

https://dspace.org/

Managing parental involvement: a case study of a private primary school in South Africa

Savary, Vanessa

2021
https://hdl.handle.net/10539/32888

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

Managing Parental involvement: A case study of a private primary school in South Africa



Vanessa Savary

Student number: 101 5417

Master of Education (Coursework & Research Report)
2020

Module Name: EDUC7031A Research Project

ABSTRACT

This study acknowledged that parental involvement is an educational imperative in children's education in line with global perspectives and endeavoured to draw greater insights, in a South African school context, diverse in race, culture and language background. Guided by the theoretical framework of Epstein's model of *overlapping spheres of influence*, this exploratory case study draws on a qualitative inquiry into the management of parental involvement in a private primary school. The qualitative research design situated in an interpretivist paradigm generated data through semi-structured interviews.

This study worked on the premise that the school aims is to provide quality education and the success of school outcomes is dependent on factors that extend beyond education policy on curriculum, teaching and learning to include the benefits that can be derived from parental involvement. Given that, it was argued that education policy incorporating managing parent partnerships is an important factor that impacts educational success which is not confined to the school but remains a joint effort between the home and the school.

The study revealed that the management of parental involvement aims for a long-term shared partnership that guides and empowers all role players to achieve the desired outcomes in education. Parent-school partnerships were found to be multifaceted and dependent on relationship building where managers' display high levels of awareness and sensitivity to the complexity of contexts prevalent in partnerships. It was determined that for the school be able to develop long term parent partnerships that are functional and sustainable, a deep understanding of the needs of its parent population and forming suitable means to engage with and navigate the steep terrain that may be existent in partnerships is required.

Managing parental involvement remains an important focus for school management as it is integral to quality education and the establishment of a powerful alliance with the parent community. A key factor is that for partnerships to be functional and beneficial, a high level of meaningful connection and mutual understanding of the reciprocal roles and responsibilities of role players for achieving goals is necessary.

DECLARATION



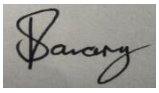
I, Vanessa Savary (Student No. 1015417), hereby declare that my research report "Managing Parental Involvement: A case study of a private primary school in South Africa" abides by the following expectations and rules of the university:

First, the information in this report is my work and where other researchers' work was consulted, they have been acknowledged and referenced as sources.

Second, books, journals and the internet as sources of information have been carefully referenced through the required referencing conventions.

Third, this work has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other university.

Vanessa Savary

Signature: ……

Date: ……15/03/2021……

Supervisor: Dr Bernadette Johnson



Signature: ……

Date: ……15/03/2021…

DEDICATION

I dedicate this research to the Lord who has been a great pillar of strength and inspiration to me and without Him, this would not have been possible.

I express my appreciation and gratitude to my husband, Mervyn Savary and children, Kasmira, Mayuri, Joshua and Caleb, who have encouraged and inspired me on this journey. They have been a tremendous source of motivation.

I would also like to remember and acknowledge the role played by my mum, Mrs S Naidoo and late uncle and aunt, Mr and Mrs Murugan who valued education and made great sacrifices to support me in pursuing one. Without their kindness, generosity and support, I would have not come this far.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my most sincere gratitude and appreciation to my supervisor, Dr Bernadette Johnson, for her motivation, inputs, contributions and guidance towards my studies and the writing of this research report.

I would also like to extend my gratitude to the following people for their effort and time invested in making this research possible:

- Principal for permitting me to conduct research at the school.
- Principal, management members and parent participants in the research for their invaluable inputs.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title
Abstract ii
Declaration iii
Dedication iv
Acknowledgements v
Table of contents vi
Abbreviations viii

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction 1
1.2 Background and Context of study:
1.2.1 Parental Involvement: a contribution to nation-building in South Africa 3
1.2.2 Historical perspectives in South African education and the rise of the private school sector 7
1.3 Problem Statement 8
1.4 Purpose and Rationale for the study 9
1.5 Significance of study 9
1.6 Objectives of the study 10
1.7 Key research questions 10
1.8 Delimitations of the study 11
1.9 Outline of study 11
1.10 Conclusion 12

