2014).

#### **1.4 Rationale for the study**

After so many years of democracy in South Africa, the country still lacks parental involvement; instead of improvement, there is a decline in parental involvement in children's schooling (Du Plessis & Mestry, 2019; Hlungwane, Ham-Baloyi, Jordan & Oamen, 2021). Motshekga (2020) also complains about the lack of parental involvement in schools which compromises academic standards in South Africa. Most primary schools in the rural areas of the uMzimkhulu in KwaZulu-Natal also complain about the lack of parental involvement compared to urban schools as their counterparts. The rationale for conducting this study is premised on parents' potential to contribute to the theoretical, personal, professional, academic and institutional understanding of leadership practices and strategies that promote parental involvement in rural schools. Personally, this research study is intended to empower me to grow both professionally and career wise by acquiring comprehensive knowledge and understanding of effective leadership practices that lead to leader effectiveness in a school environment for promoting parental involvement for sustainable learning in a rural school environment. Professionally, the acquisition of research skills and a Master's qualification will enhance opportunities to grow career wise and to increase prospects of being admitted to higher degree qualifications (at the

Doctor of Philosophy level) thereby, enriching my academic knowledge regarding school principals' leadership practices in enhancing parental involvement for the promotion of sustainable learning.

This study will further contribute to additional theoretical understanding and additional academic knowledge of the leadership practices that promote parental engagement for sustainable learning in rural schools. The rationale for conducting this study also rests on the fact that the findings are intended to contribute to the body of knowledge on leadership practices that promote parental engagement in rural schools. The implementation of the recommendations from the research might help provide insights about how school principals can improve their leadership styles and strategies that help overcome the challenges hindering parental involvement in rural schools. Alhumum (2021) states that school principals need to reflect their leadership by ensuring that parents are actively involved in the education of their children. Furthermore, it is envisaged both the school principals and the schools they lead will benefit by ensuring that recommendations arising from this study are implemented and can thus, improve parental involvement, which may ultimately contribute to improved learner performance. According to Hlanga, Mthiyane and Muresherwa (2021), most scholars are of the view that parental involvement in schools leads to high learners' performance and good conduct. Literature based on numerous scholars' studies views parental involvement as a precursor to increased academic achievement (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017).

### **1.5 Significance of the study**

One needs to take note of the fact that the principals need to include all the stakeholders in the functioning of their schools, including parents in the schooling of their children for academic success. Scholars such as Ates (2021), Đurišić and Bunijevac (2017) and Yulianti et al. (2020), are of the view that there is a symbiotic relationship between effective parental involvement and high academic achievement. There has been a noticeable decline in parental involvement as observed by the Minister on Basic Education in South Africa Angie Motshekga and other scholars, as cited in the previous sections. It is therefore a worrying factor and one that may compromise academic achievement in schools. Scholars (Ates, 2021; Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017; Hlalele, 2014) suggest that schools in rural areas are mostly affected by a lack of parental involvement compared to their counterparts in urban areas. This study should therefore

contribute greatly towards the understanding of how some principals in the rural context of the uMzimkhulu Circuit promote parental involvement in their schools. This study will share anecdotal evidence amid experiences of the participants (principals) and can I therefore add to the discourses It should also be a reminder for those who do not fully understand what is expected of them.

## **1.6 Key research questions**

This study is guided by the following key research questions:

- What are the principals' leadership practices in promoting parental involvement in rural primary schools?
- What factors support or inhibit the principals in promoting parental involvement in rural primary schools?
- How do the principals mitigate the factors that inhibit their efforts in promoting parental involvement in rural primary schools?

## **1.7 Clarification of key concepts**

Drawing from various scholars, numerous concepts that are used in the study are clarified for use in this study. These key concepts are parental involvement, rural primary schools and leadership practices. These key concepts are discussed in the following paragraphs based on scholarly information.

### **1.7.1 Parental Involvement**

There are various ways in which parental involvement in education is conceptualised. Parental involvement refers to all the activities performed by the parents to enhance learners' success and good behaviour within or away from the school (Hlanga, Mthiyane & Muresherwa, 2021). Yulianti et al. (2020) assert that parental involvement means effective participation of the parents in the holistic development of the learners for success while Barr and Saltmarsh (2014) contend, that parental involvement refers to the shared responsibilities carried out by parents in the education of their children. Đurišić and Bunijevac (2017) support the belief that parental involvement starts at home and at different levels of education for successful learner academic

achievement. In the context of this study, parental involvement includes all the activities that parents are engaged in and that relate to their children's education and any support mechanisms that facilitate effective learning.

### **1.7.2 Rural primary schools**

Rural primary schools are located in rural and disadvantaged areas that are characterised by scarcity of resources, with the state being underdeveloped (Du Plessis & Mestry, 2019). To buttress that, these researchers refer to those schools as marginalised and in poorly resourced areas. Msila (2012) maintains that rural primary schools are rated far below their counterparts in terms of their quality of education, emanating from parental involvement. He further states that the rural schools are still suffering from insufficient and necessary needs for quality education and most of the parents have low levels of education. Similarly, Ahmed, Rönkä & Perälä-Littunen (2022) acknowledge that rural primary schools reflect inadequate knowledge and skills mainly because of the scarcity of working resources for quality education.

### **1.7.3 Leadership practices**

Leadership practices refer to the actions exercised by the leaders to direct the relevant institutions towards achieving something that will actually benefit these institutions (Minja, 2010). He further elaborates by saying that good leadership can result in success of the leader and that shows poor actions of a poor leader. According to Brewster and Klump (2005), leadership practices relate to overseeing the progress in the development in the institution so as to produce good results. These emanate from being successful principal.

## **1.8 Delimitations of the study**

The delimitations of this study are important as they provide information about the boundaries; in this case the study will be conducted in a small geographic area. The study's boundaries affect how the conclusions are drawn and also act as a reminder of possible shortcomings in the study (Maree & Mokhuane, 2007). Delimitations of the study should however enhance the trustworthiness of the findings of the study. The study was conducted in five rural primary schools with five principals sampled as participants. The study took place in the uMzimkhulu Circuit which falls under the Harry Gwala District Municipality.

## **1.9 The outline of the study**

This dissertation comprises five chapters that are outlined as follows:

### **Chapter One**

This first chapter serves as an introduction to the study. The chapter includes the following important aspects, namely, the background to the study, the statement of the problem, the rationale, motivation and aims of the study. The research questions, the significance of the study, and the definition of key concepts form part of the chapter.

### **Chapter Two**

This chapter contains a variety of discourses and scholarly perspectives about principals' leadership practices in promoting parental involvement in rural primary schools. The chapter also discusses theories that underpin the study on parental involvement and such theories are unpacked. Scholarly contributions from local, continental, as well as global perspectives inform the whole chapter in addressing the research questions.

### **Chapter Three**

The third chapter contains the research design and methodology that the study employed. Details of and justification for using the research design and methodology in this study are also provided. This chapter provides details of the way these designs and methodology are relevant to the study.

### **Chapter Four**

Chapter Four contains the presentation of the generated data with the participants through the use of semi-structured interviews. The participants' perspectives are reflected in this chapter with recordings having been utilised.

## **Chapter Five**

Chapter Five is the last chapter and it contains findings drawn from the previous chapters including the data generated and presented. This chapter reflects mostly on what was provided in Chapter Four on data generation.

### **1.10 Chapter summary**

The first chapter is an introductory chapter, and it contains a clear background to the study on principals' leadership practices in promoting parental involvement in rural primary schools. Other aspects of the first chapter were discussed and summarised in the outline of the study in the above section. The next chapter focuses on the review of literature and a discussion on the theoretical framework.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 2.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, an introduction and outline of the dissertation were provided. This chapter reviews the local and international literature related to this study with scholarly contributions by different scholars. The Department of Basic Education (DBE) expects all schools to have positive school-community relations for learners' academic achievement (DBE, 2012). According to SASA (RSA 1996), the parents in public schools have a crucial role in securing their children's future by working with the principals in directing the schools to success. This literature review therefore presents the body of literature concerning one's understanding of the principals' leadership practices in promoting parental involvement in rural primary schools. Rurality is also discussed based on local and international literature. The three research questions are used to guide the analysis of the scholars' views and in so doing this chapter focuses on the principals' leadership practices in promoting parental involvement.

This chapter is organised as follows: (a) The principals' leadership practices in promoting parental involvement in rural primary schools; (b) Factors supporting or inhibiting the principals in promoting parental involvement in rural primary schools; (c) Principals' leadership practices to mitigate factors that inhibit their efforts in promoting parental involvement in rural primary schools as subsidiary questions; (d) The theoretical framework, Epstein's overlapping spheres of influence regarding school, family and community, with Epstein's six typologies of parental involvement namely, communicating, parenting, learning at home, decision-making, volunteering and partnership with the community (Epstein, 1996). This theory has been substantiated by invitational education theory and practices (Purkey & Siegel, 2003), with five pillars, namely, respect, optimism, trust, care and intentionality. Lastly, there will be a chapter summary at the end of this chapter.

## **2.2 Principals' leadership practices to promote parental involvement in rural primary schools**

I start by explaining the term 'leadership practices', as it refers to the actions exercised by the leaders to direct the institutions towards achieving something that will benefit the institutions (Minja, 2010). Minja (2010) further elaborates by saying that leadership can prove a leader's success and less show of the poor actions of a poor leader. School principals are leaders who are expected to meet the parents in connection with their children's progress and behaviour and further involve themselves in the educational related activities of the community as some of their core duties (Department of Basic Education, 2016). Principals are responsible for promoting parental involvement through their knowledge as leaders (Rapp & Duncan, 2012). Following is the outline of principals' leadership practices to promote parental involvement in schools, that I am going to discuss in this section. These will be discussed as follows: Principals' effective leadership, ensuring a positive school climate and creating working parent-school-community relations in diversity.

### **2.2.1 Principals' effective leadership**

Principals' effective leadership refers to the determination shown by the principals in executing their duties for the benefit of the school and the community (Chikoko, Naicker & Mthiyane, 2015). Similarly, Rapp and Duncan (2012) maintain that school principals are required to provide effective leadership by encouraging parents, teachers, students and the community to work as a team. Principals are the key agents when it comes to a schools' success (Alhumam, 2021). Transformational leadership practices ensure successful parental involvement and motivate them to take part in children's academic achievements (Jeynes, 2018). Numerous scholars such as Arar, Abramovitz and Oplatka (2016); Bhengu and Svosve (2019); Yulianti et al. (2020) posit that transformational leadership enables the leader to ensure that all stakeholders including parents work for the desired school's academic performance and team building. James McGregor Burns (1978) coined the term transformational leadership and he is still regarded as the father of the theory (Bhengu & Svosve, 2019). When principals enact transformational leadership, the schools are likely to benefit from the blessings of having more parental co-operation, and can ultimately achieve well academically (Yulianti et al., 2020).

Invitational leadership practices are also about how leaders encourage the parents to take part in the education of their children (Bhengu & Svosve, 2019; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011).

Locally, Bhengu and Svosve (2019) further buttress this view by explaining that invitational practices facilitate good interpersonal relationships with the community members so that the latter take part in education. If the principals' invitational leadership style is well-practised, teachers tend to support parental involvement (Arar et al., 2016). The principals' effective leadership practices are also very important in relating the schools with the community for good learners' performance (Yulianti et al., 2020). Some scholars refer to the principals as school leaders because of the roles they play in relating the school and the community through their inviting practices (Yulianti et al., 2020). In the South African context, the SASA reiterates the inclusion of parents in school activities (RSA, 1996). According to the DBE (2016), Child Trends (2018), Munje and Mncube (2018) and others, there is a growing decline in parental involvement; therefore, the school principals together with their teachers, need to use their leadership strategies to change the situation into what is desirable. It is not enough for the parents to be actively involved in education by being on the School Governing Body only; but they also need to be invited to take part in their children's education (DBE, 2016).

Similarly, in the global context, in countries such as Japan, Indonesia, United States of America (USA), parental invitations work as motivation to the parents as they feel honoured to be part of children's education (Yulianti et al., 2020). In a study conducted in Japan and the USA, it was found that when mothers appreciated the invitational practice at school, they even volunteered to have contact with teachers and assist in the classrooms (Yamamoto, Halloway & Suzuki, 2016). Principals' shared leadership enables the successful principals to share their insights with all agents (principals, teachers, staff and parents) so as to solidify their collaboration towards maintaining good strategies for the school (Alhumam, 2021). Principals' shared leadership practices are those that include other stakeholders, contrary to the old style of a 'top-down' approach (Mphale, 2015). Mphale (2015) further posits that, when the Botswana education system introduced a Parent-Teachers' Association, the principals were motivated to involve parents in order to achieve their objectives and goals of the institution.

### **2.2.2 Principals' leadership for positive learning climate**

A positive learning climate is defined by certain scholars as a warm and welcoming environment that is conducive to learning (Thapa, Cohen, Guffey & Haiggin-D'Alessandro, 2013). They further posit that a positive learning climate involves teachers, principals, parents, and the community at large. According to Alinsunurin (2020), a positive learning climate is a different form of relationship within the learning environment which relates to parental involvement that takes part in school leadership and school improvement. I wish to focus on parental involvement as being related to the principals' leadership ability as this study focuses on principals' leadership practices required to promote parental involvement in schools. School principals are expected to relate their leadership practices to parental involvement for the benefit of the schools to ensure a positive learning environment (Maxwell, Katherine, Lee, Subasic & Bromhead, 2017). The latter scholars further define school learning climate as social attributes of the school within its stakeholders. A positive learning climate is fuelled by the shared leadership practices with clearly put approaches leading to successful learning at school (Cohen et al., 2009; Maxwell et al., 2017; Thapa et al., 2013). I have included a positive learning climate because when I draw from various scholars it is clear that when parents become involved in learning at school, these schools obtain high academic achievement. Principals' practices therefore should involve parents in a positive learning climate for the benefit of their schools in terms of achievement. As Berkowitz et al. (2017) point out, parental involvement is a very important element of school climate as it helps improve academic outcomes among learners. Clearly, school leaders who embark on establishing a positive school climate in their leadership practices promote parental involvement in schools.

### **2.2.3 Creating working Parent-School-Community relations in diversity**

Locally, Smith (2012) and the DBE (2016) maintain that principals have the responsibility of improving collaboration between parents, school, and the community with its diversity. The term 'diversity' is explained as "having a variety of differences in nature" (Smith, 2012). It is derived from the Latin word 'divers' which refers to the differences in various ways. I have used it in the study because, in education, there is diversity among many different members of the society; the families in education come from different backgrounds in terms of ethnicity, social class, language and level of education (Berkowitz et al., 2017). Principals, in their

leadership practices, have to orchestrate working relations between the parents, schools and community to improve learners' academic achievement (Smith, 2012). This scholar points out that diversity in education can present some barriers to parental involvement in their children's education. Similarly, in the global context scholars such as Ho (2009) and Berkowitz, Iachini, Moore, Capp, Astor, Pitner and Benbenishty (2017) contend that Parent-School-Community relationships play a pivotal role in the collaboration of all stakeholders at the school. Ho (2009) agrees that parental involvement in learners' schooling both at home and at school, is playing a pivotal role in the success of the education of their children (Ho, 2009). A study conducted in California using a School-Parent-Survey, the findings proved that school leaders were instrumental in parents and families' involvement in minority ethnic groups in a society with diversity (Berkowitz et al., 2017). Parent-School-Community relations are therefore relevant for this study as these can show success in also solidifying the relationship among the all stakeholders in the school.

Similarly, local scholars such as Myende (2012), Myende and Chikoko (2014) and Naicker (2012) state that, school-community partnership (SCP) is necessary even in a deprived context. These scholars advise that school principals should exercise their leadership beyond the school context to create a symbiotic partnership with the community. According to Myende (2013), the school leaders, and particularly school principals, need to involve themselves in community life. Literature suggests that deprived contexts affect different dimensions such as income, education, health employment, and material similar to rurality (Chikoko, Mthiyane & Naicker, 2015). Similarly, Maringe and Moletsane (2015) suggest that deprived areas are mostly affected by rurality. Myende (2013) points out that when SCP is exercised by school leadership through their philosophy of Ubuntu, it works for the success of the institution. According to Barge and Loges (2003) and Araque, Wietstock, Cova and Zepeda (2017), non-profit organisations (NPOs) also play a critical role in luring parents to be involved in school activities and to participate in school activities. Collaboration between parents and staff at schools as well as parent-to-parent ties, can be facilitated by non-profit groups. Parents claim that collaboration between parents, teachers and volunteers in after school activities are essential for ensuring students' success (Barge & Loges, 2003).

## **2.3 Factors supporting or inhibiting the principals in promoting parental involvement in rural primary schools**

Parental involvement mostly depends on a myriad of factors to be practised by the school principals as they are duty-bound to strive for the school's functionality (Wasserman & Zwebner, 2017). The parents do not necessarily visit the schools therefore the principals need to exercise their leadership effectively in promoting parental involvement in their schools (Yulianti et al., 2020). School principals, no matter where in the world have the responsibility of producing education of high quality (Naicker, Chikoko & Mthiyane, 2013). There are also other duties including bringing change to their institutions by being transformational socially (Bhengu & Svosve, 2019). The following are the sub-themes listing principals' supporting factors in promoting parental involvement in rural primary schools. There are however some factors inhibiting their efforts. These will be discussed below:

### **2.3.1 Factors that support the principals' efforts**

In this section I outline the factors that support principals' efforts in promoting parental involvement, my review of literature having generated three factors: (a) Leadership in early primary education; (b) Leading for effective communication; (c) Principals' leadership for parent-friendly schools. These factors are discussed below.

#### **2.3.1.1 Leadership in early primary education**

Early childhood development is known as the preparatory stage involving children's readiness for primary school education (Ezati, Madanda & Ahikire, 2018). Leadership refers to the influencing and motivating practices exercised towards set goals (Cheung & Kam, 2019). Cheung and Kam (2019) support the view that early childhood education requires sound leadership practices to set a rigorous parental-friendly school. Primary schools provide formal education for learners from Grade R to Grade 7 (Kaga, 2016). Kagan (2018) states that primary school education deserves a great deal of parental involvement as learners are still young. There is a strong relationship between early childhood development and primary schools as they address the transition for young learners (Kaga, 2016; Tatto, Richmond, Cater-Andrews, 2016). School principals extend their invitational leadership to the parents who are expected to provide

parental care for their children as early as the foundation phase so as to build strong foundation (Fajoju, Aluede & Ojugo, 2016). They believe that parental involvement is paramount to the learners' success, therefore school principals should create a welcoming environment for the parents. Early care foundation is defined as one of the crucial pillars in children's education during the early stages (Early Childhood Foundation, 2021). The World Health Organisation (WHO) states that the early care foundation refers to the critical period in the early stages where there is a need for the provision of strong building blocks (WHO, 2021). I have chosen to focus on this for this study as it talks to the early stages in the education of learners at primary schools. This study encompasses primary schools where the early stages of education for children are provided. The Minister of Basic Education, Angie Motshekga places emphasis on Early Childhood Development her department as a suitable path leading to readiness for Grade 1 classes (DBE, 2022). The idea is that principals need to utilise this opportunity and strengthen parental involvement in their children's education. At this stage of their children's education, parents are more involved than at later stages.

Locally, Bhengu and Svosve (2019) investigated early childhood development (ECD) in the rural schools of Zimbabwe. Through their qualitative study, they found that, school principals were using good leadership practices in bringing a myriad of changes to their schools. Their transformational leadership and invitational leadership are bringing a lot of change within the schools because school principals are succeeding in involving more parents in education. Bartoli, Joshi and Wolf (2022), in a recent study conducted using mixed methods in the Ghanaian context, found that parental involvement in early childhood education such as primary schools, can promote successful development in the education of the young children through the use of sound leadership practices. School principals have the responsibility of enhancing parental involvement in rural primary schools to ensure sustainable learning (Hlanga, Mthiyane & Muresherwa, 2021).

In the global context, Ho (2009) understands parental involvement as that based on Bourdieu's theory of practice, where the school principals need to understand and practice the rules of the game, and to achieve success. Pierre Bourdieu was a French philosopher who produced his theory of practice to analyse the school and its relevant leadership. It refers to the school as the field, habitus as the ideology and beliefs of the school principals' and parental involvement as the zone of acceptance and school and family resources as capital. Bourdieu (1984) produced

a formula of (Habitus) (Capital) + Field = Practice. The principals, teachers, students and parents are referred to as the agents of the school field. Principals who exercise their leadership provide a good working environment for all the agents of the school field (Ho, 2009).

### **2.3.1.2 Leading for effective communication**

Local and international scholars define the term ‘effective communication’ in various ways. Effective communication refers to the interchanging of information that leads to the successful attainment of targeted goals (Myende, 2013). Hlanga, Mthiyane and Mureshrwa (2021) content that principals, as school heads, need to communicate with the stakeholders for sustainable learning. Internationally, Wasserman and Zwebner (2017) concur by stating that effective communication refers to effective information-sharing between parents and teachers for students’ academic achievement.

Berkowitz et al., (2017) point out that when the schools and parents maintain their close relationships through regular communication, both schools and parents can positively contribute to the positive achievement of the schools’ goals. Mukurunge and Bhila (2019) agree that effective communication in an educational setting works for the improvement of the success of the institution. In addition, the use of social media should be utilised by the leaders of the institutions to reach out to all parents easily and as a time-saving method (Mukurunge & Bhila, 2019). Mkurunge and Bhila (2019) further state that, social media can help the school achieve effective communication among all the stakeholders for the benefit of the school. Similarly, Wasserman and Zwebner (2017) support the idea of the use of social media platforms as they improve continuously to allow direct communication between parents and the school. When the school leaders need to convene parents’ meetings, through these social media platforms such as WhatsApp, and computers, communication is facilitated (Kurt, 2014). Moreover Kurt (2014) further says that, social networks also allow for a quick response to avoid other time-consuming ways of conveying responses. Principals’ leadership practices need to be flexible and innovative to allow effective communication in order to transform parental involvement in their schools.

### **2.3.1.3 Principals' leadership for parent-friendly schools**

Parent-friendly schools refer to those schools that are easily accessible to the parents. In other words, these are the schools with a welcoming atmosphere for the parents. The ideal position is for school principals to create an environment where they are familiar with every child and their parents (Preston & Barnes, 2017). School principals should establish a strong and working relations with parents at school to enable parents to be involved in the education of their children (Chan, 2012). Numerous scholars such as Angelucci (2008), Baker et al. (2016), Zuckerman (2020) and Cheung et al. (2019) support the view that school leaders' practices are paramount for the establishment of the parent-friendly environment in schools to set a conducive tone at the school.

Some school principals practice distributed leadership to create an open environment for the parents to feel welcome in the school (Harris, 2003). Distributed leadership is an approach that entails extended cooperation within the stakeholder community in an organisation (Baloglu, 2011). According to scholars such as Hoy and Miskel (1987), Spillane and Burch (2006) and Yilmaz and Turan (2015), school leaders utilise distributed leadership to desist from a kind of leadership that focuses on an individual; distributed leadership is very important when it enhances the collective efforts of the stakeholders, including parental involvement in education. Baloglu (2011) affirms the view that when school leaders use a distributed leadership approach, their leadership practices produce a working friendship with the parents; as a result, schools can achieve all their set goals. The significance of practising distributed leadership at a school so that it influences and motivates all the stakeholders (school leaders, administrators, teachers, learners and parents) to uplift the standard of the school by putting more efforts in the expertise (Liu, Frankel & Roohr, 2014). Beattie (2016) and Bostanci (2013) affirm that distributed leadership is the precursor to the parent-school-friend relationship together with positive academic outcomes for the learners.

According to Myende (2019), school principals should distribute leadership so as to ensure strong cooperation within stakeholders to achieve success of their students. On the other hand, distributed leadership practices can also bring relief for the principals as all stakeholders are "hands on" and he/she can achieve a better partnership with parents (Myende, 2019). Numerous scholars such as Coleman (2005), Ceylan and Akar (2010) and Henderson et al. (2007) share

the same sentiment in that leadership for the successful parent-friendly school requires distributed leadership so that educators become actively involved in opening doors for parents to come to the school. Khalifa (2012) believes that the extended leadership responsibilities for school principals are necessary for their status as community leaders to have a strong bond with the parents in the community.

### **2.3.2 Factors inhibiting the principals' efforts**

In this section I outline the inhibitors to the principals' efforts to promote parental involvement in the education of their children. There are four factors inhibiting principals' efforts, and these are: (a) Educational leadership in the context of rurality; (b) Social media platforms inhibiting principals' leadership; (c) Principals' leadership and parents' low levels of education; (d) Principals' leadership and socio-economic factors. These inhibitors are discussed as follows.

#### **2.3.2.1 Educational leadership in the context of rurality**

Local and international literature defines rurality similarly. Internationally, scholars such as Afrin and Chowdhury (2019), Yulianti et al. (2019), Williams, Swain and Graham (2021) and Li, Shi and Xue (2020) maintain that rurality refers to the underprivileged and poorly resourced citizens with low socio-economic backgrounds compared to their counterparts. Myende and Chikoko (2014) state that numerous scholars have attempted to define rurality, but its complexity makes it difficult to arrive at a single conceptualisation and definition. Almost all areas affected by rurality face strong impediments that impact negatively on their education system (Bhengu & Myende, 2015). According to local scholars such as Hlalele (2014), Msila (2012), Du Plessis and Mestry (2019), Myende (2019) and Bhengu and Svosve (2018), rurality refers to a certain way of life where communities rely on land and livestock for a living. It is associated with poverty and under-resourced schools.

Robinson and Volpe (2015) state that the parents of rural school, children have difficulties in supporting school leadership in promoting parental involvement. According to literature, poverty, illiteracy, poor education and lack of knowledge are some of the dominating factors that inhibit principals' leadership in promoting parental involvement (Burns, 2020). Similarly, Jafarov (2015) says that prominent school leaders influence and motivate rural parents to act

against the negative effects of rurality and try to enhance highly appreciated parental involvement. In the rural primary schools in Bangladesh, there is no clear indication that parental involvement in children's learning exists in a rural context. Qualitative research was conducted using semi-structured interviews for teachers as participants and in-depth interviews for parents. The findings identified the lack of parental involvement in rural primary schools in Bangladesh instead some intervention was due (Chowdhury & Afrin, 2019). In this study, I have drawn that, principals' leadership practices are hindered by the issues of rurality. Similarly, in the research that was conducted in Pakistan, investigated the teachers in connection with parental involvement and its impact on the education of children in developing countries. Rurality was once again a problem in Pakistan as per the findings, as parental involvement was unknown in that context and there were numerous negative factors emanating from the issues of rurality (Ahmed, Rönkä & Perälä-Littunen, 2022).

Similarly, in Indonesia, school principals attempt to lead schools in ways that enhance parental involvement, but rurality undermines their efforts by jeopardising their leadership. Rurality in Indonesia is challenging in education as there is a lack of resources and parents are less interested in involving themselves in their children's schooling (Yulianti et al., 2019). Rurality in Pakistan is characterised by the poor quality of education in rural public schools, however, on the other hand parents are not financially able to send their children to private schools (Ahmed, Rönkä & Perälä-Littunen, 2022). School principals invite parents through their invitational leadership practices, but parents in Pakistan's rural schools do not place value on those invitations (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). In rural Pakistan, some studies reveal that rural school principals' leadership has been inhibited by poor teaching and learning emanating from poorly resourced rural schools (Ahmed, Rönkä & Perälä-Littunen, 2022).

Locally, in the South African context, rurality poses similar problems as principals' leadership practices face barriers in promoting parental involvement in rural primary schools. Numerous studies such as those of, Msila (2012), Hlalele (2014), Du Plessis and Mestry (2019); Myende and Maifala (2020) and Munje and Mncube (2018) found that the complexities of rurality presented numerous challenges, especially for school principals in promoting parental involvement in education. School principals are however, trying strategies to bring parental involvement to the rural context of South Africa (Munje & Mncube, 2018). In a qualitative study conducted in Mpumalanga province, South Africa, the findings showed that schools in

rural areas were running short of various important resources. This undermined the principals' leadership in rural schools (Du Plessis & Mestry, 2019). According to the literature, rurality in South Africa is more problematic than in developed countries. Nevertheless, what is taking place in Pakistan in terms of rurality affecting parental involvement in rural schools, is different from that prevailing in South Africa. According to Myende and Maifala (2020), rurality in South Africa presents school principals with a myriad of challenges and dilemmas in their leadership practices. In numerous developing countries and some developed countries, rurality is clearly more complex compared to urban setting (Hlalele, 2014). In the study conducted by Myende (2013), he posits that in a few rural areas, rural schools are however the only places that introduce some improvements in the community.

### **2.3.2.2 Social media platforms inhibiting principals' leadership practices**

Social media platforms refer to electronic communication used for social networking and microblogging through which users create on-line communities to share information, ideas, personal messages and any other information sharing (Meier, 2013). Wasserman and Zwebner (2017) state that social media refers to on-line information technologies that extend communication channels between people. Social media platforms however, are still having some challenges in school leadership practices. Similarly, numerous types of social media platforms can cause impediments to the principals' leadership practices regarding parental involvement in the school (Keley-Shahim & Gefen, 2014). Principals in rural schools put more effort into communicating with parents via social media, but challenges inhibit their leadership practices in promoting parental involvement through social media. Network problems in rural areas can inhibit communication between the parents and the school, some people in rural areas do not have smart phones and some are still living without cell phones (Al-Hail, Al-Fagih & Koc, 2021).

Similarly, Wasserman and Zwebner (2017) point out the challenges brought by the WhatsApp group as some parents send photos and videos clips at inappropriate times. Some parents even insult other parents and educators and some misinterpret the messages. Some create conflict within the groups and disappoint other parents, while other parents direct their communications to the principals unnecessarily (Wasserman & Zwebner, 2017). The cost of living is generally high, and access to data in areas challenged by rurality make it difficult for this communication

to commence freely for all parents (Beecher & Buzhardt, 2016). Shechtman and Busharian (2015) point out that some impediments are driven by the lack of skills in technology and poor socio-economic background as well as parents not having smart phones because of their religious beliefs and financial constraints. Wasserman and Zwebner (2017) further point out that numerous messages often accumulate while some parents respond to messages that are irrelevant to them.

### **2.3.2.3 School leadership and low levels of parents' education**

School principals, through their leadership and responsibilities regarding parental involvement, try to invite parents to their schools, but their efforts are thwarted by parents' low levels of education (Ahmed, Rönkä & Perälä-Littunen, 2022), for example in rural Pakistan, illiteracy inhibits the principals' efforts to improve parental involvement. Low levels of education refer to a state where people seem to have below-average common knowledge of education-related basic aspects that are known by many other people (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Some scholars such as Matshe (2014), Orozco-Lemus and Gearing (2019) refer to the low levels of education as illiteracy. This means some parents cannot read and write. Furthermore, they see illiteracy as undermining the principals' leadership efforts for example some parents have an inferiority complex about going to school and having a conversation with teachers and school leadership. Parental involvement activities are then futile exercises (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Local and international literature proves that parents with very low levels of education usually feel inferior about interacting with the stakeholders at school (Msila, 2012). Du Plessis and Mestry (2019) agree that, generally parents in rural settings are less educated, therefore, it is difficult for them to take part in the education of their children as they are less interested in monitoring their school work. In short, schools in rural areas often have poor education standards and parents are unwilling to take part in education. This results in drop out and low learner enrolment (Du Plessis & Mestry, 2019). Lack of education standards generally affects the promotion of parental involvement in schools negatively (Ahmed, Rönkä & Perälä-Littunen, 2022).

Another challenging factor is the fact that parents who are unable to read and write are also unable to communicate in any other language except their home language, which is not necessarily a language of teaching and learning (Ntekane, 2018). Ntekane (2018) confirms it

is difficult for the school to create good relations with parents who feel inferior due to lack of education. In rural Indonesia, parents feel that they have inadequate knowledge when dealing with teachers at school (Ahmed, Rönkä & Perälä-Littunen, 2022). According to Shah and Anwar (2014), when children display inappropriate behaviour, it is highly possible that it is transferred from their parents who have low levels of education. They also agree that a low level of parents' education hinders most principals' efforts to lead for the success of parental involvement as the education of a child starts at home. Furthermore, most parents in rural areas provide less educational support for their children compared to parents in urban areas who seem to have higher standards of education (Azubuike, Adegboye & Quadri, 2021). Low socio-economic factors also inhibit parental involvement, especially as they relate to literacy and numeracy. These parents often lack time needed to be involved, and their negativity towards their involvement is invariably due to a low level of education (Ndebele, 2015).

Further afield, in a quantitative study that was conducted in Southern Punjab in Pakistan, a Chi-square test was employed to test how pivotal parents' education was in parental involvement in education. The findings of the study indicated that parents' education and their involvement were precursors to the children's academic performance. For parents to be actively involved in the education of their children, it is important that this inhibiting factor is acknowledged, and strategies devised to overcome its negative effects. Another study was conducted in Greece to investigate parents', teachers' and principals' perceptions about the involvement of parents in education. In that study, it was found that teachers reported a need for training of parents because of their attitudes. However, the parents were reported to be hesitant to talk to the teachers; they felt that the teachers lacked professionalism, and such attitudes became a barrier to communication (Anastasiou & Papagianni, 2020). Clearly, based on the literature, low levels of education of parents constitutes a problem, especially in a rural context and it compromises success in principals' leadership regarding parental involvement. Shar and Anwar (2014) argue that, parents in rural areas should obtain education so as to involve themselves and become role models for their children.

#### **2.3.2.4 Principals' leadership and socio-economic factors**

Socio-economic factors refer to income, education, employment, community safety, ethnic group, gender and social support (Ndebele, 2015). Socio-economic factors negatively affect

principals' leadership for parental involvement in the education of their children (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Similarly, Msila (2012); Ndebele (2015) share the same opinions regarding principals' leadership and socio-economic factors. Socio-economic status is also related to the geographic status of an area, and both influence parental involvement (Williams, Swain & Graham, 2021). In a research conducted in Ngaka Modiri Moleme in the North-West province, it was found that most parents were affected by poverty and most children were not even living with their biological parents but with grandmothers. Unemployment was rife, and people were living in shacks. All these factors discourage parents from being involved in school activities. According to Matshe (2014), these socio-economic factors pose challenges to principals' leadership practices in promoting parental involvement in schools.

Studies conducted abroad by Đurišić and Bunijevac (2017), Gokturk and Dinckal (2018) and Naqvi et al. (2015) on parents' socio-economic status in parental involvement in children's education revealed a dichotomy between teachers' views on that teachers felt most of the parental involvement had to be exercised at home. This is contrary to the views that parents were eager to involve themselves in school decisions to support principals' leadership (Gokturk & Dinckal, 2018). Similarly, in a study conducted in Turkey on administrators, educators and parents' perceptions about parental involvement, their focus was on families and their socio-economic status. The findings were that parents from different backgrounds perceived parental involvement similarly because of the connections between the parents and the school (Cetin & Taskin, 2016). They also found that parents' socio-economic backgrounds affected school leadership practices' success or failure.

Locally, a study was conducted by Ndebele (2015) in Johannesburg in South Africa. The study examined socio-economic factors that influenced parental involvement in doing homework in the Foundation Phase. The findings revealed that when the socio-economic status of parents was high, parents were likely to play a pivotal part in children's education, while parents with low socio-economic backgrounds were less interested in taking part in their children's education (Ndebele, 2015). Local literature also points out that parents differ according to their levels of education due to their socio-economic status, but that school leaders can influence them to actively assist the schools (Singh, Mbokodi & Msila, 2004). Parents often focus on their livelihoods and forget about involving themselves in education (Rached, 2015). Poverty leads to difficulties for principals' leadership practices in promoting parental involvement,

especially in rural schools, according to Ahmed, Rönkä & Perälä-Littunen (2022). Drawing from this literature, it is evident that the socio-economic conditions of parents constitute a barrier and can undermine school principals' efforts in promoting parental involvement in education.

## **2.4 Principals' leadership practices to mitigate factors that inhibit their efforts in promoting parental involvement in rural primary schools**

There are some impediments to principals' leadership practices in promoting parental involvement (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). It is the school leaders' responsibility to mitigate the factors that inhibit their efforts in promoting parental involvement in education (Al-Hail, Al-Fagih & Koc, 2021). The term 'school leaders' in this study is used to refer to school principals (Yulianti et al., 2020). There are numerous strategies that school leaders can exercise to involve parents in children's education (Ntekane, 2018). Some scholars maintain that some schools do not try effective strategies to motivate parents to play their role in education (Kwatubana & Makhalemele, 2015). There are, however, four strategies that principals can use to mitigate the negative effects of the inhibitors to the principals' efforts, and these are; (a) Principals' design of an annual plan for parents' meetings; (b) Principals' leadership for academic achievement; (c) Principals' leadership practices to enhance a positive school culture; (d) Social media platforms used to benefit principals' leadership.

### **2.4.1 Principals' design of an annual plan for parents' meetings**

An annual plan is defined as a plan that is scheduled for a year on which there are scheduled dates for a particular year (Epstein, 2002). In other words, an annual plan is a plan that reflects times and dates to meet parents per year. Principals who include an annual plan to meet parents in their leadership practices can gain trust and meet their expectations (Torre & Murphy, 2014). Erdener (2016) contends that when principals exercise strong leadership in designing a plan for the annual meetings with parents, parental involvement can be successful. An annual plan includes meetings, school events such as parents' days and 'coffee with the principal' to bring parents to school (Yulianti et al., 2019).

In developed countries such as Japan, Britain, and the United States of America, research evidence shows that developed countries provide proof that parental involvement is the

precursor to learners' academic achievement (Radzi, Radzak & Sukor, 2010). Principals hold strategic positions in schools, therefore they need to be proactive in developing yearly plans to bring parents into the children's education (Yulianti et al., 2020). Similarly, Yulianti et al. (2019) maintain that for the parents to avail themselves, school leaders have to plan activities and invite them to come. Bennis and Nanus (1985), as cited in Alhumam (2021), assert that principals need to be well trained in order to be able to plan and monitor the implementation of plans to ultimately improve people's lives. School activities in children's education have shown pivotal importance in parental involvement in children's education (Radzi, Razak & Sukor, 2010). Programmes for the recruitment of volunteer parents to assist the schools in education related activities, are imperative for students' success (Epstein, 1996).