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

2.1 Introduction 13
2.2 Conceptualising Parental Involvement 13
2.3 Leading and Managing Parent-School Partnerships 15
2.3.1 Participative leadership 17
2.3.2 Collaboration 17
2.3.3 Communication 18
2.3.4 Culture of Relationship building 19

2.4 Challenges and Barriers to Forming and Sustaining School-Parent Partnerships 20
2.5 Theoretical Framework: Epstein's model of *overlapping spheres of influence* 21
2.5.1 Establishing shared vision, goals, roles and responsibilities for partnerships 22
2.5.2 Parent-School Partnerships as reciprocal and mutually beneficial 24
2.5.3 Parental Involvement is context-specific 24
2.6 Conclusion 25

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction 26
3.2 Research Paradigm 26
3.3 Research Design 27
3.4 Research Methodology 27
3.5 Research Sample 28
3.6 Data generation methods 29
3.6.1 Semi-structured Interviews 29
3.6.2 Document Reviews 30
3.7 Data Analysis 31
3.8 Ethical Issues 31
3.9 Issues of Trustworthiness 32
3.10 Limitations of the study 33
3.11 Conclusion 33

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction 34
4.2 Conceptualising parental involvement 34
4.3 Practises of parental involvement and addressing the needs of a diverse parent population 38
4.4 Expectations of parents and its influence on parental involvement 43
4.5 Benefits, drivers and enablers 52
4.5.1 Drivers 52
4.5.2 Benefits 54
4.5.3 Enablers 55

4.6 Challenges, limitations and barriers 59
4.6.1 Challenges 60
4.6.2 Barriers 61
4.6.3 Limitations 64
4.7 Conclusion 67

CHAPTER FIVE: STUDY SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS
5.1 Introduction 68
5.2. Study Summary 68
5.3 Conclusions 69
5.4 Recommendations 70
5.5 The implications for research 71

REFERENCE LIST 73

APPENDICES
Appendix A: Ethics Clearance Certificate 80
Appendix B: Turn-it-in certificate 81
Appendix C: Permission Letters (School Principals, Participants, etc.) 82
Appendix D: Participant Information Sheet 84
Appendix E: Informed Consent Letters 85
Appendix F: Informed Consent Letters 86
Appendix G: Interview Schedule for all Participants 87

FIGURES
Figure 1: Parental involvement delimited into the home and school-based involvement. 14
Figure 2: Epstein's six types of involvement 15
Figure 3: Principal leadership and the role of the SMT 15
Figure 4: The role of enabling factors in managing parent-school partnerships 17
Figure 5: Epstein Theory of *overlapping spheres of influence* 23
Figure 6: The reciprocal nature of parent-school partnerships 24

TABLES

Table 1: Participants interviewed 28

Table 2: Benefits, Drivers and Enablers of Parental Involvement versus Challenges, Barriers and Limitations of Parental Involvement 66

ABBREVIATIONS

ANC – African National Congress
SASA – South African Schools Act

ISASA – Independent Schools Association of South Africa

NECC - National Education Crises Committee

NECT – National Education Collaboration Trust

COVID 19 – Corona Virus Disease 2019

HIV – Human Immunodeficiency Virus

AIDS – Auto-Immune Deficiency Syndrome

WHO – World Health Organisation

SGB – School Governing Body

SMT – School Management Team

PTA – Parent Teacher Association

PTSA – Parent Teacher Student Association

COSAS - Congress of South African Students

SACE – South African Council of Educators

CAPS - Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements

UNICEF - United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

CHAPTER ONE

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

> **"Without parents' support and involvement, school alone cannot create an appropriate learning environment to enhance children's willingness to learn".**
> Sharma (2008, 72) cited in Segoe and Bisschoff (2019)

The above quote underscores the significance of the complementary role and interconnectedness that should exist in parent-school partnerships. It unequivocally suggests the significant role of parents in the actualisation of educational goals and is pertinent to this study, which focused primarily on the management of parental involvement. Other research in the field, including many landmark studies locally and globally, comprising Mncube (2010), Myende (2018), Prew (2008) and Meier and Lemmer (2015) resonates this statement that school-parent-community partnerships are an effective strategy to address problems that schools cannot tackle alone.