School leaders need to plan for the empowerment of all the stakeholders so as to mitigate all the barriers to parental involvement (Anastasiou & Papagianni, 2020). In a study conducted in Central Eastern Greece, by Anastasiou and Papagianni (2020), principals said that they were more than willing to involve parents in education. They further suggested a need to organise meetings with both teachers and parents to mitigate the barriers to parental involvement in education. School principals should therefore plan the meetings for the year with both teachers and parents to minimise their hesitation and negative attitudes towards parental involvement (Anastasiou & Papagianni, 2020). In the international arena, Yamamoto, Holloway and Suzuki (2016), Young (2018), Yulianti et al. (2020) and Jeynes (2018) suggest that school principals should play a leading role in planning programmes that will encourage the parents to be actively involved in education. According to Jeynes (2018), school leaders should draw up a clear schedule of events in which parents need to take part, such as parents' days, parents' meetings and so forth. Young (2018) found that, in Japan, parental involvement was accelerated by the fact that parents were provided with yearly schedules to enhance children's learning. Furthermore, Japanese parents had a schedule for attending seminars, trainings, reading, use of the internet and monthly attendance of classroom lessons.

Local literature suggests that in rural schools, principals should raise the spirits of the parents by including them in their schedules regarding decision-making activities (Msila, 2012). Similarly, Bhengu and Myende (2015), Du Plessis and Mestry (2019) and Myende (2019) believe that schools should draw up policies and plan programmes that are more relevant for the success of their schools. They further suggest that the school-community programmes

should be included in a school year plan to support parents from rural communities to mitigate the feeling of isolation. School leaders should also plan home visits and school-parent conferences each year so as to have face-to-face interactions with parents (Cooper, 2021). Similarly, in Turkey, schools are given the mandate to establish a School-Family Association (SFA) to plan activities such as volunteering, parental empowerment, parent-teacher conferences, students' and parents' events, face-to-face communication, training activities as well as fund-raising activities (Seni & Onyango, 2021). According to Hakymez (2015), in Turkish schools, there are even planned programmes to monitor parental involvement in children's schooling.

Invitations to organised programmes involving celebrities encourage learners to develop a love for education in schools and to recognise the importance of education in their lives (Constantino, 2020). In developed countries such as Britain, the United States of America (USA), France and Netherlands, celebrities take part in changing children's lives by helping them develop a love for the school (Deck, 2018). The latter author further states that celebrities, also referred to as the 'global citizens' organise programmes and even make donations to help children to engage in education. Celebrities attract children as they are their role models; children do what is desired in education due to celebrity involvement (Shahzad, Habib & Nouman, 2020). Based on international and local literature, I believe it is paramount to plan programmes that accommodate parents for the benefit of the schools, especially rural schools.

#### **2.4.2 Principals' leadership for academic achievement**

Academic achievement refers to the outcomes of academic performance that determine the extent to which the goals were achieved by an individual or an organisation (Steinmayr, Meiner, Weideinger & Wirthwein, 2014). Dweck and Elliott (1983), as cited in Tatlah, Masood and Amin (2019), define academic achievement as the overall performance based on potential, ability, and own skills in school subjects. Numerous scholars locally and internationally, such as Fajoju, Aluede and Ojugo (2016), Seni and Onyango (2021), Ntekane (2018), Myers-Young (2018) and Gonida and Cortina (2014) and others, support the view that parental involvement is a precursor to academic achievement in education which can enrich school leadership. Similarly, another study was conducted in Tanzania, using mixed methods to look at the role of parents in enhancing children's academic achievement. The findings showed parents were

not doing their best in supervising their children's learning at home. Due to the lack of parental involvement, the school leaders were advised to organise seminars and workshops for parents in order to encourage them to take part in education-related programmes to enhance the academic achievement of their children (Seni & Onyango, 2021). Also, in Tanzania, Shija (2017) conducted a study on assessment of parental involvement in academic performance. The findings showed that there was poor parental involvement in education which led to poor academic performance thus providing that principals need to play a leading role in influencing parents to enhance their children's education for academic achievement (Shija, 2017). Đurišić and Bunijevac (2017) posit that there is a strong need for parental involvement to obtain children's academic achievement in education. When the school leaders exercise their leadership properly, parents can be transformed from being passive to being active and excited about the education of their children, they also show excitement (Donkor, 2010). Leaders should also invite parents, the business community, as well as service organisations to identify academic goals for children's education (Donkor, 2010).

In South Africa, parental involvement in children's schooling is even stipulated in legislation such as the SASA and Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM) of 1998 (DBE, 2016).

The legislation further provides for parental involvement by urging parents to become valued partners in children's academic achievement (DBE, 2016). In the PAM documents, the school principals are mandated to honour their core duties of meeting the parents for the children's progress and behaviour and principals are required to involve themselves in the education-related community activities to enhance their children's achievements (DBE, 2016). Fajoju, Aluede and Ojugo (2016) conducted a study in Nigeria based on three critical subjects (Mathematics, English language and Integrated Sciences). The study sought to investigate the relationship between parental involvement and primary school children's academic achievement in the Edo State. The findings revealed that parental involvement fuelled primary school children's academic achievement (Fajoju, Aluede & Ojugo, 2016). Numerous scholars further recommend that school leaders should consider the involvement of experts such as educational psychologists to enhance parental involvement by using their expertise in children's academic school programmes (Fajoju, Aluede & Ojugo, 2016). In this literature, I have noted that school leaders should utilise several school activities to enhance parental involvement as it is seen as being appropriate for children's academic achievement. Clearly, parental involvement in children's schooling produces learners who achieve academically.

### **2.4.3 Principals' leadership practices to enhance a positive school culture**

Scholars have defined school culture in various ways. Deal and Peterson (1990) and Schein (2010) define school culture as referring to deepened patterns of the beliefs, values and traditions established in the school's history. Stolp and Smith (1995) as cited in Atasoy (2020), define school culture as deep patterns of norms, beliefs, ceremonies, rituals, traditions and myths and the way they are perceived by the principals and all other stakeholders within the school. Similarly, Hall and Hord (2015) in the United States of America state that school culture is the inspiration brought by the beliefs and attitudes towards all the aspects of how the school functions. In the Chinese context, school culture refers to cultural norms that direct people to place group goals above personal goals with thoughts and behaviours acceptable to social expectations (Haiyan, Walker & Xiawei, 2017). Numerous scholars from different countries define school culture according to their contexts. Similar attributes are identified within their definitions which are seen to be authentic and appropriate in different countries.

According to Bolman and Deal (2008), a negative school culture refers to those malpractices that result in undesirable situations. Bolman and Deal (2008) further state that when a school culture is toxic, it is unable to produce and sustain good learner achievement. Positive school culture can be associated with good leadership practices of the principals including the encouragement of parents to engage in their children's learning (Karadağ, Danisman, Dulay, Öztekin-Bayir & Tekel, 2018; McDowall & Schaughency, 2017; Spence, 2019). Drawing from this literature, I view positive school culture as welcoming to the parents and helping them to enhance quality education. The school leadership is intertwined with a positive school culture as a result of leadership styles that work for the benefit of parental involvement for learners' achievement (Atasoy, 2020; Bradshaw, Bearss, McCracken, Smith, Johnson, Lecavalier & Scahill 2018). Atasoy (2020) believes that a positive school culture and school leadership have the potential to inspire each other directly or indirectly therefore school principals are expected to establish and support a positive school culture to motivate parents, teachers and learners. They play a central part in the establishment of a positive culture in the school (McDowall & Schaughency, 2017). Moreover, school principals need to apply wise strategies in developing their positive school culture to motivate all the stakeholders to play their roles in achieving quality education (Karadag & Ozdemir, Ak, Ozer, Dogan & Elkiran, 2015). Honest and respectful relationships among the stakeholders in schools also need to be established to create

an environment that is conducive to learning (Kalkan, Altinay Aksal, Atinay Gazi, Atasoy & Dagi, 2020).

School principals are required to establish a clear vision and mission with the assistance of all stakeholders, including parents, to benefit the school (Atasoy, 2020). The school vision is defined as the statement that gives an explicit outline of the school values and objectives (Drew, 2021). According to Drew (2021), the school's mission statement provides information on what is done by the school to achieve its vision. Jacobson (2011) says that, this vision is the ability to analyse a plan for the future of an organisation. Drew (2021) maintains that those schools' values and objectives provide parents and the community with all ethos of the school.

School principals shape the school culture to demonstrate the aims and activities of their schools and to make the parents feel valued within the school (Deal & Peterson, 1990). It is expected of the principals to transform the school into a learning organisation through the involvement of parents who can play their role in education (Avei, 2016). Research studies on school culture reveal that school principals have the responsibility of uplifting the commitment of the school community in order to ensure a positive school culture (Moslehpour, Chau, Zheng, Hanjani & Hoang, 2020). They further support the view that school principals often need to allow a change in their organisations to build a positive school culture successfully. Drawing from the literature, it is evident that school principals have a major role to play in inculcating a positive culture that can enable parental involvement to prosper.

#### **2.4.4 Social media platforms used to benefit principals' leadership**

Social media platforms are the applications or websites where users become able to create and share their content and communicate with other website users (Chinje & Chinomona, 2015). Similarly, social media platform means any user-specific, web-based technology designed to create virtual connections on the internet (Mpinganjira, 2014). The latter scholar further states that the primary goal of utilising social media platforms is to connect with people and build communities which allow for group-sharing ideas and pivotal information. WhatsApp is one of the popular social media that is utilised in education as school principals, teachers, parents and even learners can easily access it (Annamalai, 2019). Numerous scholars such as Lia (2016), Andujar (2016), Kurtz (2014) and Schectman and Boucherian (2015) are echoing

similar views that WhatsApp is one of the social media technologies that enriched communication between school principals, teachers and parents in education. WhatsApp is a popular digital technology where messages are sent and received through electronics (Amini, 2018). Strong and visionary school leaders utilise their digital leadership to empower the teacher, parents and even learners to facilitate change and allow parental involvement in education (Kurtz, 2014). School principals can utilise networked leadership which, in turn reflects people-centred leadership that shares values and visions (Pashiardis, Savvides & Lytra, 2011). Strong school leaders intensify their leadership practices by forming successful WhatsApp groups to accept change as the world is moving from analogue to digital (Seitsinger, Felner, Brand & Burns, 2008).

School principals through their leadership can encourage parents to join school WhatsApp groups so as to access information easily from the school and to respond (Amini, 2018). Echoing similar views Schectman and Boucherian (2015) assert that principals' leadership should include digitalisation to strengthen the relationship with teachers, parents and learners. They further posit that digital leadership significantly enhances involvement in education. Using WhatsApp social media provides platforms to overcome all difficulties encountered by parents and the schools to communicate (Beecher & Buzhardt, 2016). The latter point out that, as parental involvement in education is critical for the success of children, mobile technology can benefit schools in the promotion of parental involvement.

In a quantitative study conducted by Amini (2018) in Indonesia, which intended to ascertain the significant role played by social media (WhatsApp) in parental involvement. The findings revealed that WhatsApp groups could significantly promote parental involvement when caring for the children at home. The findings also concluded that WhatsApp groups worked for the direct communication between teachers and parents, and even parent-to-parent communication. The parents could gauge their strengths and weaknesses when assisting children at home. WhatsApp social media groups can therefore support school leadership to enhance parental involvement in their schools (Amini, 2018). Similarly, a study that was conducted in Israel by Wasserman and Zwebner (2017), used the qualitative method to investigate out how WhatsApp (social media) improve parental involvement between teachers and parents in schools. The findings revealed that although there were some challenges to the use of WhatsApp, WhatsApp groups were beneficial to the principals' leadership in schools.

School principals can therefore create and manage WhatsApp groups and examine the boundaries appropriate in education (Wasserman & Zwebner, 2017). While electronic WhatsApp media promotes a positive connection between principals, teachers and parents regarding learner education (Kurtz, 2014). School leaders must ensure that WhatsApp groups are used specifically for educational purposes (Wasserman & Zwebner, 2017). Coleman (2003) advises school principals to help enable all stakeholders to utilise easily reached social media platforms so as to promote parental involvement in their schools. Ndlovu (2011) suggests that principals can enlighten the parents by means of the workshops to enhance their involvement in school activities. In short, utilising WhatsApp groups and involving various stakeholders, including parents, has the potential to improve both parental involvement in the affairs of the school, and communication between schools and the home can thereby be enhanced.

## **2.5 Theoretical framework**

The theoretical framework is defined as the structure that guides and provides a lens for the study (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). Similarly, the term theoretical framework refers to an organised guide that uplifts the research for the purpose of ensuring better understanding of the phenomenon of the study (Ololube, 2015). According to Grant and Onsloo (2014), a theoretical framework directs the research in the direction in which it was originally intended during the planning stage. A theoretical framework can interlink and coordinate the ideas of the researcher (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). It serves as the solidified foundation of the study conducted (Pajares, 2007). Based on these definitions, scholars indicate that a theoretical framework understands the planning of the research topic. Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres of influence and the Invitational leadership model by Purkey and Siegel (2003) are employed to underpin this study. Epstein's theory is used to better understand principals' leadership practices in order to promote parental involvement in rural primary schools.

### **2.5.1 Epstein's overlapping spheres of influence theory**

The study employs Epstein's overlapping spheres of influence theory by Joyce Epstein formulated in the 1980s. This theory suggests the connection between the School, Family and Community partnership. It also includes six fundamental characteristics of parental involvement and is relevant for this study as it deals with reciprocity between school and

parents. Myende (2013) describes the school-community partnership as a form of reciprocal communication between the school and the community. Epstein's overlapping spheres of influence theory features the school, the family and the community that ultimately empowers school leaders and all other members of an organisation to work in collaboration for the benefit of learners' achievement (Epstein, 2018). Furthermore, she contends that this theory promotes a partnership designed to work towards the success of students at different levels. Epstein and Sanders (2006) assert that students dedicate themselves to learning more to succeed at different levels when the home, the school and the community work together and put the students at the centre. Teachers play a pivotal role in creating the linkages between students' academic lives with the home environment (Tomchuk, 2021). Tomchuk (2021) believes that teachers' attitudes and behaviours ought to bridge students' academic performance and home.

Scholars such as Constantino (2020); Harris and Goodall (2007) and Handerson and Mapp (2002) perceive Epstein's overlapping spheres of influence as a child-centred theory as it sees the students as central figures, in the school, family, and community. Epstein recognises 'school, family, and community as paramount and far beyond just parental involvement (Constantino, 2020). Naicker (2013), as cited by Myende (2019), refers to the three spheres of school, family, and community as the three wheels that can produce the desired students' achievement if they work collectively towards the shared goals. Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres of influence explains the interaction between the community individuals, organisations as well as businesses for the improvement of students' academic achievement (Myende, 2019). For students to be successful there should be a symbiotic relationship between teachers and parents in terms of learners' achievement, with all supporting each other (Epstein & Sanders, 2006). Globally, numerous scholars assert that school-community partnerships provide the means for mitigating the challenges that cannot be dealt with by the individual school (Blank, Smits-Engelsman, Polatajko & Wilson, 2012; Myende, 2013; Myende & Chikoko, 2014). Epstein lists the six types of parental involvement in her framework. Joyce Epstein is well known as the founder of the theory which outlines of the attributes of parental involvement that are desired to solidify a sound partnership between the school and parents for school achievement (Young, 2018). The six characteristics can be used for this study. These key elements of parental involvement, as they are referred to by certain scholars, are parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, as well as collaborating with

the community. Below is given explanation of each of Epstein's six types of parental involvement.

### **2.5.1.1 Parenting**

Parenting refers to the guidance and empowering of learners throughout their years of schooling needed to inspire their positive self-esteem (Teba-Teba, 2016). Bhengu and Myende (2015) point out that parenting is attributed to the basic roles of families. They believe this parenting has to do with empowering families to create a positive environment so as to assist their children as learners. Inadequate parenting skills hinder the successful learning of children in schools (Hlanga et al., 2021). Caño, Cape, Cardoso, Miot, Pitogo, Quinio and Merin (2016) view Epstein's six types of parental involvement activities as building blocks in parental involvement and when parenting is appropriate, both learners and the school attain successful learning and achievement. According to Alhumam (2021), parenting entails the assistance of parents by the schools in terms of the necessary skills to develop throughout their children's schooling. He further advises that for the parents to be able to create a healthy home environment, conducive to education, schools should play a pivotal part. Good parenting beyond the school is vital for success, according to the literature.

### **2.5.1.2 Communicating**

Communicating refers to the various means of information-sharing with its reciprocity between parents and school leaders to enhance parental involvement (Epstein & Van Voorihs 2010 & Toom, 2018). Myende (2019) defines communication as a two-way reciprocal connection for a sustainable school-community partnership. Myende (2019) further refers to communication as a valued ingredient in creating sound school-community partnerships. School principals should provide numerous channels of communication for sound parental involvement (Hlanga et al., 2021). Alhumam (2021) also supports the view that communication is reciprocal between the school leaders, teachers and parents and guardians. It is about assisting family members in forming mutual connections with the schools to benefit schools, the schools' programmes and learners' progress (Bhengu & Myende, 2015). Communication between parents and school leaders should honour transparency and diversity in terms of culture and language appropriately (Alhumam, 2021). He also states that, it is the responsibility of the schools to

create good communication methods and line functioning for that communication to succeed. Drawing from the literature, I understand that it is the school leader's responsibility to navigate all the means of communication with parents for children's success throughout their education.

### **2.5.1.3 Volunteering**

Volunteering refers to the context in which parents are afforded time to render their contributions to schools to provide their support through voluntary involvement (Umeana, 2017). Alhumam (2021), Bhengu and Myende (2015) and Umeana (2017) support the idea of allowing parents a chance to volunteer regarding school activities as promoting the success of school leadership. School principals should therefore afford the parents a chance to volunteer and thereby enhance the education of their children (Alhumam, 2021). A similar view is that schools should plan school programmes to allow parents to volunteer to take part in school activities. As Hamlin and Flessa (2018) assert, volunteering allows the chance for the parents to exert their efforts and be motivated to support schools' efforts in educating learners. Volunteering, for example affords parents a chance to be volunteers in fund-raising programmes planned by the schools to check learners' attendance and become part of learners' sports-related functions (Epstein, 2010, Epstein, 2006 & Ntekane, 2018). Recruitment of parents by the school can assist teachers and relieve them off some duties, such as extra-mural activities (Bhengu & Myende, 2015). I conclude from this literature based on an interpretation of Epstein's theory, that volunteering also requires healthy relations between the schools and the parents.

### **2.5.1.4 Learning at home**

Learning at home refers to the context in which the parents and the schools have the responsibility to ensure children's educational assistance at home and school (Bailey, Bashford, Boatman, Squires, Weiss, Doyle & Spinney, 2016; Epstein, 2006). Children who have sound assistance at home progress better than those without home assistance (Epstein & Jansorn, 2004). This requires the school to ensure the possession of all relevant learner-support materials by the parents to enhance children's successful learning (Teba-Teba, 2016). Moreover, the latter author says that when parents are empowered by the school to enhance their children's learning, they are motivated to check their children's progress and keep in touch with teachers

at school. The families should be notified by the school leadership in terms of how to ensure learning of the children through homework (Ihmeideh, Alflasi, Al-Maadadi, Coughlin & Al-Thani, 2020). Similarly, Đurišić and Bunijevac (2017) assert that families should be included in setting yearly targeted students' goals, planning for their improvement in the classrooms and assisting them with their homework. Parents should organise activities such as visiting museums, extensive libraries and so on, to create a healthy home-based learning environment (Alhumam, 2021).

### **2.5.1.5 Decision-making**

Decision-making refers to the involvement of parents in the decisions that are taken by the schools, including empowering parents' leaders and representatives (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017). School principals ought to invite the parents to be part of decision-making in order to enhance their involvement in school matters (Young, 2018). Scholars such as Soini, Pietarinen, Pyhalto, Haverinen, Jindal-Snape and Kontu (2019) assert that the school's capacity to involve all stakeholders in decision-making is the determinant of fundamental school improvement programmes' success. Scholars such as Hamlin and Flessa (2018) and Ntekane (2018) maintain that parents' seminars and forums are paramount for decision-making as they motivate them to further involve themselves in school activities. It is suggested by scholars such as Young (2018) and Yulianti et al. (2020) that transformational leadership practices should therefore be utilised by school principals to involve parents in decision-making. I, therefore, believe that if school leaders include parents in the school's decision-making, parents tend to identify with the school and this ensures loyalty.

### **2.5.1.6 Collaborating with the community**

Collaborating with the community refers to the amalgamating of important community services and resources to develop strengthen the schools' programmes, families' practices, as well as students' learning and development (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017). It therefore believes all community members to help build their school and develop it to produce desirable learners' achievement and behaviour (Teba-Teba, 2016). The inclusion of numerous stakeholders in various school-building ideas in the engagement plan produces the best for the schools (Young, 2018). Strong, working leadership believes in working through collaboration with parents

(Myende, 2019). Naicker (2013) and Albright (2018) support Epstein's theory in placing value on parental involvement to improve schools' performance. This view is echoed by Hlanga, Mthiyane and Muresherwa (2021) who refer to schools with effective parental involvement and community as forces of change in society. According to Bhengu and Myende (2015), Epstein's model also believes the school leaders to remove all the boundaries between their schools and communities and allow various forms of parental involvement in their schools. In a study conducted by Yosef, Hasmalena and Sucipto (2020) in the Philippines and Indonesian elementary schools aligned with Epstein's six types of parental involvement, the findings proved that all six types of parental involvement were proven to be essential in parental involvement. Drawing on the literature, I recognise the importance of strengthening the symbiotic connection between the schools and their communities' school principals. This notion interlinks well with the next section that discusses Invitational Theory.

### **2.5.2 Invitational Education Theory and practices**

Purkey and Siegel (2003) are the co-founders and developers of Invitational Education Theory and Practices by featuring principles, values and leadership qualities. Numerous scholars have made some contributions to defining this theory regarding all interested stakeholders as part of successful in education (Day, Harris & Hadfield, 2001, Purkey & Siegel, 2003, Purkey & Novak, 1996). This theory revolves around invitations that are sent to people through person-to-person communication (Day, Harris & Hadfield, 2001). Invitational leaders create an environment that accommodates people's inter-relations in order to reach the goals of the institution (Purkey & Novak, 1996). It focuses on educational leadership practices in promoting parental involvement in education. I have chosen this theory for this study because, through its principles, it enlightens school principals about how to create a fertile learning environment by inviting and welcoming parents (2019). Similarly, Yulianti et al. (2019) believe that when leaders exercise invitational leadership by inviting parents to be involved in schools, parents feel welcome. Invitational education theory was developed based on five pillars, namely, respect, optimism, trust and care, and intentionality (Burns & Martin, 2010). The five pillars with bullets are discussed next.

### **2.5.2.1 Respect**

Respect is what people feel when recognised and are shown that they are valued as individuals. This is linked to the respect for each individual regarding their importance and worthiness by school principals so as to cultivate a co-operative environment within the education institution. This helps to enrich parental involvement as parents feel part of the institution (Evans, 2019). Invitational leaders treat people with respect and expect positive outcomes in their institutions (Stillion & Siegel, 2005). School principals need to work in collaboration and invite parents in education institutions to help achieve their schools' set goals.

### **2.5.2.2 Optimism**

Optimism reflects the belief that stakeholders in the institution have the necessary abilities to fuel growth and continuous development. In schools, when the parents are involved, school leaders believe parents' knowledge and skills can help to develop an institution and leaders encourage them to make a myriad of positive contributions towards the success of the school (Leithwood & Levin, 2005). Stillion and Siegel (2005) contend that invitational leaders convert difficult problems into valuable opportunities, therefore school principals in their leadership practices need to envisage that parents will fully participate in the education of their children (Gardner, 1990). This optimism includes having positive attitudes towards parents and being optimistic that they will contribute positively to the life of the school if they are given an opportunity to do so.

### **2.5.2.3 Trust**

Invitational leaders show that they are confident about the abilities, integrity and responsibilities of all stakeholders (Purkey & Siegel, 2003). In other words, this means that, when the parents are invited to school, principals ensure his/her trust in them (Day, Harris & Hadfield, 2001). School principals, however, need to cultivate a meaningful and working environment between home and the school to promote parental involvement.

#### **2.5.2.4 Care**

Parents need to be seen as assets in order to become partners with the school (Boutte & Johnson, 2014). School leaders' leadership practices embrace asset-based thinking when they invite parents to the school to show that they care for them (Jeynes, 2018). In order to obtain the support from parents, school leaders have to take care of them and be welcoming to their views about the school (Leithwood, 2012). Parents are an asset if they are fairly treated with care (Boutte & Johnson, 2014)

#### **2.5.2.5 Intentionality**

This means reflecting what is intended and how is it intended to provide a clear direction to the institution (Stillion & Siegel, 2005). Invitational leaders use their intentions when dealing with their stakeholders. Invitational school leaders are robust and rigorous in their intentions to change their institutions so as to be more invitational and welcoming to everyone (Stillion & Siegel, 2005). A study conducted by Shezi (2012) revealed that, when school principals invited parents, in different ways, parents felt motivated and energised to take part in school activities. Drawing from the above literature, I view this theory as pertinent to the responsibilities of principals who, when using all these principles, can enrich their leadership practices in promoting parental involvement in their schools. When the school principal uses all five basic principles of this theory, change can emerge to bring about a desirable situation in the school. This theoretical framework used in this chapter was chosen as it resonates from the research questions of this study as it seeks to know the principals' leadership practices in promoting parental involvement in rural primary schools.

#### **2.6 Chapter summary**

This chapter provided discussions on the literature, following what was dealt with in the previous chapter. The discussion focused on issues of leadership practices of principals in promoting parental involvement in rural primary schools. When viewing this literature, I intended to obtain insights with leadership practices that are exhibited by principals in promoting parental involvement in their schools. Additionally, certain factors that support or inhibit their efforts to promote parental involvement in their schools were discussed based on

scholarly contributions by local and international scholars. This part was followed by discussing some of their leadership practices to mitigate factors that inhibit their efforts in promoting parental involvement in rural primary schools. Lastly, this chapter discussed the theoretical framework that underpins this study. This chapter will be followed by chapter three which will discuss the research design and methodology used.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

In the previous chapter, the literature review and theoretical framework were presented based on the views of various local and international scholars on principals' leadership practices in promoting parental involvement in rural primary schools. In this chapter, I also present a discussion about the research design and methodology that were used to conduct the study. Firstly, the research paradigm with its philosophical underpinnings, that is, ontology, epistemology and methodology in which the study is located, is presented. Secondly, the research design and methodology are discussed, followed by sampling methods. Thirdly, a discussion on data generation methods is followed by data analysis, justification for its use, and issues of trustworthiness all of which are highlighted to ensure the credibility of the study. Ethical issues are also outlined, and the limitations of the study are included. A chapter summary concludes the presentation of the chapter.

#### **3.2 Research paradigm**

A research paradigm is defined as the framework within which the world is viewed in various ways (Hesse-Biber, 2010). The latter author posits that, the world view inspires personal behaviour and professional practices within the position taken in the research. This study was conducted within the interpretive paradigm. Scholars such as Creswell (2009), Willis (2007) and Lincoln and Guba (1985) perceive the interpretive paradigm to be anti-positivist and one which appears to be more subjective than objective. The interpretive paradigm requires an understanding of a particular context, and it is believed that reality is socially constructed (Willies, 2007). Denzin and Lincoln (2011) and Yanow (2014) state that interpretation draws from various methods, tools and techniques to ensure a credible understanding of a certain phenomenon. This view is echoed by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018) when they state that the interpretive paradigm includes multiple perspectives and interpretations of any phenomenon. From these definitions, I concluded that an interpretive paradigm was the most

relevant for this study as it allows for different perspectives on the researched phenomenon to prevail.

### **3.2.1 Ontological position of the interpretive paradigm**

Ontology refers to the nature of reality in the study (Crotty, 1998). The ontological position of an interpretive paradigm is characterised by the nature of multiple realities viewed in a certain phenomenon (Maree & Mukhuane, 2007). Maree (2007) further posits that the nature of these realities vary across time, as well as places. Alharahsheh and Pius (2020) concur in that ontology concerns mainly the phenomenon in its nature of existence. They further describe ontology as the nature of many different realities. The multiple realities can be socially obtained (Krauss, 2005). This study sought to understand the leadership practices in promoting parental involvement in schools, therefore, principals' views vary within their realities. The multiple realities in their leadership practices as explained by the school principals seem to be pertinent to this study.

### **3.2.2 Epistemology of the interpretive paradigm**

Epistemology is the understanding of the ways of knowing the nature of realities (Crotty, 1998). Based on the interpretive paradigm, it explains the ways of knowing what we know, as well as relating human beings with their social world (Crotty, 1998). Interpretivism believes the world is attributed to human beings with various beliefs, assumptions, views as well as various approaches (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). Epistemology in the interpretive paradigm is also about relating the researcher and the reality, as the researcher and participants have conversations and the potential to inspire each other to acquire knowledge (Crotty, 1998; Guba, 1990). It becomes pertinent for this study as it allows interaction with the research participants to express their views and knowledge on the phenomenon. The school principals were therefore able to explain their perceptions of their leadership practices in promoting parental involvement in rural primary schools and I could obtain a comprehensive impression of the interactions between various participants from different schools and their social realities relating to the phenomenon.

### **3.2.3 Methodology based on the interpretive paradigm**

The methodology is concerned with the strategies for conducting research and the design process for conducting research (Igwenagu, 2016). According to Alharahsheh and Pius (2020), the methodological assumptions inspire research methods, procedures and analysis of gathered evidence to obtain reality on the phenomenon. The methods enabled me to generate qualitative data through comprehensive conversations and probing questions to acquire the participants' social realities (Yin, 2018). By employing semi-structured interviews for data generation, the study assumed a position required to acquire meaningful realities from the participants. This study focused on the principals' leadership practices in promoting parental involvement in rural primary schools. The study was conducted in rural primary schools with experienced school principals who had been in their leadership positions for several years.

### **3.3 Research design**

Research design refers to a plan and strategy that resonates with the underlying philosophical assumptions, and that are precise in the sampling of participants, as well as data gathering techniques and analysis (Maree, 2007). It relies on the researcher's assumptions, skills and practices and inspires the ways of producing data (Maree, 2007). Similarly, Pandey and Pandey (2015) posit that research design is a framework or plan guiding and directing the study towards data generation, as well as data analysis. This depends on the choice of the researcher to select the more suitable research design for the study so as to reach reality (Crotty, 2003). McMillan and Schumacher (2006) point out three types of research designs in which the researchers can choose. They are quantitative, that is numerical, qualitative with (narrative data) and mixed methods that use both designs. This study adopted a qualitative research design as the data were generated through the inter-changing of words with the participants.

According to Creswell (2009) and Dawson (2006), a qualitative research design is categorised as the one that searches for detailed and comprehensive information based on people's lived experiences, perceptions, personal attitudes, as well as human views and opinions. Creswell (2007) states that, a qualitative research design is where the researcher obtains information from the participants through face-to-face interaction during the study. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2006), a qualitative research design uses non-numerical ways of analysing

data to enhance a greater understanding of the studied phenomenon. I chose a qualitative research design as the study intended to seek information from primary school principals in order to understand their leadership practices in promoting parental involvement in their schools. Using a qualitative research design was advantageous for this study as it allowed me to seek information from my participants during face-to-face interaction so as to understand their social experiences. Utilising this design therefore further enhanced my understanding of the principals' leadership practices in promoting parental involvement, by directly listening to what they said. Alharahsheh and Pius (2020) argue that a qualitative research design intends to provide valuable knowledge about the phenomenon based on peoples' experiences. Similarly, McMillan and Schumacher (2006) point out that qualitative research is where the researcher interacts with the participants orally to probe and to share their thoughts on the phenomenon. Qualitative research is utilised to assemble the deepened details on a particular topic (Rahi, 2017).

### **3.4 Research methodology**

Numerous scholars have formulated their descriptions of research methodology. What I have drawn from their various descriptions is that research methodology does not entail just only methods and techniques utilised to produce data. Scholars such as, Jansen and Warren (2020) define research methodology as the way the researcher systematically organises the study to ensure the trustworthiness of the results of the study. According to Igwenagu (2016), research methodology simplifies and guides the manner in which the research is conducted. She further posits that it is the interconnection of techniques that are applied in the study. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018) state that various methodologies are utilised by the researchers in qualitative research studies, namely, action research, case studies, as well as ethnography and surveys. This study followed a case study methodology, as it systematically sought to obtain reality from the principals on their leadership practices in promoting parental involvement in rural primary schools.

A case study is defined as a study focusing on a single case to be investigated in depth by utilising probing questions posed to the participants (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). They further posit that it is obtaining data for a single phenomenon irrespective of the number of research sites as well as people who will participate in the study. It is also defined as a case

researched in a systematic and in-depth context to obtain realities about the specific case (Rule & John, 2011). Interpretivists' perspectives view a case study as a comprehensive understanding of the way the participants construct the meaning of a studied phenomenon (Maree, 2007). Yin (2018) argues that a case study limits the chances of manipulation of the participants who are part of the study of a certain phenomenon. I strongly agree and chose a case study as it was relevant for this study on principals' leadership practices in promoting parental involvement in rural primary schools. I further believe that a case study is suitable for this study as it is located in an interpretive paradigm which aligns itself with multiple truths in the social world. I believe principals' perceptions reflect various truths during the study. According to Maree (2007), a case study does not only focus on a single perspective, instead, it offers multiple perspectives analysis in which other relevant groups are considered as well as the dynamics of the situation. This study focused on rural primary school principals as the study participants reflected the dynamics of their schools in terms of parental involvement.

### **3.5 Research population**

The research population is defined as all human beings or items that the researcher intends to know deeply, while sampling is known to be choosing a certain portion of the entire population (Rahi, 2017). According to scholars such as Malhotra and Birks (2007), a chosen smaller part of the population can make inferences at the expense of the entire population. They further posit that the sampling of a certain portion of the population minimises workload and time factors that can be caused by studying the entire population. The sampling method is pertinent to the studies that are naturally related to a particular sampling (Rahi, 2017). When I draw from the above definitions of the populations and sampling, I agree that, sampling of the population is reasonable for the entire research as it makes it possible for the researcher to make inferences from the sampled population. I therefore believe that a sampled population is relevant for this study, as the study required five rural school principals as participants. They were chosen for the study as they provided leadership strategies to promote parental involvement in schools. Principals were chosen to be participants in this study because of their experience in working in strategic positions in rural primary schools. I believe their participation in a study was imperative as they are currently experiencing various factors in the execution of their daily work.

### **3.5.1 Purposive sampling**

Purposive sampling of the population is normally utilised to acquire valuable knowledge from the participants who are knowledgeable or have information that is pertinent to the phenomenon (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018). McMillan and Schumacher (2006) maintain that purposive sampling entails a targeted population, as well as institutions with detailed and intimate information about the phenomenon as they are known as guaranteed to possess knowledge about the researched phenomenon. Purposive sampling seemed to be relevant for this study as it could target rural primary school principals who were knowledgeable in parental involvement in rural schools. The study sought to understand the principals' leadership practices to promote parental involvement in rural primary schools. The school principals are responsible for motivating and influencing parents to be actively involved in school activities with other stakeholders (Calitz, Fuglestad & Lillejord, 2002). According to Du Plessis and Mestry (2019), principals in rural schools have the responsibility of fighting the challenges brought by rurality and need to increase parental involvement in rural primary schools. School principals could express their views on success or failure in their efforts to promote parental involvement. According to Myende (2019), school principals are the drivers of collaboration with the parents in rural schools as they are in deprived environments. Purposive sampling was believed to be the most appropriate for the study as it was anticipated that it would provide valuable information. As Maree (2007) points out, purposive sampling carried out specific purpose in mind.

### **3.5.2 Sampling instrumentation**

Sampling instrumentation is defined as the selection of the instruments to utilise in the research during the data generation stage of research (Ary, Jacobs, Irvine & Walker, 2018). According to Malacanang-Bitonio's (2014), research instrumentation refers to the construction of research instruments to be utilised appropriately during data gathering in the research study. Ary, Razaveih and Sorensen (2010) posit that the most commonly used research instruments in qualitative research include observation, interviews and document analysis. In this study, a semi-structured interview guide and a voice recorder device were utilised for data generation. Scholars such as Creswell, Hanson, Clark-Piano and Morales (2007) and Hamilton and Finley (2019) suggest that for the researcher to obtain the required quality of research findings, the relevant instruments should be utilised. An interview guide should be utilised in case where

interviews are conducted (Jamshed, 2014). According to Adosi (2020), an interview guide refers to the set of topics planned by the researcher to cover all research questions to be answered under each question. Similarly, Jamshed (2014) affirms that an interview guide is important to guide the face-to-face conversations between the researcher and participants for the satisfaction of the research purpose. What I drew from this literature was that, an interview guide was the most relevant for this study as it would satisfy the purpose of the study as it focused on face-to-face interaction with the principals as participants.

Voice recording is defined as the use of a voice-recording device as an instrument to make recording of the participants during the interviews (Maree, 2007). It is one of the instruments that can satisfy the purpose of the study as it deepens the views of the participants and is pertinent to their reflections (Maree, 2007). Bowen (2009) agrees that electronic devices used to record participants' voices during interviews help to generate evidence and to improve the quality of the research findings are important for the study. According to Rutakumwa, Mugisha and Bernays (2019), the voice recording instrument is required in the research study to ensure rigour and trustworthiness of the research. According to Nordstrom (2015), recording devices have a pivotal role to play in the interviews as they influence the interviewer and the interviewee. What I have drawn from this literature is that the recording device is important for this study to ensure trustworthiness of the study, as well as the quality of research findings. Secondly, the recording device allows easy reflection on the study.

### **3.6 Data generation methods**

Data is defined by scholars as the amount of information obtained from the participants during the commencement of the research study (Muir, Callingham & Beswick, 2016; Otto, Otto & Scholl, 2013). The term 'methods' is used as 'techniques' by some scholars such as Gormode and Srivastava (2009) and Maree (2007). Data generation methods are imperative to the research findings depending on what is revealed by that data (Pandey & Pandey, 2015). Similarly, qualitative data generation techniques play a pivotal role in providing useful information needed to understand the study and its research findings (Kabir, Rahman, Smith, Lusha, Azim & Milton, 2016). Kabir et al. (2016) also refer to qualitative data as the non-numerical data taken from the qualitative research study, therefore qualitative data-gathering methods were utilised in this study as it was a qualitative research study and non-numerical.

The semi-structured interviews, guided by the interview guide, as well as a voice recorder were the methods chosen for this study to generate data.