This research study coincided with the Coronavirus pandemic which caused a major disruption to the 2020 academic year. Schooling and the involvement of parents were affected worldwide. To maintain health and safety as a priority and curb the spread of the virus, social distancing was enforced, as a result, school closures were implemented (Savides, 2020). Although this was unintended at the inception of this study, the data reflects parents' experiences as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic and is therefore complete and representative of the reality that transpired.

The infectious disease caused by the COVID-19 virus is transmitted through saliva or discharge from the nose and mouth when infected persons cough or sneeze, causing mild to moderate and sometimes severe respiratory illness, resulting in large scale deaths. Effective treatment for the virus was unavailable at the time although many clinical vaccine trials were underway (Pathak, 2020).

According to Harris and Goodall (2008), parental involvement is the non-school factor, most strongly linked to and significantly influences achievement and attainment compared to factors such as socioeconomic status, parent's educational achievement and family structure. Coupled with this, Sathiapama, Wolhuter and van Wyk (2012, p.63) contend that policy and practice of

parental involvement as a fundamental aspect purposed by school managers, is of more significance than "race, ethnicity, socioeconomic level or marital status", in influencing the amount of involvement. Furthermore, Myende (2018) maintains that sound parental involvement is strongly determined by managers' understanding of parent's expectations of quality education and the significance of parental involvement.

The above statement by Sharma (2008) was most pertinent during the pandemic when the practical reality of the indisputable need for effective partnerships in children's learning came to light. In South Africa and globally, the home became the place of learning as schools continued with remote learning platforms and parents and teachers were unprepared for the challenges that unfolded, grappled to adjust to the new reality and roles demanded of them. Parents doubled their efforts and supervised their children's learning, simultaneously fulfilling work obligations. When private and more affluent public schools reopened, a "blended" or "hybrid" learning programme was implemented to accommodate remote and in-school options thus, privileged households and schools were better resourced to adapt to the new challenges.

In contrast, learning in most public schools ceased due to a lack of resources and access to technology to pursue remote learning platforms. Thus, existent inequalities that plague the South Africa education system made a huge resurgence, bringing into sharp contrast, experiences of privileged and disadvantaged households due to the legacy of apartheid and the failed attempts of the ANC led government and post-apartheid education policies to bring about redress and transformation post- democracy due to varying factors. This led political parties like the Congress of South African Students (COSAS), an anti-apartheid student organisation, to take protest action, highlighting deepening inequalities between private and public schools that perpetuate the chasm between the privileged and the masses (Monama, 2020).

The focus of this case study was to understand how parental involvement is managed in an urban and private Gauteng primary school with diverse parent communities and its implication for education policy. The study was located in a well-established, co-educational, nonreligious and English medium, independent school affiliated with the Independent Schools Association of South Africa (ISASA). The school situated in the northern suburbs of Sandton, the economic hub of the country, accommodates learners from pre-prep to grade seven, catering for middle to upper-income families diverse in race, culture, language and class backgrounds, reflective of many schools currently in South Africa. Although many valuable insights into managing

parental involvement with possible policy implications were obtained, the findings do not apply to other educational institutions.

1.2 Background and Context

1.2.1 Parental Involvement: a contribution to nation-building in South Africa

Meier and Lemmer (2015, p.1) highlight that parental involvement contributes to long-term economic benefits for developing nations, resulting in a return on "child's human capital accumulation and skill development". Inferring that an investment in education is a commodity, translates to a competent and stable workforce and a high return in the economies of many countries, hence to economic growth. Thus, parent-school partnerships are an overarching, vital issue for policymakers to explore critically if the general quality of education is to improve, making legislation an imperative (Okeke, 2014; Mestry & Grobler, 2007; NECT, 2016).

"The idea that parents can change their children's trajectories by engaging with their children's schooling has inspired a generation of school reform policies" (Okeke, 2014, p.3) that foreground schools that effectively involve parents as better positioned to positively influence educational outcomes. Hornby and Witte (2010b) cited in Myende (2018, p. 4) indicate that the explosion of the concept of parental involvement and the institution of the Epstein model (2001) as a framework in education policy globally, including the "No Child Left Behind policy" in the United States, "Children's Plan in the UK", and the "Schooling Strategy" in New Zealand, are drivers of parental involvement as a key factor in educational improvement (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011, p. 49). South Africa commensurate with global trends, pursued democracy post-apartheid and transitioned to an enabling policy environment, provisioned for parent-school partnerships with greater impetus after school improvement reforms of curriculum change and redress alone, proved ineffectual ((Mestry & Grobler, 2007; Lemmer & van Wyk, 2008; Mncube, 2010; Hands, 2010).