### **3.6.1 Semi-structured interviews**

Semi-structured interviews (such as an oral face-to-face conversation) with the five primary school principals were used to generate data for this study. Semi-structured interviews allow the participants to give detailed information and provide their personal views and beliefs based on the specific topic (Dawson, 2006). Maree (2007) highlights the fact that it is the qualitative data generation method that allows the participants to provide answers to a set of questions and allows for the probes to further clarify their answers. Similarly, scholars such as Creswell (2009) and Adams (2015) posit that semi-structured interviews allow for the situations in which the need for follow-up questions arises. The semi-structured interviews allow for flexibility between the researcher and the participants (Dawson, 2006). Semi-structured interviews comprise both closed and open-ended questions that allow for unrestricted deliberations by the respondents which result in the collection of detailed information (McNeil & Chapman, 2005). I therefore regarded semi-structured interviews as relevant for this study, as they allowed for probing questions to enable the participants to certain issues. Secondly, the mere fact that they were conducted in a face-to-face situation allowed the participants to provide detailed and reliable information based on their experiences.

### **3.7 Data analysis techniques**

Data analysis techniques are defined as the ways of organising and interpreting data from the participants for the justification of the process of analysing data by the researcher (Thorne, 2000). Analysis enables the researcher to critically analyse volumes of collected information (Rule & John, 2011). Data analysis techniques are associated with the researcher's actions of minimising information after having gathered large volumes of information (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018). Voice-recordings of the interviews with the participants' meant information transcribed verbatim. Verbatim data represents original information, with the words taken originally as they were used (Pandey, 2015). In this study, I applied thematic analysis so as to minimise all the information provided by the primary school principals as the participants. Thematic analysis means converting the large volumes of gathered information

into small themes (Nowell et al., 2017). Coding of information and development of themes from the gathered data is fundamental in the analysis of data (Creswell, 2009).

A six-step process of thematic analysis produced by Braun and Clarke (2006) was utilised in data analysis, namely, familiarisation by reading repeatedly and listening to a recording of semi-structured interviews, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing potential themes, defining and naming themes and producing the report. The voice-recordings gave me better understanding of the original transcribed data. Braun and Clarke (2006) describe themes as the last products of data analysis in the thematic analysis approach. That was done by relying on voice recordings of participants by playing the voice-recorder and pausing to access what was important. I ensured that the transcribed verbatim transcriptions maintained the originality of information by repeatedly reading transcriptions. I looked for themes as well as patterns associated with my research questions. Braun and Clarke (2006) describe themes as the last products of data analysis in the thematic analysis approach. On the other hand, Vaismoradi and Snelgrove (2019) describe themes as the subjective meaning and cultural-contextual message of data. Drawing from this literature, I realised that themes are imperative in the process of analysing data so I utilised inductive thematic data analysis. The themes from generated data from participants emerged. Themes were given names to ensure the production of good reports on theme development (Vaismoradi, Jones, Turunen & Snelgrove, 2016). These scholars state that themes are the major product of data analysis, therefore to be able to analyse the findings of this study, I utilised arrangements for thematic analysis. After finalising all these processes, I was capable of interpreting data generated and writing about it.

### **3.8 Issues of trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness is important in qualitative research. One presents the background and the context of the study and a deep description of the phenomenon to allow comparisons to be done (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). According to Stahl and King (2020), trustworthiness of the research refers to the shared realities where the writers and the readers find commonalities within their construction processes. Trustworthiness reiterates values like transparency, as well as professional ethics (Rule & John, 2011). Four important components listed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) include credibility, transferability, dependability as well as confirmability. These

four components were utilised in this study to ensure trustworthiness. They are described below:

### **3.8.1 Credibility**

Credibility entails the reality shown in the data or findings and reflects the participants' lived experiences (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Similarly, Creswell (2009) posits that credibility depends on the confidence found in the truth of the research findings. Given the above, I noted that credibility was ensured in this study as the findings were rooted in what was said by the participants. The sampled participants were interviewed through semi-structured interviews with their confidentiality guaranteed and freedom to express their views. Lincoln and Guba (1985) further posit that credibility depends on the findings being drawn from the original data provided by the participants. The use of a voice-recorder, I believe brought credibility to the study.

### **3.8.2 Transferability**

Transferability refers to how the research findings can apply to other contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this case, similar contexts can refer to the similar circumstances, same population and same phenomenon (Tobin & Begley, 2004). It can be referred to it as a case-to-case transfer. Stahl and King (2020) state that patterns and descriptions from one context can be applied to another, therefore, the background information on the settings in which the study was conducted was provided to improve transferability in the study. All the processes followed during the research were clearly stated. This implies that the findings of this research study can be utilised by other researchers.

### **3.8.3 Dependability**

Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to the consistency of the research study findings. According to Cohen and Crabtree (2008), dependability refers to the level of reliability and consistency of the research findings as well as predictability if similar research is repeated by other researchers. When readers can scrutinise the research process, they can judge the dependability of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Shenton (2004) maintains that dependability entails

interpretation of data, evaluating the research findings as well as recommendations of the research so as to guarantee the support by data generated from the research participants. I utilised the original verbatim quotes of the participants. To guarantee the dependability with the data generated from the participants, I checked the originality of such information to verify it.

### **3.8.4 Confirmability**

Lincoln and Guba (1985) define confirmability as meaning that the findings adhere to the responses from the participants and the researcher avoids any potential bias or personal inputs. Rule and John (2011) view confirmability as the method in which researchers deal with the inspirations or biases in the research study. Similarly, Nowell et al. (2017) state that confirmability emanates from the research findings being derived from the participants' responses and, preferably, the researcher should show the readers how conclusions and interpretations were reached. , In this study, the research findings were guaranteed to be a true reflection of the participants' exact views and experiences. The research transcripts were shared with the participants to ensure their authenticity and the research participants were allowed to verify my interpretations for quality assurance. Generally, according to Guba and Lincoln (1989), confirmability can be ensured only if credibility, transferability, and dependability are all achieved. In this study, all four aspects were guaranteed to ensure that there was trustworthiness.

### **3.9 Ethical issues**

Ethical issues are significant and require researchers' consideration in qualitative research as educational research involves human beings and their lives (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). Miller, (2000) asserts that the research study must consider ethical issues as it is the researcher's responsibility to adhere to the procedures. McMillan and Schumacher (2006) contend that educational research has to consider issues of voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality (including protection of participants' real names) as well as a guarantee of having no harm to the participants (non-maleficence). According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018), it is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that even the results are reported with fairness and credibility.

In respect of the above, I applied to the Provincial Education Department in KwaZulu-Natal to seek permission to conduct research in the five rural primary schools in the uMzimkhulu Circuit within the Harry Gwala District. Prior to that, I first obtained approval from the DBE. I then wrote letters to the principals of sampled schools, to seek their permission as gatekeepers with all the detailed information specified. The issue of voice recording was explicitly put to the participants to ensure understanding. I informed the participants about their voluntary participation, giving them their full right to withdraw. Bertram and Christiansen (2014) assert that participants should be informed about their rights in the study including the right to withdraw at any stage of the study. Confidentiality was guaranteed to ensure the protection of participants' identities with pseudonyms (false names) given to them. Application to the Human and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) was forwarded with the completed application form, consent letters, as well as all other letters of consent including the one from the DBE. An ethical clearance certificate was granted by HSSREC.

### **3.10 Limitations of the study**

Limitations of the study refer to the challenges and possible time constraints and limited access to the participants (Maree, 2007). Theofanidis and Foutouki (2018) define limitations of the study as possible weaknesses of the study that seem to be out of the researcher's control. They further state that all possible limitations of the study should be explicitly stated to avoid any distortion as well as misinterpretation of results. Maree (2007) says that the researchers should convince their readership of how the conclusions were reached by precisely stating the study's possible limitations. This study used a case study research methodology, with a limited number of participants within a selected small area. Given the small size of the sample and the methodology, I ensured that the findings were trustworthy nonetheless, utilising the framework that was developed by Lincoln and Guba to enhance credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. More importantly, through the design and methodology adopted for the study, no generalisation was intended, however what I have stated at the beginning of this section does not mean that the findings are less credible in any way.

### **3.11 Chapter summary**

To summarise this chapter: I have presented the research design and methodology used in the study and an outline of the procedures for conducting the study. The interpretive paradigm based on its ontology, epistemology, as well as a methodology based on the interpretive paradigm and their interconnectedness to the study were detailed. The sampling method was also discussed together with the appropriateness of purposive sampling in the study. The sampling instrumentation which included an interview guide and voice-recorder were part of the tools of the study. Semi-structured interviews were highlighted as data generation methods and thematic data analysis were also discussed. Issues of trustworthiness were dealt with in detail ethical issues were also highlighted regarding their relevance to the study. Limitations of the study and the ways they were dealt with in the study were noted and lastly, the chapter summary was provided to outline the whole chapter. To follow will be the data presentation and discussion in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### PRESENTATION OF DATA AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented a discussion on research design and methodology that was utilised for data generation, as well as analysing data with the purpose of addressing the research question. In this study, semi-structured interviews were employed with *verbatim* quotes being utilised as the justification for the claims that I made about the participants' perspectives and experiences of their efforts in promoting parental involvement. To enhance the discussion, I have injected the literature that was reviewed and discussed in Chapter Two of this study. The discussed themes arise from the data analysis. I begin the discussion of the findings by presenting the profiles of the schools and the participants. The chapter summary winds up this chapter.

#### 4.2 The profiles of the five participants and their schools

In this section the profiles of five rural primary schools where the study was conducted are presented. This study was conducted in the uMzinkhulu Circuit Management Centre (CMC), in the Harry Gwala District. It is very important to understand the profiles of schools where the study was conducted as it sheds more light on the context of the study (Chan, Manzon, Hong & Khong, 2022). For a better understanding of the multifaceted dimensions of what is being studied, the contexts should be known. According to Porter, Kongthon and Lu (2002), it is useful to obtain a comprehensive picture about the context of a particular research study. In this case, it is important to understand the nature of rural primary schools in the South African context in terms of their Quintiles, human resources, infrastructure and so forth. The schools were given *pseudonyms* (not real names) as follows: Vezokuhle Primary School, Hambisa Primary School, Nqubeko Primary School, Dalokuhle Primary School and Zizamele Primary School. The participants of the study who provided data were the principals of the above rural primary schools and the documents were reviewed as well. These primary schools are located in rural residential areas characterised by high levels of unemployment and poverty. All five primary schools have properly-functioning School Governing Bodies (SGBs) which were

introduced by the Department of Basic Education after 1994, and these include parents, teacher components and non-teaching staff, including the school principal (by virtue of being a departmental representative). Because these schools are primary schools, they do not have a Representative Council of Learners (RCL).

#### **4.2.1 Vezokuhle Primary School**

Vezokuhle Primary School is a Quintile 2 public Primary school. It falls under Section 21 and it is located in the eNgunjini Location in the uMzimkhulu. It is stipulated in SASA, Section 39 (7) that it is one of the prerogatives of the Minister of Basic Education (MBE) to crystallise the quintiles for all public schools so as to determine which schools must charge school fees and which cannot (RSA, 1996). All schools are grouped based on five quintiles ranging from the poorest to the least poor. Quintile 1 schools are categorised as the poorest and at the other end of the spectrum is the Quintile 5 category, it is regarded as the one that is not as poor. In other words, Quintile 1 schools are regarded as those that are the poorest and Quintile 5 schools are categorised as the least poor. The schools are also categorised by the SASA (Section 20 and Section 21). These schools that are in Section 21, such as Vezokuhle receive an allocation from the Department of Basic Education in terms of norms and standard to purchase Learning and Teaching Support Materials (LTSM), electricity, textbooks and so on. Vezokuhle Primary School has a principal and five Post Level One educators, also referred to as teachers. This term is used in this study to refer to the educators that are based in the classrooms, and who are not part of the School Management Team (SMT).

The school enrolled 147 learners from Grade R to Grade 7 and is categorised as a non-viable school. A non-viable primary school is a primary school that has a learner enrolment of less than 150 learners therefore, Vezokuhle Primary School is deemed a non-viable school as it has less than 150 learners. The school has six classrooms. The school holds four parents' meetings per year and eight SGB meetings per year.

#### **4.2.2 Hambisa Primary School**

Hambisa Primary School is a Quintile 2 rural primary school located in the Driefontein Location in uMzimkhulu in the Harry Gwala District in KwaZulu-Natal Province in South

Africa. It also falls under Section 21. The school has one principal and five Post Level one educators, with an enrolment of 141 learner therefore, Hambisa Primary School is one of those schools that are known to be non-viable. The school has nine classrooms. The school holds 4 parents' meetings and 4 SGB meetings per year.

#### **4.2.3 Nqubeko Primary School**

Nqubeko Primary School is also a Quintile 2 rural primary school located in the Sihleza Administrative Area, which falls under the uMzimkhulu Circuit Management Centre (CMC), in the Harry Gwala District. The school is also considered a Section 21. The school has a principal, 3 Departmental Heads (DH), and 11 Post Level One educators. The school has an enrolment of 500 learners, and therefore, it is a viable school in terms of the provisions of the Schools Act. The school has 10 classrooms and holds 4 parents' meetings and 6 SGB meetings per year.

#### **4.2.4 Dalokuhle Primary School**

Dalokuhle Primary School is a Quintile 2 rural primary school in the eNgunjini location which falls under uMzimkhulu Circuit Management Centre of the Harry Gwala District. The school is under Section 21. The school has a principal, 01 Departmental head (DH), and 7 Post Level One educators. The school has an enrolment of 207 learners, and the school is viable in terms of the provisions of the SASA. The school has 13 classrooms and holds 4 parents' meetings and 4 SGB meetings per year.

#### **4.2.5 Zizamele Primary School**

Zizamele Primary School is a Quintile 2 rural Primary school in the eMpola Location which falls under the uMzimkhulu Circuit Management Centre (CMC), in the Harry Gwala District. The school is considered a Section 21. The school has a principal and 5 Post Level 1 educators. The school has an enrolment of 160 learners, and it is categorised as a viable school in terms of the provisions of the schools Act. The school has 6 classrooms and holds 4 parents' meetings and 6 SGB meetings per annum.

#### **4.2.6 Mr Mthwa (School Principal) of Vezokuhle Primary School**

The first participant of the study is Mr Mthwa (not his real name); he is a male who is the Principal of Vezokuhle Primary School. He is 48 years old and has been teaching for 20 years in total, with 13 years as a principal of the school. He obtained the following qualifications: Primary Teacher's Diploma, Further Diploma in Education, Bachelor of Education Honours.

#### **4.2.7 Mr Mkhwanazi (School Principal) of Hambisa Primary School**

The second participant of the study is Mr Mkhwanazi (not his real name), and is a male who is the principal of Hambisa Primary School. He is 54 years old and has been teaching for 29 years in total, with 11 years as a principal of the school. He obtained the following qualifications, Senior Teacher's Diploma, Further Diploma in Education and Bachelor of Education Honours.

#### **4.2.8 Mr Somuntu (School Principal) of Nqubeko Primary School**

The third participant of the study is Mr Somuntu (not his real name), a male who is the principal of Nqubeko Primary School. He is 50 years old and has been teaching for 26 years in total, with 14 years as a principal of the school. He obtained a Senior Teacher's Diploma Education, Bachelor of Education and Bachelor of Education Honours.

#### **4.2.9 Mr Njinge (School Principal) of Dalokuhle Primary School**

The fourth participant of the study is Mr Njinge (not his real name), a male who is the Principal of Dalokuhle Primary School. He is 58 years old and has been teaching for 34 years in total, with 29 years as a principal of the school. He obtained a Secondary Teachers' Diploma, Bachelor of Arts Honours and a Masters of Education degree.

#### **4.2.10 Mr Zondi (School Principal) of Zizamele Primary School**

The fifth participant is Mr Zondi (not his real name), a male who is the Principal of Zizamele Primary School. He is 52 years old and has been teaching for 21 years in total, with 11 years as a principal of the school. He obtained a Senior Primary Teachers' Diploma.

### **4.3 Presentation and discussion of data**

The presentation and discussion of data is based on the 11 themes that emerged from the data and they correspond with the research questions. This section presents a discussion of findings under the following themes: (a) Principals' understanding of the parental role in the education of their children; (b) Principals' leadership in planning and inviting parents to school meetings and to engage in other activities; (c) Factors supporting principals' efforts in promoting parental involvement in rural primary schools; (d) Rurality affecting the promotion of parental involvement in rural primary schools; (e) Factors supporting principals' efforts in promoting parental involvement in rural primary schools; (f) Factors inhibiting the principals' efforts in promoting parental involvement in rural primary schools; (g) High levels of illiteracy inhibiting the principals' leadership in promoting parental involvement; (h) Socio-economic factors in the family backgrounds inhibiting principals' leadership in promoting parental involvement; (i) The lack of effective communication between the school and the parents; principals' leadership in poorly-resourced rural schools compared to urban schools; (j) Principals' strategies to mitigate the inhibitors of their efforts in promoting parental involvement in education; (k) Ensuring a welcoming and respectful environment for parents so as to enhance their involvement in education. These themes are discussed next:

#### **4.3.1 Principals' understandings of the parental role in the education of their children**

Wise school principals clearly understand the roles and responsibilities of the parents in the education of their children. Parents are pillars of strength in the context of parental involvement that is necessary to enrich leadership practices in their schools. In this study, principals expressed a clear understanding of the role of parental involvement as the most crucial one in the education of their children as parents need to be involved in various school activities. These activities include the following: drafting of the code of conduct for learners, assistance of the learners with their homework, including other curriculum-related activities and involvement in the structures such as SGB. When I asked the participants about their understanding of the role of parents in the education of their children, their responses suggested that they had a clear understanding, and their voices bear testimony to my claims. One of the participants explained that:

*I understand their parental role as they play the important role in the drafting of the learners' code of conduct, in helping their children when doing home-works and even promote acceptable discipline. Parents have a legal status to govern the school through the SGB as a formulated structure and there would be no proper education without parental involvement. I rely on them through those SGB structures in making lots of important decisions in the school such as financial related decisions, language and so on (Mr Mkhwanazi, Principal of Hambisa Primary School).*

Mr Njinge, the Principal of Dalokuhle Primary School, shared similar views in terms of understanding the parental role in the decision-making in the availability of the code of conduct for the learners so as to maintain discipline and their assistance for their children in academic work such as reading storytelling and so on. The forming of structures such as the SGB, to involve parents as they provide direction of the school towards successful performance was regarded as important. This is what he said in this regard:

*I strongly believe in the role played by the parents as they help their learners with doing of their school-work, maintenance of discipline as they play a big role in drafting the code of conduct for the learners. They also support teaching and learning in helping their children in their school-work such as homework, narrating stories for them to promote the listening skill. The formation of the structures like SGB shapes the direction of the child and it also makes children to have some form of elevated form of focus to their studies (Mr Njinge, Principal of Dalokuhle Primary School).*

The principals viewed the involvement of parents as one of the aspects that solidified their leadership style for the benefit of their schools. Therefore, the principals were always eager to promote parental involvement as they saw it as 'a pillar of strength' in the education of their children. Similar views emerged from the participants but this is what Mr Mthwa said:

*I strongly understand the role of the parents as they help in drafting of the code of conduct for the learners in growing disciplined learners. They also support curriculum by helping children in doing their home-works. I have been working with parents, it helps me to manage well and teachers to work freely knowing that the parent is involved. It impacts my leadership style when they are involved, knowing that their involvement in the learning, schooling of a child has created much more positive attitudes towards the entire goals of the parents and the school (Mr Mthwa, Principal of Vezokuhle Primary).*

Another participant shared the same sentiment because he too believed in parental involvement in the education of their children. He noted that the parents also provided the school with the

information about that children, most of whom lived with parents. Here is how he shared his views:

*The progress and failure of the school depends on the parental involvement; they provide the school with the learner's information such as medical information and in terms of the background to their performance in school subjects. They provide a good guidance in drafting of the policies of the school such as the making of the learners' code of conduct. We do not stay with the learners but get everything from the parents, especially from the biological parents, I do not make decisions alone (Mr Mkhwanazi, Principal of Hambisa Primary School).*

The responses of the participants concur with numerous studies by scholars such as Dladla (2013), Du Plessis and Mestry (2019), Msila (2012), Yulianti et al. (2020), Barr and Saltmarsh (2014) and others. Both international and local literature seems to view the principals as being in the best position to understand what must be done by the parents in order to be involved in the education of their children. Certain local literature dwells much on the role played by the parent components in the SGB as regulated by the Schools Act. In this study, those local scholars share similar views as the participants of this study in the South African context. The review of literature indicates that in a qualitative study that was conducted in the rural elementary schools in Pennsylvania, the findings revealed that a principals' leadership played a pivotal role in order to garner sound and useful involvement of parents in the education of their children in order for a school to be recognised as successful or not (Angelucci, 2008).