The current crisis in education is a remnant of the long-standing backdrop of racial and socioeconomic inequality that has plagued the education landscape for many decades as instituted by *The Bantu Education Act of 1953*. Historically Black parents were an important impetus in the struggle against apartheid that served to maintain economic oppression, marginalisation and disenfranchisement of Black people. Black parents supported mass action initiatives to counter their oppression through organising parent-teacher-student associations (PTSAs). An example of this is the Soweto Parent's Crisis Committee through which Black

parents supported their children in the fight against the imposition of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction (Rakometsi, 2008). Their White counterparts benefited from their privilege of a higher resourced of apartheid education to the detriment of the majority of black South Africans.

During the apartheid era, parental involvement was confined to financing school fees, attendance of school functions, fundraising and in many poor socioeconomic communities, involvement was completely lacking (Lemmer & van Wyk, 2008). Subsequently, the South African Schools Act (SASA) of 1996 legislated parent and community representation in school governance structures and unprecedented in 1997, parents were through devolution of power, granted privileges and rights of decision making in establishing school fees, admission policy and decision making roles in governing structures (Southall, 2016; Lemmer, 2007; Lemmer & van Wyk, 2008). Therefore, school governing bodies (SGB) was a mechanism to initiate school improvement, but poor funding and insufficient training of teachers contributed to schools remaining untransformed (Prew, 2009).

Although parent participation in school governance and leadership is integral, it should not be confined to this. School governance only does not improve learner achievement since poor learning outcomes are still prevalent in schools with efficient governing bodies, besides parents' involvement in children's learning proves more prolific (Lemmer, 2007; Lemmer & van Wyk, 2008; Okeke, 2014). Thus parental involvement in diverse South African contexts, necessitates a broader conceptualisation and comprehensive framework, surpassing school governance (Lemmer & van Wyk, 2008; Okeke, 2014; Meier & Lemmer, 2015).

More recent policy shifts through the formulation of the "School-Parent-Community Engagement Framework" by the National Education Collaboration Trust (NECT, 2016, p.1), is envisaged to contribute a significant step forward for education in South Africa, acknowledges a need for deeper involvement of parents (Myende, 2018). Furthermore, parent-school partnerships presume paramount importance in a developing country like South Africa, where a predominant part of the education system is defective and debilitated, ravaged by a discriminatory political past and socio-economic problems (Sathiapama et al., 2012; Lemmer & van Wyk, 2008). Thus, granting parents a greater participatory role supports the functioning of schools (Mncube, 2010; Segoe & Bisschoff, 2019).

Mestry and Grobler (2007) indicate that both the inconspicuousness need for and the lack of involvement of parents remains a barrier to quality education as participation remains confined to governance, fund-raising and paying school fees (Okeke, 2014). Despite legislation, the number of actively involved parents remains low and is shown to decline after the fundamental years of schooling (NECT, 2016; Lemmer, 2007). Furthermore, the absence of involvement is not because of a lack of interest, but societal issues including poverty, HIV/AIDS pandemic, single-parent families, language, cultural and socio-economic contexts act as barriers (Okeke, 2014; Mestry & Grobler, 2009).

There are many compelling symptoms of the education crisis in South Africa that warrant a parent-school partnership to impact education positively. Firstly, educational outcomes remain below that of countries with lower resources. Secondly, literacy and numeracy levels, the two key determinants of educational outcomes lag behind world standards, given that only a fraction of public schools provide practical numeracy and literacy skills, makes "learning deficits" acquired in primary school "insurmountable" over time (Southall, 2016, p. 103). Although it was found that parental involvement in the primary stage of a child's education impacts literacy abilities substantially (NECT, 2016; Okeke, 2014).