#### **4.3.2 Principals' leadership in planning and inviting parents to school meetings and other activities**

Principals reflected their leadership in planning for school meetings how often they intended to meet parents in a specified period of time, for example, a year. It is the principals' responsibility to ensure that there is a clear plan for parents' meetings, and they need to send invitations to the parents. Planning is key for principals in running their schools smoothly. Everything that is implemented and that flows from the principals' planning which reflects good leadership in schools. Planning for the parents' meetings for the whole year is also convenient for the parents who are aware of principals' invitations to the school meetings well in advance. It is the responsibility of the school leaders to craft a plan for the year to ensure good attendance of meetings. When I asked a question about their practices to promote parental

involvement their voices bore testimony to my claim that planning is the precursor to the perfect execution of duties in the school. Without planning, there is no proper implementation of duties. Here is one of their voices to substantiate my claims:

*I provide them with a schedule of meetings for a whole year. They do attend meetings. They do write minutes and I've taught them how to write minutes. I invite them to attend the meetings as I need maximum participation in our meetings* (**Mr Mkhwanazi, Principal from Schools**).

Likewise, the Principal of Vezokuhle Primary shared the same sentiment when he said:

*We have adopted a simple thing whereby we call meetings; we create platforms where parents suggest their feelings within the school. We share moments by monitoring their invitations to come to the meetings to make suggestions towards teaching time and so on* (**Mr Mthwa, Principal from Vezokuhle Primary School**).

The Principal of Zizamele Primary School echoed similar views about invitations to parents' meetings as he had this to say:

*You need to invite parents in the parental meetings you must have that time to call them and don't wait for the problem to arise* (**Mr Zondi, Principal from Zizamele Primary School**).

Echoing a similar view, the participant from Dalokuhle Primary School said:

*It's through calling meetings, where we discuss the conduct and behaviour of the learners, be it good or bad. What I also do as a principal is to call SGB meetings* (**Mr Njinge, Principal of Dalokuhle Primary School**).

The participants reported on a variety of events to which parents were invited to take part for the benefit of their schools. Saying they also check responses to invitations. One such event is the prize giving. Some participants viewed the prize giving as an inspiration to the parents as they see their children being awarded prizes at school for their good achievement, but in contrast one participant said demoralising for those parents whose children were not awarded prizes in terms of performance. When they were asked about what they did as principals to promote parental involvement in their schools, the participant from Zizamele Primary School said:

*I invite the parents to the prize giving or else there is that important thing, called Parents Day to view the learners' work. I think that it will work for the school; you must involve them, knowing that they must know each an everything based on their learners' progress* (**Mr Zondi, Principal of Zizamele Primary School**).

The Principal of Dalokuhle Primary School shared a similar view as that of Mr Zondi in the planning and organising of special activities to encourage parents to play their role in the education of their children, as He said:

*We provide gifts to parents and also parents provide gifts to their own children. I plan and organise days when the children have to read on the open space in front of their parents so that the parents can also appreciate that, they are at school it's not that they take the school as a dumping ground; they take the school as important sources of up-bringing of the child*  
**(Mr Njinge, Principal of Dalokuhle Primary School).**

The Principal of Hambisa Primary School also shared the same ideas as he showed the recognition for the parents by including them in curriculum-related school activities. It is clear that when parents are valued by the school, there is one hundred percent participation in school activities. This principal said:

*We plan and organise Parents' Days. Parents come to school and view their learners' work, and we organise internal academic competitions like reading, spelling competitions, debates. Learners are competing in front of their parents, and we normally award them for their good performance. We organise market days where there is a lot of selling taking place around the school, parents do sell their own wares*  
**(Mr Mkhwanazi, Principal of Hambisa Primary School).**

The Principal of Nqubeko Primary School was one who doubted the wisdom of the awarding of prizes to the learners as he believed, it is demoralising for those parents whose children were not awarded prizes due to their low performance. He was empathetic about giving out the awards in the presence of parents of low-performing learners. He expressed his views as follows:

*Those parents that are having children that are out-shining the others that are taking lots of trophies, taking lots of certificates, the parents will be motivated and encouraged. You must also cater for those that are not hundred percent achievers; you must also try to have something so that all the parents when they come out from that meeting they must all have something to say, not having few that are happy and the majority that are not happy. Last week we conducted a career exhibition event. We invited the university to come to our community to present on career guidance. The parents responded in hundred percent attendance, and they were also participating. They were also dancing; they were also enjoying themselves and asking questions*  
**(Mr Somuntu, Principal of Nqubeko Primary School).**

In relation to what emerged from interviews with the participants, scholars such as Erdener (2016) and Yulianti, Denessen and Droop (2019) say, it is important for the principals to exercise their leadership by ensuring that there is proper planning of parent-teacher meetings and those meetings should be scheduled at convenient times for the parents' attendance followed by an invitation. Similarly, Tshabalala and Ncube (2013) posit that the school heads should accommodate all parents when planning parents' meetings and should ensure that they receive invitations to a meeting in good time so as to be able to accommodate those who are working. Tshabalala and Ncube (2013) further states that, if the schedule for parents' meetings is well planned, and invitations be sent well in advance, leadership will benefit much from attendance by the parents. In the review of literature, the invitation to parents to attend school meetings or any other school activities is related to the invitational leadership (Purkey & Siegel, 2003). Yulianti et al., (2020) concur in that school heads, as they refer to the principals need to ensure that parents are invited to come to school as the parents usually stay at home; they need to be made aware of the school's desire for them to engage in school matters. The Invitational Leadership Theory views the invitation of parents as something that provides a moral boost for those parents as they realise their level of importance and relationship with the school (Purkey & Siegel, 2003). Schools are places where the parents need to feel welcome (invited) and be recognised for their positive contributions and strengths, and their potential in making the school successful (Epstein et al., 1996).

The above responses from the participants reflected the principals' efforts at school's planning and inviting the parents in order to promote parental involvement in primary schools. The theme revealed different views held by the participants and the related literature from various scholars which emphasises the importance for the school leaders to plan and invite the parents as they feel encouraged to come to school. It was also noted that one of the participants opposed sending the invitation of all the parents to attend the prize giving ceremony. Providing the parents with schedules of meetings for a year is also something that has been reiterated in vast amounts of literature, and in the views of the participants it was clear that early prior notice was important.

### 4.3.3 Rurality affecting the promotion of parental involvement in rural primary schools

Rurality still poses several challenges in the South African education system as it faces numerous forms of deprivation. To compound the challenges even further, parents are less active in terms of supporting the schools and their children compared to that of the urban schools. This is exhibited when the parents raise serious comparisons between the two contexts and which result in disadvantaging the rural schools' enrolment for the learners. When I asked the participants how the geographic location of their schools in the rural communities affected parental involvement, the participants exposed a variety of views. They mentioned, for instance that the issues of child-headed families, the long distances travelled by the learners and parents without transport. These all conspired to undermine the quality of schooling and the level of parental involvement in schooling. Most children did not live with their parents but instead lived with their grandparents and so on. Here are some answers from the participants. The Principal of Hambisa Primary School had these views to share:

*Most families here are headed by grandparents; their children's parents had gone out for job opportunities; they don't have resources because our learners are not exposed to modern ways of finding information like internet. Now, as a rural school, we lack resources that would help our learners and parents to be in contact with outside world (Mr Mkhwanazi, Principal of Hambisa Primary School).*

In addition, the Principal of Nqubeko Primary School answered a similar question by revealing a variety of problems such as the proximity of the school from home together with the geographical area where the school was situated, as well as poverty. He highlighted these factors as contributing to low parental attendance in parents' meetings. Regarding the issue of the learners of the school not living with their biological parents: this directly affected the attendance at school meetings and/or any emergency for which the parent might be called to the school. Because it was not convenient for the grandparents to avail themselves for any school activities due to their ages, parental involvement was negatively affected. He highlighted the following:

*Learners are coming from a distance four to five kilometres away from the school. Secondly, poverty situation: parents would have may be money to have transport to come to school, but now they have to walk. Those grandparents cannot come to the meetings and there is no way we can communicate because of the issue of network so it's the problem of the rural areas (Mr Somuntu, Principal of Nqubeko Primary School).*

The Principal of Dalokuhle Primary School shared similar views on the issue of rurality as network problem and the non-availability of the cell phones. This is challenging for the principals' efforts when they try to move with the times by communicating through, for example, things like emails, WhatsApp or any use of cell phones and the internet. In rural areas, most places experience poor network connectivity. This tampers learners when given school tasks such as access to Google using the internet. It is a problem particularly in rural areas. When the principals want to make things easier for the parents by sharing information about the school through the internet, most of the parents cannot access that information. Here is what one participant highlighted during the interviews:

*They don't have access to the libraries and internet. Some of them even do not know how to use cell phones; cell phones are scarce in some areas. Quite a number of times the resources are not always there; but, the resources are supposed to be coming from the side of the parents (Mr Njinge, Principal of Dalokuhle Primary School).*

Another participant from Vezokuhle Primary School cited the issue of poverty as it emanates from rurality and rurality is associated with the scarcity of job opportunities; consequently, parents are unable to assist their children. When the principals try to organise donations from parents for anything that will need financial support, they fail because the parents or guardians will always complain of their poverty status in rural areas. Here is how he expressed his views:

*Another thing that is challenge in us here is a poverty. Poverty plays its own role where people feel that nothing make their life better; even education because financial support to the children challenges our parent; our parents rely on social grants (Mr Mthwa, Principal of Vezokuhle Primary School).*

Rurality refers to the situation that exists in those geographical areas that are mostly characterised by a fairly primitive way of life and houses are situated far apart (Hlalele, 2014). Challenges that are normally associated with rural communities persist and these constitute what I refer to as rurality. These areas are also characterised by the most undesirable way of life, being poorly-resourced as compared to the urban areas (Bhengu & Svosve, 2018). Similarly, Du Plessis and Mestry (2019) echo the same views when referring to rurality as being associated with poverty and poor resources; even education in these areas is struggling. The views expressed by the scholars above are consistent with what was expressed by the participants in this study. Similarly, numerous scholars affirm the inability of rural schools to

create symbiotic relations with their communities. In contrast, however, Bhengu (2013) argues that some rural schools succeed in luring the parents and their communities into assisting in bringing quality education to their schools.

The views of the participants in this regard were buttressed by the literature from different scholars such as the study that was conducted by Munje and Mncube (2018). These findings revealed that parental involvement was one of the most important aspects in the daily practice of the school. Poverty was identified as one of the challenging factors in parental involvement in education as it compromised their active participation in their children's schooling. There was always a lack financial resources needed to take care of their children. Poverty is still a problematic condition in rural areas as most people in rural areas are unemployed and depended on social grants for their survival; however, grants are insufficient when it comes to sustaining their children at school (Ferreira & Serpa, 2017). As already stated most children are supported by and are living with their grandparents. Lessons from literature indicate that support and care that is provided by grandparents is usually far from being sufficient. This is based on the fact that most grandparents rely solely on pensions (Mtshali, 2015). Mtshali states that these poor families obviously struggle to give full care to their children, especially in rural schools. Because of that, some learners feel neglected when lacking all necessities required at school to assist their learning (Humble & Dixon, 2017).

#### **4.3.4 Factors supporting principals' efforts in promoting parental involvement in rural primary schools**

Communication is one of the supporting factors that assist the principals in promoting parental involvement in rural primary schools. In this study, communication was cited as a key element for the principals to provide good school leadership. Although communication was practised in schools, it was clear that there was still room for improvement in efforts by the principals. This view was expressed by various participants. For instance, the Principal of Nqubeko Primary School highlighted the importance of communication and a welcoming disposition towards the parents. He revealed his opinion when saying:

*I have good communication with parents and whenever I communicate with them my communication must be in their standard, but precise in what I want to say in their level. I include warm welcoming of when they are coming to the gate, security guard guide them.*

*The guidance that you give them is the key (Mr Somuntu, Principal of Nqubeko Primary School).*

The Principal of Hambisa Primary School also shared similar views but added another dimension in relation to other stakeholders' contributions to parental involvement. He made mention of a certain woman who used to make donations for the Christmas Party for the parents every year. He argued that positive contribution enhances parental involvement and assists the school leadership in its promotion of parental involvement, even by simply organising a parents' party at the school. He also made mention of the information-sharing meetings, where the parents were given very important information; information that can be of help now and their future. Lastly, he included the market that used to take place. It inspired the parents to have relations with the school because parents donated a portion of what they earned from selling, to the school. Here is how he expressed his views:

*We have a lady here who has NPO (Non- Profit Organisation). Each year, she usually invites parents to a Christmas Party that is held here at school. All stakeholders are invited towards the end of the year; they become motivated about their ways of assisting in the restoration of the culture of teaching and learning. There are information-sharing meetings; those are closing gaps between the school and the parents. They also enjoy selling because towards summer they have a lot of produce. They enjoy selling, but now as a school we also enjoy a portion of their income which comes to school as a result of this fund-raising (Mr Mkhwanazi, Principal of Hambisa Primary School).*

One of the participants from Zizamele Primary School mentioned the donations from the sponsors which closed the invisible fence that existed between the school and the community. Through those sponsorships, the school was able to assist in supporting the orphans and other vulnerable children. He also mentioned the assistance that was given by the sister departments in providing awareness for the parents and the whole community by organising special programmes in the school. They even organised a career exhibition for the learners so as to help them take appropriate subjects in choosing their careers. The participant from Zizamele Primary School expressed his views:

*The sponsors in those OVC (Orphans and Vulnerable Children), they are most important and working for us in school. We also involve health department, who gives us a lot of assistance. Even the police come and do awareness, crime awareness and health conducts lots of programmes regarding the spread of diseases; even the priests come and render*

*services at school. We invite people to do career exhibition so that the learner knows what she wants to be in future; curriculum orientation which is done and the government is there to assist the schools (Mr Zondi, Principal of Zizamele Primary School).*

Likewise, the Principal of Vezokuhle Primary School shared the same views as the Principal of Zizamele Primary School on the assistance they got from the sister departments and also mentioned the educational programmes introduced by the Department of Basic Education to assist the schools' leadership to promote parental involvement and, lastly, he mentioned the use of shared leadership as another factor that provided support to him in promoting parental involvement. He highlighted the following:

*Various departments like Social Development, Department of Health also support the role of parents towards parenting and fighting the challenges that learners and parents have. The Department of Education programmes also help us in the schooling, sending of the child to school like SGB and QLTC (Quality Learning and Teaching Campaigns) where parents are taking part in the governance of the school and discussing issues that the school have and represent the whole community in decision -making. Through using shared leadership style, it helps me a lot to make people feel to engage themselves in support of the school (Mr Mthwa of Vezokuhle Primary School).*

The literature review confirms that principals' leadership styles are pertinent in determining the success or failure of the involvement of parents in the school (Yulianti et al., 2020). This is also evidenced by Alhumam (2021) in that principals' leadership styles play a pivotal role in parental involvement in the school as the school is an organisation. Similarly, is echoed by Purkey and Siegel (2003) in their theory, in which the invitational leadership is aligned to parental involvement. Drawing from the above literature, I view the principals' leadership styles as determining the level of parental involvement in schools. According to Wasserman and Zwebner (2017), communication between parents and teachers in the review of the research literature is considered to be parental involvement. This mutual connection should be effective between parents and teachers as school leaders have the responsibility to enhance the mutual connection between the parents and the school (Ho, Hung & Chen, 2013). Various forms of communication between schools and communities have emerged as a critical element in promoting parental involvement in schooling. This resonates with one of the six components of Epstein theory, namely, communication. This aspect underscores the importance of communication in an organisation. It is seen as a facilitating force for parental involvement in the schools' programmes.

#### **4.3.5 Factors inhibiting the principals' efforts in promoting parental involvement in rural primary schools**

The inhibiting factors refer to those factors that prevent something from being done successfully in order to fulfil a certain target, such as the hundred percent parental involvement (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). When the principals strive through their leadership to have all parents involved in their children's education, certain factors inhibit them from reaching their targets of having the full support of the parents. This was evident in the views of the participants during the interviews. They made mention of the following factors: illiteracy, poverty, lack of effective communication between the school and the parents, socio-economic home background, principals' leadership in poorly-resourced rural schools compared to urban schools. All these factors are discussed below.

##### **4.3.5.1 High level of illiteracy inhibiting principals' leadership in promoting parental involvement**

It is concerning that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there is still a high level of illiteracy in our communities as it brings hardships as far as parental involvement is concerned. It also inhibits the principals' leadership in promoting parental involvement in their schools. This mostly emanates from the absence of the biological parents for the learners' lives. Parents leave their children in the hands of and care of their grandparents. As most of the learners live with their elderly grandparents, correspondence can be a problem as someone complained that they cannot read and write, leaving the school correspondence unattended to. Furthermore, some of them are not able to participate in any way in terms of assisting their children's academic work. Here is what was revealed by the participants during interviews. The Principal of Zizamele Primary School expressed his views as follows:

*Some parents are illiterate; learners live with their grandfathers and grandmothers who can't be able to read and write.*

Likewise, the Principal of Hambisa Primary School shared a similar view as that of the Principal of Zizamele Primary School in that, they believe that there is still a level of illiteracy to the parents that impacts negatively on efforts to promote parental involvement in rural primary schools. Here is how the latter participant expressed his views:

*High levels of illiteracy now on the side of parents directly affects the school, as they do not involve themselves in the school activities (Mr Mkhwanazi, Principal of Hambisa Primary School).*

Similar views were buttressed by the views of the Principal of Dalokuhle Primary School as he also experienced the level of illiteracy on the part of parents, and when the follow-up question arose on the issue of the existence of illiteracy these days, they said that many of the very old people did not attend school in their younger days. Here is how he expressed his views:

*Some parents are not involved because they complain of not being well educated. They will say, “We don’t know anything. We are illiterate. We can’t read, we can’t do anything.” Now because of that, they end up not participating in school activities, not only in making their children do the home-works, but also in terms of not being part of the meetings. They complain that they know nothing and they take the old-fashion view that it is the duty of the teacher to teach the children so they are not supposed to be part of that. We still have people who were born in, the 1930s, for example, 1938, 1940 and so on, who say, “We did not go to school. We can’t read and we can’t write. (Mr Njinge, from Dalokuhle Primary School).*

The Principal of Nqubeko Primary school viewed the problems similar to the other participants. He put it as follows:

*The educational level of parents is still a problem, I’m saying the educational level also hinders the involvement of a parent, so to be present in the meeting does not mean being involved in child’s education it’s just presence in the meeting (Mr Somuntu, Principal of Nqubeko Primary School).*

Illiteracy refers to the lack of education in terms of reading and writing which sometimes emanates from lack of schooling of the aged, or any other reasons (Munje & Mncube, 2018). The participants complained of the high level of illiteracy as one of the inhibitors when they attempt to promote parental involvement in rural primary schools.