Third, the lack of a "culture of teaching and learning" is endemic in South African township schools (Lemmer & van Wyk, 2008, p.267) thus, Prew (2009) advocates that fundraising encourages parents' presence and full community involvement that extends beyond the norm of involvement over academic concerns and discipline, positively affects the culture of teaching and learning and proves more beneficial in a developing country. Fourth, the majority of schools suffer a severe lack of resources, thus, the importance of schools and communities engaging as "overlapping spheres" to garner support beyond the school boundaries, to address social and educational needs is recognised (Myende, 2018, p. 3). Most parents prioritise academic progress and fundraise to enhance conditions and resources which directly impact teaching and learning (Lemmer, 2007; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Prew, 2009).

Fifth, Hands (2010, p. 189) maintains that where economic and cultural diversity exists, "the gap in student achievement between the advantaged and disadvantaged groups is widening", thus, schools find it difficult to create the environment to address diverse needs, making community involvement necessary. Prew (2009, p. 825) warns that "Western concepts of school development…cannot be lifted wholesale and planted in the developing world", rather

strategies that make closed institutions, the case of "dysfunctional schools" more amenable to transformation efforts, through community involvement should be explored.

Given these crises prevalent in the South African education system, the need for "grassroots development of partnerships among schools and community members" is required to resolve issues hampering student achievement (Hands, 2010, p. 189). The literature widely establishes the numerous benefits that sound parental involvement contributes to children's learning and quality of education. Parent involvement is shown to improve, academic attainment (Meier & Lemmer, 2015), writing and reading skills, achievement in mathematics (Mncube, 2010; Prew, 2009), socio-emotional and psychological development (Emerson, Fear, Fox, & Sanders, 2012), self-confidence, school attendance, behaviour, school drop-out levels, communication between parent and child, programmes and school climate among other positive outcomes (Sathiapama et al., 2012; Mestry & Grobler, 2007). Thus parent-school partnerships can positively affect many multivariate problems that plague South African education.

Furthermore, parental involvement influences a child's achievement irrespective of socio-economic class, providing hope for improving education in poor socio-economic groups. However, policymakers should be cognisant that many parents in South Africa are themselves poorly educated, unemployed and poverty-stricken (Gordon & Nocon, 2008; Singh, Mbokodi & Msila, 2004). Therefore, these factors prejudice poor and working-class parents, perpetuating inequality among classes, highlighting that parental involvement is not a "panacea for whatever is going wrong or missing in educational delivery", contends Singh et., al (2004, p. 301).

Vally and Spreen (2010, p. 140) concur that "quality education is linked to the proper resourcing of schools – both material and human" and if this is lacking, the case in a majority of schools, parental involvement is confined to fundraising. Thus, addressing the wide-ranging crises plaguing education in the large percentage of disadvantaged communities, cannot rest on the shoulders of parents, instead of social issues stemming from lower socioeconomic class on which parent involvement is contingent, also have to be addressed if a significant contribution is to be seen.

1.2.2 Historical perspectives in South African education and the rise of the private school sector

Given South Africa's political past, its impact on education and influence on the trajectory of educational outcomes and job aspirations according to race makes parent's choices and decisions for their children's education relevant to the educational experiences of the past (Southall, 2016). Therefore, understanding the History of South Africa's education and the limitations it imposed on certain groups applies to the current involvement existent in schools.

In 1994, the dawn of a new democracy, the South African education system underwent a major overhaul and many new reforms and policies were introduced to dismantle segregated education and effect major transformation to redress the inequalities entrenched during the apartheid era (Christie & McKinney, 2016). A unified, non-segregated education system was formed and the doors of learning were open to all, at advantaged and privileged former white schools, gave parents of all races the freedom to choose schools (Southall, 2016). Parents had high hopes and expectations for their children's educational aspirations, quality of education and job opportunities, sought better previously and traditionally white-only schools, abandoning black township schools with a populace of mainly poor and working-class households (Southall, 2016).

Public education plunged into disarray, leaving many black township schools dysfunctional and parent's confidence in public education eroded. Attempts to redress existent inequalities and improve education proved futile. Instead, a "two nations" education system formed, comprising a "poorly resourced" public sector, "serving the poor and mainly black population" and private and semi-private schools serving wealthy, "mainly whites and the new black elite" according to Badat & Sayad (2014, p. 49) cited in Southall (2016, p. 103). Well-endowed schools raised higher funds augmenting superior education, further entrenching class inequality (Lemmer & van Wyk, 2008). This foiled attempts to "narrow the racial and class gap, an opportunity was created for the privatisation of education" instead, contributing to 'free enterprise', raising demand for schools with good standing, firm discipline and high quality of teaching (Southall, 2016, p. 120).

Thus, the advent of many private schools contributed to a proliferation of choice, with private schools evolving into highly competitive, racially and culturally diverse educational spaces, resulting in a greater stratification of the education landscape based on the economic power of parents, as opposed to racial lines as was previously the case (Southall, 2016). Currently,

according to the South African Schools Act (SASA) of 1996, education provision is categorised into two groups, public and private (Lemmer & van Wyk, 2008).

1.3 Problem Statement

Post-apartheid education policy and reforms in South Africa focused primarily on improving the quality of education through curriculum, teacher empowerment, financing and making education accessible (Jansen & Taylor, 2003). However, Epstein (2002) posits that such reforms have a limited impact on school outcomes and learner development and argues that schools need the support of parents and the community to achieve greater success in achieving their objectives. The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) corroborates this view, showing that education and learning is the total of the synergistic interactions and influences of all role players, therefore, should be fully explored for raising the level of education.

> Learning does not begin when children walk through the school doors nor does it end when they exit for the day. It takes place all the time and everywhere, throughout life. There is a pedagogic dimension to the links between schools and homes and localities. Children bring to school their family and community beliefs, practices, knowledge, expectations and behaviours. Similarly, when they return from school they bring back to their homes and communities new forms of knowledge, practices, behaviours, attitudes and skills. Children are engaged in a continuous, dynamic process of bridging the world of school and the world of home and community. They learn from both worlds, facilitated by teachers, family members and others. Linking schools and communities is widely recognised as good pedagogic practice.
>
> (UNICEF, 2009, 98)

The School-Parent-Community Engagement Framework as part of the 2030 National Development Plan concurs that parent–school- community partnerships contribute significantly to successful school outcomes and that parental involvement is context-specific (Harris & Goodall, 2008; NECT, 2016). Although a few local studies exist, it is concentrated and contextualised around parental involvement in poor socioeconomic contexts, differing from that prevalent in more affluent schools (Myende, 2018; Prew, 2009), highlighting a dearth of studies in private schools despite the trend towards private education.

Besides, South Africa as a fairly young democracy is still transitioning and evolving as a united nation and given apartheid realities and schools being a microcosm of society, schools remain places where societal issues of varying degrees arise. Despite this, few studies have delved into

managing parental involvement in multicultural contexts leaving many schools in the deep end because they lack the knowledge to navigate these divides and manage issues of diversity.

1.4 Purpose and Rationale of the Study

In my experience as an educator in both public and private schools, other factors aside from those of the school and classroom, particularly the context in which the child coexists, meaning the influence of parents and the home environment were also significant contributors to a child's education, learning and development. Thus, my interest in parents' role in education stems from my professional involvement, pragmatic observation and engagement with learners and parents. In my interactions with other professionals, it was widely acknowledged that children who are well supported outside the classroom perform better and are more advantaged.

Despite existent policy and guidelines, the level of parent participation in education remains low, showing that gaps exist in implementation at the grassroots level (NECT, 2016). This points to a need for deeper insights, policy and practice to develop from within schools, to be context-specific and effectively implemented.

1.5 Significance of the study

It is anticipated that this study conducted in a private school can contribute to filling the gap in the literature on managing parental involvement in this sector. Firstly, given that studies on parental involvement in South African private schools are limited. Secondly, few studies based on parental involvement examine the management of parental involvement, so it will bring a specific dimension to the larger body of work on parental involvement. Although studies by Prew (2009), Myende (2018) and Sanders (2014), examine the role of leadership and management in parental involvement, it is limited to public schools of lower socioeconomic status. Thirdly, less attention has been paid to parental involvement in diverse parent populations and South Africa remains an important site for examining this dimension, given the racial diversity and economic and cultural differences that exist (Beutel & Anderson, 2016).