#### **4.3.5.2 Socio-economic factors in the family backgrounds that inhibiting principals’ leadership practices in promoting parental involvement**

Socio-economic factors include the issues of poverty. They are consistent with high levels of unemployment and most children live with their grandparents who depend only on social grants

that cannot adequately maintain the child's educational needs. Most biological parents are not at home for different reasons. Some are not there because they are looking for job opportunities in towns and cities. The unfortunate part is that some of the parents died under various circumstances, thus leaving their children in child-headed families. They has a negative impact on the principals' leadership in promoting parental involvement. The participants also provided evidence about how socio-economic factors inhibited parental involvement. The Principal of Nqubeko Primary School alluded by saying:

*The issue of poverty also hinders the involvement of the parents in the education, some parents want to be involved but they have nothing to do, it's a problem.*

Another participant from Dalokuhle Primary School alluded to the issue of the learners living with their grandparents because of the absence of their biological mothers for different reasons. Regarding to child headed-families, he had this to say:

*Most of the learners live with their grandparents because of the scourge of HIV/AIDS, some are great grandparents to those children and therefore cannot come to school and participate fully because they cannot read and write, and those very people have the great grandchildren who are enrolled in this school (Mr Njinge, Principal of Dalokuhle Primary School).*

The Principal of Vezokuhle Primary School concurred with what was said by Mr Njinge. The child-headed families exist not only because of death but also due to the absence of their parents who have moved away because of job opportunities. That keeps the parents far away from the education of their children. Here is how he presented his views:

*Child-headed families makes it difficult to find a person or a guardian with full support of the child that is at school. We also have a challenge of absent parents due to work far from the school and the children, making parenting of the child very difficult, I think those are the challenges we are facing in these rural areas (Mr Mthwa, Principal of Vezokuhle Primary School).*

Many participants highlighted the same issues of unemployment, social ills, such as child-headed families, and children being raised up by their grandparents. However, the Principal of Hambisa Primary School came up with a different issue altogether. This participant highlighted the issue of young parents who, apparently, were not ready for parenting. These parents abused alcoholic beverages resulting in the total neglect of their children. This is what this participant had to say:

*Young parents are demotivated; they are unemployed and stressed and end up failing to exercise their duty of care, because they need to care for their children. Each year we have environmental factors like high levels of drunkenness by youth and some of the youth are parents, so drunkenness ends up affecting the schools. Such parents do not involve themselves in the school activities (Mr Mkhwanazi, Principal of Hambisa Primary School).*

In a study conducted by Matshe (2014), in the Northwest province of South Africa, the findings revealed that socio-economic circumstances of the parents seemed to determine the level of parental involvement in the education of their kids. The study found that most learners did not live with their biological parents which, as already stated, places the whole burden on the grandparents who take over.

#### **4.3.5.3 Lack of effective communication between the school and parents**

Most rural schools are facing myriads of challenges in catching up with the modern ways of communication that seem to be the most favourable in communicating with the parents. When there is a lack of effective communication between the schools and the parents that gap creates a low level of parental involvement. The participants emphasised the importance of communication, and agreed that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the use of smart phone facilitated effective communication. Using the available communication platforms assists in ensuring that correct messages reach the correct destinations. This is how one participant expressed himself:

*Another factor is the communication issue; some of the learners do not relay the messages on time. Parents are being called to the meeting, in the form of letters, but some of the parents complained that these letters get lost. Some of them complain that the children did not tell them about the meeting. Some of them they have phones just to receive and some don't even have the phones. Parents do not have these things like cell phones where you would have to use WhatsApp with the parents whose numbers are available at school (Mr Njinge, of Dalokuhle Primary School).*

The Principal of Vezokuhle Primary School shared similar views on the lack of communication, because people were not in possession of smart phones and because of the poor network connectivity in a rural setting. Here is what he had to say:

*The most common issue that the school have now is the problem of communicating with the parents quickly and easier. Ex Model C schools have adopted the new ways of*

*communicating by using E-communication of which in rural areas most of the parents cannot have smart phones and network problems is still a problem. Sharing information through e-mails and WhatsApp groups make parental involvement much easier, but in this case we still have a challenge (Mr Mthwa, Principal of Vezokuhle Primary School).*

One of the participants, the Principal from Hambisa Primary School, echoed similar views. He said:

*Parents may say there is no smart phone in the house and you might find that even the one who is having smart phones would say I don't have any data because there is no maximum support given to learning so those are challenges. Now as a rural school we lack resources that would help our learners and parents to be in contact with the outside world (Mr Mkhwanazi, Principal of Hambisa Primary School).*

Communication refers to an interaction process between more than one individual where there is a sender and a receiver of the message. This is the process in which words are exchanged between individuals in the educational institution (Brinia, Selimi, Dimos & Kondea, 2022). Brinia et al. (2022) contend that communication dynamics work for the benefit of an organisation. Literature reveals that social media can be an impediment to the development of strong mutual relations between the parents and schools as the parents can either feel excluded or can create illusive relationships between the parents and the educators (Walker & Berthelsen, 2010). In a study that was conducted in Israel, Wasserman and Zwebner (2017) found that the use of the social media platforms was a disadvantage to parents living in areas without network connections. It included the issue of parents who were not in possession of smart phones. In that regard these factors can jeopardise good leadership required to promote parental involvement by the principals.

#### **4.3.5.4 Principals' leadership in poorly-resourced rural schools compared to urban schools**

The issue of various forms of resources has shown to be an impediment to the promotion of parental involvement. Principals struggle when trying to promote parental involvement in rural schools as parents show no confidence in rural schools and this results in parents not cooperating with rural school leadership; in fact, rural primary schools are often undermined by parents. The participants said some parents moved their children to the urban schools. It is because of this reality that many rural schools become non-viable and for the poor. Here is what the Principal of Hambisa Primary School had to say:

*The biggest challenge is that parents tend to compare rural schools and urban schools; as a result, some parents undermine the rural schools and simply transport their learners to those urban schools in towns and cities (Mr Mkhwanazi, Principal of Hambisa Primary School).*

The Principal of Vezokuhle Primary School shared similar views regarding the comparison of the rural schools and urban schools. Urban schools have the upper hand in the promotion of parental involvement in rural schools. The comparison is unfair as it is mainly based on resources, infrastructure and so forth, which draw more affluent families who are better able to cope with communication. One participant alluded as follows:

*We still have found the most difficult exercise within our school, black schools compared to the ex-Model C schools (Mr Mthwa, Principal of Vezokuhle Primary School).*

The Principal of Zizamele Primary School shared the same sentiment and said:

*When you go there in urban areas you will find that the conditions are much better as compared to the rural areas; there are those facilities there. We talk about heaters in classrooms; everything is fully-resourced; classrooms don't compare. That's why now there's that process you find that children are moving from the rural areas to the urban areas (Mr Zondi, Principal of Zizamele Primary School).*

Literature review revealed that parental involvement has been a challenge in rural schools (Christie, 2001; Ndlazi, 1999). In a study that was conducted in Indonesian parental involvement in their children's education, the findings revealed that parents in urban schools showed higher involvement than parents in rural schools (Yulianti, Denessen & Droop, 2019). Numerous local scholars such as Chikoko and Khanare (2012), Hlalele (2014), Myende and Chokoko (2014) and many more view the schools in rural context as fraught with myriads of challenges in terms of quality education as most of the participants echoed the similar views. International literature reviews revealed an overwhelming view that there was a growing comparison between rural and urban schools regarding parental involvement. Scholars such as Lamb, Glover and Walstab (2014), Preston and Barnes (2017) and Panizzon (2012) argue that school leadership in urban schools outperforms the leadership in rural schools in terms of promoting parental involvement for the success of their schools. All these issues underscore the importance of the role played by parents in schooling and the inability of parents in rural communities to participate in the schools' affairs.

#### **4.3.6 Principals' strategies to mitigate the inhibitors of their efforts in promoting parents' involvement**

Principals have the responsibility of employing strategies to assist them to mitigate the factors that inhibit their attempts to promote parental involvement. This is buttressed by the evidence from the data from the participants who say that principals are dishonoured by the challenging factors that impede their attempts to improvise and to mitigate certain factors. The participants therefore cited a variety of strategies that they utilised to mitigate the inhibitors of their efforts. The Principal of Hambisa Primary School discussed the issue of putting more effort into the motivation and utilising strategies to improve communication. Here is how he expressed his views:

*I motivate teachers to work with their communities; some teachers should visit families. They must attend funerals in the location. We should be one family and that on its own will help in reducing tensions between teachers and parents. We simply write letters; we give the letters to the learners so that the learners will give their parents. Other teachers would say that they are using these social media, but for us it is impossible. We even send the invitations to the headman, the local leaders (Mr Mkhwanazi, Principal of Hambisa Primary School).*

The Principal of Vezokuhle Primary School, shared his views on improving ways of communicating with parents, and encouraging parents to visit the school regularly. All the doors to communication are open for them. Here is what he had to say:

*We have developed a class WhatsApp group whereby class teachers are in control of those groups with the help of the phase head. We have also tried to issue news letters on monthly basis to try to communicate with parents about the issues that are pertaining to the school. We have also tried to welcome parents to visit the school in any hour that he/she needs to address some with the school (Mr Mthwa, Principal of Vezokuhle Primary School).*

The participant from Zizamele Primary School expressed similar views, by saying that they addressed the issue of illiteracy by the introduction of adult education classes and appealed to the Departments of Health and Home Affairs for the advocacy. Here is how he expressed his views:

*We have made advocacy from the health department on pandemic diseases, again advocacy from home affairs. Again, we have introduced the adult education to address the illiteracy rate in communities (Mr Zondi, Principal of Zizamele Primary School).*

Another participant from Dalokuhle Primary School also revealed his strategies he uses to improvise when addressing the inhibiting factors to his attempts to promote parental involvement in his school. He made mention of the use of various local platforms to reach the parents to inform them about the school issues. He also touched on the strategy of welcoming the parents by making them feel valued at the school. Mr Mthwa, Principal of Vezokuhle Primary School expressed his views this way:

*One of my strategies is to use the platform of community meetings, where I normally request the ward committee members and also the counsellor, headman, and others to encourage people to come to the meetings and not to fear anything, because generally our meetings are not there to scold the parents but to motivate their children. Another platform is to encourage the parents to attend the Sukuma sakhe meetings where most of the departments are represented; then it is in those platforms that the department representatives also encourage these people (parents) that they must keep themselves current with the issues or with the things that are happening in the school of their children and also in the schooling of their children. One of the strategies that I use to address these two, top two elders in the community to preach the gospel of education in their village. Another thing is to make sure that there are always refreshments in our meetings where we prepare some food, so that people don't go hungry after the meeting, so that itself has got a contribution, because it is a way of making them feel welcomed to the meeting and feel respected. Even if they are illiterate, they should end up in a position to see that illiteracy does not mean anything (Mr Njinge, Principal of Dalokuhle Primary School).*

The Principal of Nqubeko Primary School spoke of his strategies to mitigate the inhibitors of his attempts in promoting parental involvement in his school: He writes to parents when necessary so that they are informed of everything that is taking place within the school. Here is how he expressed his views:

*I used hard copies to write letters to parents and communicate with parents while they are at home. If there's something that is very urgent for those parents that I know that they cannot be able to come to any meeting, I just drive straight to those parents and then have a discussion with them directly so those are the strategies that I use (Mr Somuntu, Principal of Nqubeko Primary School).*

The same participant from Nqubeko Primary School added his views over and above the scheduled questions of the interview. He emphasised that he allowed the parents to lead in the meetings. In other words, he highlighted the fact that certain people should not always lead or

dominate the meetings as that may undermine some parents. He also suggested some strategies which meant inviting certain respected figures from the community to be at the meeting to influence parents about the benefits of involving themselves in the education of their children. He also suggested that as a principal, if one needs some donations, one must first look for and identify a sponsor and invite that person to the parents meeting. That strategy can work to attract the parents to donate to the school activities. Here is how he put his suggestions:

*I'm saying the principals are failing the department because they just call the parents, and they are not making necessary means to make the parents to come to meeting like for example you can invite a certain figure to be in the meeting to make them come to a meeting. If the principal needs a sponsor, he must first seek for the sponsor, come with the sponsor and tell them how much the sponsor donated* **(Mr Somuntu, Principal of Nqubeko Primary School).**

The participant from Hambisa Primary School also raised the question of the lack of motivation of the support structures at school ranging from the Department of Education to the SGB, as one of the factors that can impede parental involvement in the schools. He mentioned that if the incentives could be given to the SGB to encourage all parents to be actively involved as parent components of the SGB, improvement could occur. He said:

*Our government doesn't want to assist the support structures at school. Perhaps the payment of the SGB members can motivate them, and promote the involvement of parents in our schools, but now those SGBs are just volunteering. I don't know how we can take that into consideration* **(Mr Mkhwanazi, Principal of Hambisa Primary School).**

The participant from Zizamele Primary School suggested strategies that can make rural primary schools comparable to their urban counterparts. This participant said:

*If our schools can be improved in terms of structures and facilities, I think we can minimise that migration of the learners from rural to urban / cities to narrow that gap* **(Mr Zondi, Principal of Zizamele Primary School).**

According to Ntekane (2018), there are numerous strategies that can be utilised by the schools to get parents involved in the education of their children. Epstein (2018) posits that for effective parental involvement, strategies should be identified and utilised such as, identifying the skills of the parents who can work for the benefit of the learners therefore, by utilising their expertise the parents will feel honoured, recognised and encouraged to explore even more avenues for using their effective skills. Shearer (2006) argues that the schools are not robust in drawing up a description of what the parents should do. Parents might therefore not be certain about their

roles, and that can result in the parents taking other persons' roles. According to Msila (2012), the existing argument is that the schools ought to be in a position to identify and develop the parents' potential to make their involvement productive.

#### **4.3.7 Chapter summary**

The data was generated through the use of semi-structured interviews; transcriptions were done and thematic analysis was employed to analyse data that was generated. and data was presented in this chapter. The discussion of data presentation related to the literature review that was presented in Chapter Two. This was done to ensure the authenticity of the analysis. In the next chapter the findings of the whole study are presented, starting with the study summary, and highlighting the main findings from the data so as to make recommendations.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter presented a detailed discussion of data regarding principals' leadership practices in promoting parental involvement in rural primary schools. This chapter presents the findings based on the data that was generated and discussed in Chapter Four. All the data that emerged from the participants during the semi-structured interviews, addressed the research questions. This chapter is organised as follows: It begins with the summary of the study, followed by a discussion of the findings and the recommendations, which are based on the findings of the study. The implications of the study follow and the chapter summary concludes this chapter and the whole study.

#### **5.2 Summary of the study**

Parental involvement is regarded as the fundamental aspect that impacts positively on school leadership and school performance. It is believed that the principals have a crucial role to play in enhancing parental involvement in order to assist in the learning and behaviour of the learners. This basically means that parental involvement, irrespective of the context is determined by the principals' leadership. It is for this reason that I undertook this study. My main intention was to seek an understanding of the principals' views and their experiences in five rural primary schools pertaining to their role in enhancing parental involvement in their schools. In South Africa, it is stipulated that all schools must have parent components in the School Governing Bodies in order to deal directly with school governance issues, and also to be in touch with all the parents to enhance good governance of the school. Parental involvement is therefore determined by the competent principals' leadership practices in order to bring them to the school to work with the school in bringing up the children. It is also believed that parental involvement in schools, directly or indirectly leads to positive learner academic achievement (Ntekane, 2018).

The first chapter gave an overview and orientation to the study. The background of the study was presented, followed by the statement of the problem, the rationale, significance, the three critical research questions, the delimitation as well as the outline of the study. The second chapter presented the literature related to the leadership practices of the principals in promoting parental involvement. The theories that frame the analysis of the study were also discussed in this chapter. Epstein's theory (1997) of overlapping spheres of influence and Invitational theory by Purkey and Siegel (2003) were both adopted to underpin the study. The third chapter presented a detailed discussion about the design and methodology that were employed by the study. The fourth chapter crystallised the discussion on data that emerged during the analysis, and the last chapter now presents the findings and also makes recommendations based on the findings of the study, the implications of the study as well as the chapter summary. Before the findings are presented and discussed, the research questions are restated to remind the reader about the focus of the study.

### **5.3 Key research questions**

These three research questions listed below guided the study:

- What are the principals' leadership practices in promoting parental involvement in rural primary schools?
- What factors support or inhibit the principals in promoting parental involvement in rural primary schools?
- How do the principals mitigate the factors that inhibit their efforts in promoting parental involvement in rural primary schools?

### **5.4 Presentation of the findings**

The findings that emerged from the data presented in Chapter Four, are now presented and discussed in this chapter. These findings explicitly crystallise the way data generated from the participants has provided the answers to the research questions that guided the study. Drawing from the three research questions, themes are used as headings in this section in order to organise the discussion of the findings

#### **5.4.1 Principals' leadership practices in promoting parental involvement in rural primary schools**

The findings suggest that the principals understand the parental role in education and the multifaceted role that they, as principals, can play in enhancing parental involvement in education, despite myriads of factors that inhibit their efforts. The principals are seen as being at the centre of involving parents in their schools as many parents remain at home. The participating principals are also aware of the centrality of the role they should play in promoting parental involvement therefore, principals are conscious of the fact that they need to enhance their leadership efforts in bringing parents to the school and making them feel fully involved in the education of their children. The findings revealed that the principals have to plan careful and invite parents to come to school and to involve themselves in the programmes of the school. The findings further indicate that the principals are quite aware of what they need parents to be involved in and even the reasons for their involvement. They also view parental involvement as adding value to their leadership styles as parents mostly allow them to exercise their leadership roles as the leaders of the schools. Their involvement in the School Governing Bodies (SGB) as the parents' components elevates their involvement to that of being valued in terms of legislation such as the SASA. The findings also reveal that because of parental involvement the principals are able to obtain the learners' information as the parents or guardians live with the children, and particularly obtain useful information from biological parents. The details of these views are evidenced in Section 4.3.1 of Chapter Four.

Another finding is that the principals ensure that parents are invited to be part of the parents' meetings and various ways are utilised by the principals so as to invite the parents to make their parents' meetings a success. They start by providing a clear schedule regarding parents' meetings for the whole year so that the parents become aware of what is going to unfold throughout the year. The content of correspondence includes the learners' academic performance and the overall school performance including the role to be played by the parents in helping their children. The details of these views are found in Section 4.3.2 of Chapter Four. The other finding is based on the issue of inviting parents to Prize Giving days. A detailed discussion of this issue can be found in Section 4.3.2 of Chapter Four. Besides the principals' understandings of their role and those of the parents in the schools, there are other findings

relating to factors that either support or inhibit principals' efforts in promoting parental involvement.

#### **5.4.2 Factors that support or inhibit the principals in promoting parental involvement in rural primary schools**

There are numerous factors that either support or inhibit principals' efforts in promoting parental involvement at school in the contexts of rural primary schools. Communication and a welcoming attitude towards parents emerged as one of the supporting factors. All the participating principals demonstrated awareness of being invitational to the parents and they utilised various, and sometimes varied techniques in promoting parental involvement in their schools.