Although the benefits of and need for parent-school partnerships are included in the policy of education systems globally to ensure better participation of parents, it does not translate to increased involvement (Okeke, 2014; NECT, 2016; Mncube, 2010; Okeke, 2014). This study

will advocate for the importance of schools in managing and driving parent-school partnerships by rendering national policy into school-specific policy, practice and implementation for genuine change to be effected (Lemmer & van Wyk, 2008; NECT, 2016). In the long term, this study would contribute to diminishing the gap between involved and uninvolved parents (Harris & Goodall, 2008) hence close the gap between policy and practice. However, having made this statement, this study acknowledges that in the South African context, only a minority of parents are equipped to participate in formal structures of schooling. Limiting factors such as poor socio-economic conditions, low levels of formal education and literacy remain a stumbling block for the majority of parents to involve themselves in the formal structures of schooling especially in public schools (Singh et al., 2004; Mncube, 2009).

1.6 Objectives of the study

This study intends to deepen the knowledge base on parental involvement by providing an informative understanding of conceptualisations, practices and expectations of parental involvement in a private school. Further, it explores how contextual factors are navigated through establishing and determining the best practice when parental involvement is managed in diverse parent constituencies.

1.7 Key Research questions

The study sought to understand how parental involvement is managed in a diverse and complex urban private school setting. The primary research question is:
How is parental involvement managed in private schools?

This main question was informed by the following sub-questions:

- How is parental involvement conceptualised and experienced in a South African private primary school?
- How is parental involvement practised and encouraged to address the needs of a diverse parent population?
- What are the main expectations of parents and how do they influence parental involvement?
- What are the benefits, drivers or enablers of parental involvement?
- What are the challenges, limitations and barriers of parental involvement and how are they overcome?

These insights were elucidated to develop an understanding of how the management of parental involvement is initiated and sustained and gain insights into the implications for education policy.

1.8 Delimitations of the study

In this study, it was determined that to elucidate how parental involvement is managed and thereby define the role of school leaders and managers, it was important to delve into the substantive relationship between the key role players to gain greater perspectives. The fundamental role of leadership is that it procreates enabling conditions therefore parent participation was imperative to determine the nature, practices and conceptualisations of parental involvement of all stakeholders. In other words, the context and circumstances in which leaders and managers operate are deepened by the understanding gleaned from parents' expectations in steering this involvement forward. Lastly, the benefits, drivers and enablers together with the challenges, limitations and barriers of parental involvement from the perspectives of both parents and management members serve as means of triangulation to determine if these contexts are being managed effectively.

1.9 Outline and structure of the study

This research report is structured into subsequent chapters as follows:

Chapter One

Introduces the research topic and contextualises it, briefly characterising the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic, the rise of the private school sector in South Africa. The parameters are clarified through the aims, the key research questions and an outline of the purpose, rationale and significance. It concludes the chapter with a general overview of the structure of the study.

Chapter Two

This chapter reviews the relevant literature, both local and global on parental involvement. The conceptualisation of and factors influencing the management of parental involvement and the theoretical framework of Epstein's model, which underpins this, is briefly outlined.

Chapter Three

The chapter describes the methodology and the research instruments implemented for data collection, the process of data analysis adopted and the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on data collection.

Chapter Four

The chapter outlines a breakdown of the responses to research questions through a thematic analysis of the data presented and concludes with the identification and discussion of the main findings in themes.

Chapter Five

Chapter five provides a summary outline of the study, discusses the relevance of the findings and their implication for policy and concludes by providing recommendations regarding parent-school partnerships and pursuing research in the field.

1.10 Conclusion

In this chapter, the research problem was further explained and it was contended that understanding all the aspects that impact parent-school partnerships and the context it exists, is necessary for schools to better navigate the issues and sustain the partnership while positively impacting the education of the child.

CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

2.1 Introduction

Through an appraisal of the literature, this chapter developed an understanding of parent-school partnerships, their conceptualisation, challenges and barriers. The theoretical framework of the Epstein model of overlapping spheres was the lens through which partnerships were explored, to determine what makes it successful and how it is sustained and managed as an important and key educational factor in schools.