The second finding is closely related to the invitational attitude of the principals. Being invitational stood out strongly as a factor that could be used to strengthen efforts at promoting parental involvement, for instance, by being invited, some principals provided a healthy environment where other stakeholders from outside the school felt 'invited' and they used their human and social capital to organise and raise funds that assist the schools in their operational demands. An example here is the NGO (Non-Governmental Organisation) that operates in the community to support the schools and even addresses some of the basic needs of the orphans and other learners with various vulnerabilities. Additional details of all these views are found in Section 4.3.4 of Chapter Four.

In addition to the factors mentioned above is the notion of leadership abilities and skills. Innovation and creativity, including an acute awareness of the environment where the schools operate are some of the supporting factors. Through principals' innovation and creativity, various departments of state were mobilised to support the schools, and thus, evoke hope and trust in the future of the schools. Career exhibitions were held by structures in the schools, thereby, motivating the learners to stay at school and prepare for their future careers. Further details on this issue are available in Section 4.3.4 of Chapter Four. Besides the factors that support principals in their efforts to promote parental involvement, there were those factors that acted as barriers to their attempts. The nature of the rural areas is one of these factors.

Rural communities in South Africa are generally known as areas that face deprivations of various kinds, including poverty, lack of clean running water, poor connectivity network and the fact that many parents are still perceived to be illiterate, and thus, not being able to appreciate curriculum content. Such lack of understanding of the curriculum, renders many parents to be less useful and supportive in the education of their children. Included in their socio-economic circumstances is the notion of inferiority which tends to exclude them from active involvement in the affairs of the schools and the learners. All these factors, combined, make it extremely difficult for the principals to mobilise these parents so as to be actively involved in schooling. More details on these matters can be found in Section 4.3.3 of Chapter Four. Coupled with the challenges mentioned in this section is a social deficit wherein learners grow up with grandparents or even the child-headed home phenomenon. What emerged clearly was that some biological parents live in towns and cities, either working there or seeking employment. This results in a situation where people who could be supporting learners with their homework are virtually absent, and grandparents are generally in no position to give support to the learners or being available to the schools. Further details on these issues can be found in Section 4.3.3 of Chapter Four.

#### **5.4.3 Principals' strategies to mitigate factors that inhibit their efforts in promoting parental involvement in rural primary schools**

The participants revealed various strategies that they utilised to tirelessly ensure the mitigation of the factors that inhibited their efforts in promoting parental involvement in rural primary schools even in providing at times. The findings revealed that motivation of teachers to create positive working relationship with parents, benefits the principals' leadership in schools. The findings also showed that when the schools cooperated with the local leaders such as headmen, local leaders such as leaders in Sukuma sakhe and where different departments are represented to address the social ills, this helped school leadership in promoting parental involvement. In the prevailing circumstances in rural primary schools where most of the learners are not living with their biological parents, but with their grandparents, these guardians are unable to attend the school meetings due to various reasons. Some principals simple go straight to where they live, as home visits, to inform them about the school if they are unable to get to the school. Since some of the schools are small, it is feasible to visit parents and update them about urgent

issues that require their attention. More details in that regard are found in Section 4.3.6 of Chapter Four.

Another finding revealed the issue of providing refreshments when the parents attended the school events to show them that they cared about them and they also sat a welcoming atmosphere. Popular figures address the parents so that they imitate their community members whom they admire and who assists the school leadership. This also benefits the principals' leadership practices in promoting parental involvement in their schools. The strategy of informing parents about the school and curriculum as a form of updating them about education also appeared to work in favour of the principals. More details in these matters are found in Section 4.3.6 of Chapter Four. Numerous studies have been conducted pertaining to the promotion of parental involvement in the learners' education. These findings added to the body of literature, both globally and locally on this matter.

#### **5.4.4 Implications of the study and recommendations**

The findings have a variety of implications pertaining to numerous research-aligned issues. Firstly, one of those is the need for a clear understanding of principals' role to be played in promoting parental involvement in rural primary schools. While these findings contribute to the empirical studies, the fact is that parental involvement is still a problem in South African rural schools. Nonetheless, the study undertaken five rural primary schools has shed some light on how the principals are determined to do their best to promote parental involvement.

One of the recommendations is that the principals in rural primary schools need to strengthen their efforts to protect the image of rural schools and minimise the comparisons made by the parents between rural and urban schools as their counterparts. Secondly, there is a need to understand and strengthen the symbiotic and generic relations between the schools and traditional local leaders and to utilise the relationship to mobilise parents to get involved in the schools' activities aimed at supporting curriculum delivery. Thirdly, the principals need to strengthen their efforts in making good use of social media platforms accessible to parents even in the areas affected by rurality.

This study adds to numerous studies on the leadership practices required to promote parental involvement in rural schools. There is still a perception that the urban schools are better than rural schools and as a result it is believed that the parents tend to undermine the schools in rural communities. Research studies need to enrich the principals' leadership by closing gaps in the minds of parents. Numerous studies confirm the fact that parental involvement is the precursor to learner academic achievement and needs to be improved where necessary. Research is still pertinent to how to make parents believe that their involvement is pivotal in education. Lastly, principals' leadership to promote parental involvement still needs government support in terms of communicating with parents using the new modern ways; technology is the trend and the government will soon have to enlighten parents about communicating on-line. Further research is needed when it comes to mitigating the inhibitors, especially in rural schools in terms of the availability or non-availability of network in most rural areas.

#### **5.4.5 Chapter summary**

This chapter presented a variety of findings that emerged from the data that was presented in the previous chapter. All the findings that were drawn were directly linked to the research questions of this study. The implications of the study were also presented, followed by the recommendations that need to be considered by the school principals to ensure that there is adequate parental involvement in their schools.

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APPENDIX:A



School of Education

College of Humanities

University of KwaZulu-Natal

Date: 31 December 2021

Head of department

KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education

Pietermaritzburg

Dear Sir/ Madam

**APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN  
KWAZULUNATAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS**

My name is Sicelo Wiseman Mdingane, I am a Masters student , School of Education, College of Humanities, University of KwaZulu-Natal. I request for a permission to conduct a research in KwaZulu-Natal schools. I am conducting research entitled: **Principals' leadership practices in promoting parental involvement in rural primary schools**. The study will be focusing on rural primary school principals as participants will be chosen through purposive sampling. The schools will benefit from the study as this project will open discourses about the strategies of promoting parental involvement in rural primary schools and the factors that inhibit those strategies of promoting parental involvement.

Please note that:

- Participants' right to participate will be ensured, therefore participation will be voluntary. If someone is not participating will not be penalised.
- The confidentiality of the participants is guaranteed throughout the project.
- Semi-structured interviews will be conducted per individual for about 25-30 minutes, and Digital recording will be done.
- Any information given by the participants will be highly protected.
- Pseudonyms (false names) will be used to protect the participants from being known.
- Data will be in the form of interview transcript and will be locked in a safe place and be destroyed after five years and digitally recorded data will be deleted after five years.
- This research project will be purely for academic purposes only and there will be no financial benefits involved.
- Participants will be given consent form to sign to agree to take part in the study, and to be recorded. Thank you

Yours Faithfully

Sicelo Wiseman Mdingane

My contact details are as follows:

Email: [sicelomdingane@gmail.com](mailto:sicelomdingane@gmail.com)

Cellphone: 0730566937

My supervisor is Professor T.T. Bhengu , in School of Education, College of Humanities, University of KwaZulu-Natal

My supervisor's contact details are:

Email: [bhengutt@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:bhengutt@ukzn.ac.za)

Phone number: 0839475321

You may also contact the Research Office at:

University of KwaZulu-Natal

Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Govan Mbeki Centre

Telephone: 27312604557

Email: [HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za)

Thank you for reading this document about this research.

**APPENDIX: B**



School of Education

College of Humanities

University of KwaZulu-Natal

Pietermaritzburg Campus, KwaZulu-Natal

Date: 24 January 2022

Dear Sir / Madam

**Informed consent letter for rural primary school principals**

My name is Sicelo, Wiseman Mdingane, a student from the School of Education, College of Humanities, University of KwaZulu-Natal. I am conducting research titled: **Principals' leadership practices in promoting parental involvement in rural primary schools**. I intend

to explore the leadership of rural school principals in promoting parental involvement in rural primary schools. This study has been ethically reviewed and approved by the University of KwaZulu-Natal Human Social Science Research Ethics Committee (approval number....).

Please note that:

- Your participation is voluntary. If you do not participate you will not be penalised in any way. No marks will be deducted from my project if you decline to participate.
- Your confidentiality is guaranteed as your inputs will not be attributed to you in person, but reported only as a population member opinion.
- The focus group and individual interviews (1of each) will last for about 25-30 minutes and may be split depending on your preference.
- Any information given by you cannot be used against you, and the collected data will be used for purposes of this research only.
- Data will be in the form of interview transcripts, will be stored in secured storage and destroyed by shredding after 5 years. Digitally recorded data will be deleted after five years.
- You have a choice to participate, not to participate or stop participating in the research. You will not be penalised for taking such an action.
- Your involvement is purely for academic purposes only, and there are no financial benefits involved. However, it is expected that you will gain insight into promotion of parental involvement.

Thank you

Yours faithfully

S.W. Mdingane

My contact details are as follows:

Email: [sicelomdingane@gmail.com](mailto:sicelomdingane@gmail.com)

Cellphone: 0730566937

My supervisor is Professor T.T. Bhengu , School of Education, College of Humanities, Pietermaritzburg Compus, University of KwaZulu-Natal.

My supervisor's contact details are:

Email: [bhengutt@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:bhengutt@ukzn.ac.za)

Phone number: 0839475321

You may also contact the Research Office at:

University of KwaZulu-Natal

Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics

Govan Mbeki Centre

Tel +27312604557

Email: [HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za)

Thank you for reading this document about this research.

**Declaration of consent:**

I ..... hereby confirm

that I have been informed about the study entitled ‘**Principals’ leadership practices in promoting parental involvement in rural primary schools**’ by Sicelo Wiseman Mdingane. I fully understand the contents of this document and nature of research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand the purpose and procedure of the study. I have been given opportunity to answer questions about the study and have had answers to my satisfaction.

I declare that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at anytime without negative consequences. I voluntarily give permission for the interviews to be audio-recorded. I give permission for my information to be used as data.

My identity will not be disclosed and pseudonyms will be used to protect my identity.

If I have any further questions / concerns or queries related to the study I understand that I may contact the researcher at 0730566937, email [sicelomdingane@gmail.com](mailto:sicelomdingane@gmail.com). If I have any questions or concerns about my rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned an aspect of the study or the researcher, then I may contact: Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Administration.

I therefore grant consent for interview audio- record to be done by choosing the following box:

YES	X
-----	---

NO	
----	--

**APPENDIX: C**



**Permission to conduct research-**

**P.O. Box 271**

**Letter to the principal**

**Kokstad  
4700**

**24 January 2022**

**The principal**

**..... Primary School**

Dear Sir

**REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH AT YOUR SCHOOL**

My name is S.W. Mdingane (Student number: 221064312), a Master of Education student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Pietermaritzburg Compass), I am required to conduct a research as partial fulfilment of the requirements this degree. I, therefore kindly request your permission to conduct in your school. My study title is: **‘Principals’ leadership practices in promoting parental involvement in rural primary schools’**.

The study will focus on the school principals’ understanding their role and practices as school leaders in promoting parental involvement in rural primary schools. It will also focus on the factors that inhibit the principals from successfully promoting parental involvement, and the way they face those factors.

The study will benefit your school as it is going to initiate discourses regarding parental involvement for sustainable learning and learners' academic performance to bring quality education in the entire education system.

Narrative interviews will be used in the study, and the interviews will be audio-recorded and all the information from the participants will be protected with confidentiality ensured. Interviews will take twenty-five to thirty minutes (25-30 minutes), Voluntary participation will be guaranteed with the right to withdraw at any stage of the study. No bad consequences will be experienced by the participants who have decided to withdraw.

**Please take note of the following:**

- No financial benefits will be accrued by the participants as a result of their participation in this research project.
- Participants' identities will be highly protected throughout the research project.
- Responses by the participants will be treated with highest confidentiality.
- The participants' names will be protected by the use of pseudonyms (false names).
- Voluntary participation will be guaranteed, with participants free to withdraw at any stage of the research project.
- For accuracy during the reporting the interviews will be audio-recorded.
- Participants will be notified prior to the interview dates and time and all other information.
- For any further information on this project please contact my supervisor with contact details provided below.

Hoping that you will grant me permission considering all what I have provided above.

Yours Faithfully

S.W. Mdingane - Email : [sicelomdingane@gmail.com](mailto:sicelomdingane@gmail.com)

Supervisor: Professor T.T.Bhengu  
University of KwaZulu-Natal

School of Education

Email: [bhengutt@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:bhengutt@ukzn.ac.za)

You may also contact the Research Office at:

University of KwaZulu-Natal

Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics

Govan Mbeki Centre

Tel+ 27312604557

Research Office Contact details: [HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za)

## APPENDIX: D



School of Education

College of Humanities

University of KwaZulu-Natal

Pietermaritzburg Campus, KwaZulu-Natal

Date: 24 January 2022

Dear Sir/ Madam

### **APPLICATION FOR GATE KEEPERS' PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH IN YOUR SCHOOL**

My name is S.W. Mdingane (Student number: 221064312), a Master of Education student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Pietermaritzburg Campus), I am required to conduct a research as partial fulfilment of the requirements this degree. I, therefore kindly request your permission to conduct in your school. My study title is: **'Principals' leadership practices in promoting parental involvement in rural primary schools'**.

The study will focus on the school principals' understanding their role and practices as school leaders in promoting parental involvement in rural primary schools. It will also focus on the factors that inhibit the principals from successfully promoting parental involvement, and the way they face those factors.

The study will benefit your school as it is going to initiate discourses regarding parental involvement for sustainable learning and learners' academic performance to bring quality education in the entire education system.

Narrative interviews will be used in the study, and the interviews will be audio-recorded and all the information from the participants will be protected with confidentiality ensured. Interviews will take twenty-five to thirty minutes (25-30 minutes), Voluntary participation will be guaranteed with the right to withdraw at any stage of the study. No bad consequences will be experienced by the participants who have decided to withdraw.

**Please take note of the following:**

- No financial benefits will be accrued by the participants as a result of their participation in this research project.
- Participants' identities will be highly protected throughout the research project.
- Responses by the participants will be treated with highest confidentiality.
- The participants' names will be protected by the use of pseudonyms (false names).
- Voluntary participation will be guaranteed, with participants free to withdraw at any stage of the research project.
- For accuracy during the reporting the interviews will be audio-recorded.
- Participants will be notified prior to the interview dates and time and all other information.
- For any further information on this project please contact my supervisor with contact details provided below.

Hoping that you will grant me permission considering all what I have provided above.

Yours Faithfully

S.W. Mdingane      E-mail : [sicelomdingane@gmail.com](mailto:sicelomdingane@gmail.com)

Supervisor: Professor T.T. Bhengu

University of KwaZulu-Natal

School of Education  
E-mail: [bhengutt@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:bhengutt@ukzn.ac.za)

You may also contact the Research Office at:

University of KwaZulu-Natal

Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics

Govan Mbeki Centre

Tel+ 27312604557 Research Office Contact details:

E-mail [HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za)

**Declaration of the Gatekeeper:**

I ..... hereby confirm

that I have been informed about the study entitled '**Principals' leadership practices in promoting parental involvement in rural primary schools**' by Sicelo Wiseman Mdingane. I fully understand the contents of this document and nature of research project, I give permission to the research project to carry on in the school.

I understand the purpose and procedure of the study. I also have an understanding of the benefits that will be brought by this research to the Education system as a whole as they are stated. I have been given opportunity to answer questions about the study and have had answers to my satisfaction. If I have any further questions / concerns or queries related to the study. I understand that I may contact the researcher at 0730566937, E-mail [sicelomdingane@gmail.com](mailto:sicelomdingane@gmail.com). or the Supervisor : Professor T.T. Bhengu at 0839475321,

E-mail [bhengutt@ukzn.co.za](mailto:bhengutt@ukzn.co.za) and I may also contact the Research Office at:

**University of KwaZulu-Natal**

**Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics**

**Govan Mbeki Centre**

**TEL: 27312604557**

**E-mail: [HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za)**

Signature:.....

Date:.....

(School Principal)

**APPENDIX: E**

**A. Biographical information of the school principal**

A.1 Age ( Please tick): 25-35 years .....

35-45 years .....

45-55 years .....

55-65 years .....

A. 2 Gender ( Please tick): Male ..... Female

.....

A. 3 Educational qualifications: (Name all the qualifications)

.....

**A. 4 Work experience:**

A.4.1 Number of years as a teacher (.....)

A.4.2 Number of years as a principal (..... )

**B. Biographical information of the school**

B.1 School's location\ physical address:

.....

B.2 School Quantile (.....)

B.3 Number of learners (.....)

B.4 Number of teachers (.....)

B.5 Number of departmental heads (.....)

B.6 Number of non-teaching staff (.....)

B.7 Number of classrooms (.....)

B.8 Number of parents meetings per year (.....)

B.9 Number of SGB meetings per year (.....)

## **APPENDIX: F**

### **INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR SCHOOL PRINCIPALS**

- ❖ As a principal what is your understanding of parental involvement in education?

**(Probe):** How does your understanding assist your leadership in your school?

- ❖ Please share with me why you believe that parents should be involved in the education of their children?

**(Probe):** What is it that you want parents to be involved in ?

Why do you regard their involvement in that area as important?

- ❖ What do you as a principal, do to promote parental involvement in learners' education in your school?

**(Probe):** How have the parents responded to your attempts to have them involved in their children's education?

- ❖ How does the fact that the school is in rural community affect parents' involvement?

Please elaborate!

- ❖ What do you see as factors that support you in your attempts to promote parental involvement in the education of their children?

- ❖ Are there any factors that inhibit attempts in promoting parental involvement in the education of their children?

**(Probe):** How many of these factors are within your control ?

How many of these factors are out of your hands?

- ❖ What are some of the strategies that you have used to address the inhibiting factors to parental involvement in your school?

**Thank you very much for your participation in this discussion, if there is anything that you want to say that I did not ask , you are free to add it at this point!**

## APPENDIX: G



**KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE**

EDUCATION  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**OFFICE OF THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT**

Private Bag X9137, PIETERMARITZBURG, 3200  
Anton Lembede Building, 247 Burger Street, Pietermaritzburg, 3201  
Tel: 033 392 1051

Email: buyi.ntuli@kzndoe.gov.za

**Enquiries:** Buyi Ntuli

**Ref.:**2/4/8/7237

Mr Sicelo Wiseman Mdingane  
P.O. Box 172  
**KOKSTAD**  
4700

Dear Mr Mdingane

### **PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS**

Your application to conduct research entitled: **"PRINCIPALS' LEADERSHIP PRACTICES IN PROMOTING PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN RURAL PRIMARY SCHOOLS"**, in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the Intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The period of investigation is limited to the period from **28<sup>th</sup> January 2022 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2024**.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Miss Phindile Duma at the contact numbers above.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report/dissertation/thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Office of the HOD, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to schools and institutions in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education.



**Dr M.J.B. Mthembu**  
**Acting Head of Department: Education**  
**Date: 28<sup>th</sup> January 2022**

**GROWING KWAZULU-NATAL TOGETHER**

APPENDIX: H

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## Mdingane Chapters First Draft

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ORIGINALITY REPORT

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