2.2 Conceptualising Parental Involvement

Before the definition of parental involvement was further explored, the understanding of the term parent was first established. The SASA recognises a parent as:

> (1) the parent or guardian of a learner; (11) the person legally entitled to custody of a learner and (111) the person who undertakes to fulfil the obligations of a person referred to in paragraphs (1) and (11) above towards the learner's education at school."
>
> (RSA, 1996b, cited in p.2; Mncube, 2010).

Lemmer and van Wyk (2008) further clarify that a parent is any person who cares for and legally undertakes the responsibility of the child. Mncube (2010) adds that the parent can be a biological parent, legal guardian or caregiver. This study assumes these definitions of a parent.

There is no one conclusive definition of parental involvement. 'Parental involvement' includes many behaviours and practices of parents including, parental aspirations for children's academic achievement, communication with children and teachers about the school, participation in school activities and instituting rules considered being education-related (Harris & Goodall, 2008; Goodall & Montgomery, 2014; Mncube, 2010). Also, it means being present at school (Segoe & Bisschoff, 2019), attending parent-teacher interviews and education meetings (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011); volunteering and participating in social and instructional activities such as homework and reading (Garbacz, McDowall, Schaughency, Sheridan, &

Welch, 2015). Besides this, it means engaging in children's extra-curricular activities, providing guidance in course selection, monitoring academic progress and imparting parental values (Mestry & Grobler, 2007), ensuring school attendance; setting expectations for schooling; supporting a child's out-of-school learning; advocating on behalf of a child (Shiffman, 2013).

A comprehensive understanding of the concept of parental involvement is provided by Hill, Witherspoon and Bartz, (2018, p.12) who maintain that "More generally, it has been defined as parents' work with schools and with their children to benefit educational outcomes and future success and a commitment of family resources to support academic development." These definitions provide a comprehensive understanding of parental involvement and the multiple roles parents play. Thus, it is multidimensional, has a broad focus, both conceptually and in its application, encompassing a wide variety of actions and practices in every facet of a child's education and development.

Hill et al., (2018) further delimit parental involvement to include home and school-based involvement. The different involvements distilled from the readings is depicted in a diagrammatic representation in Figure 1, concurring with Epstein's model that this framework guide the formulation of a "balanced, inclusive programme of home-based and school-based volunteering" NECT (2016).

Figure 1. Parental involvement delimited into the home and school-based involvement

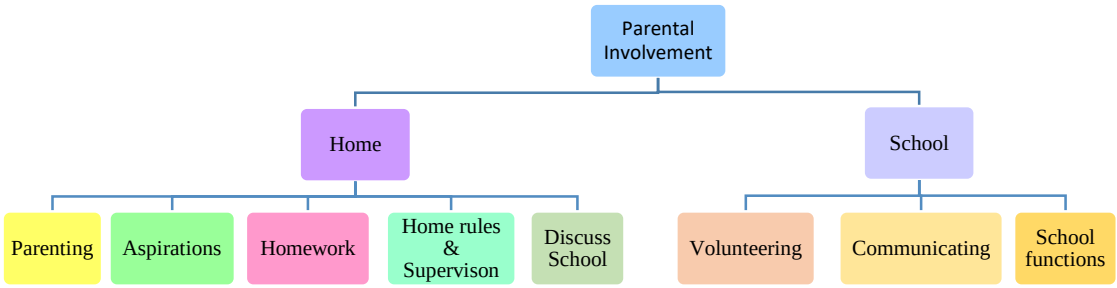
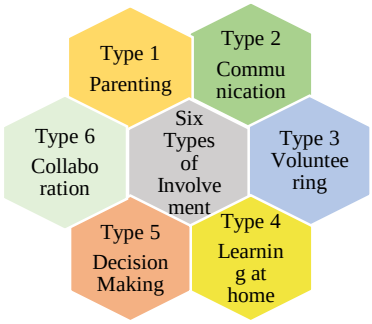


Figure 2 is a visual representation of "Epstein's framework of six major types of involvement" in which parental involvement finds expression within the context of both the home and school. This aligns the role of the family to a broad spectrum of involvement, ranging from simpler, home-based activities to more multifaceted, school-based activities (Lemmer, 2007, p. 221; Sanders, 2014).

Figure 2: Epstein's six types of involvement



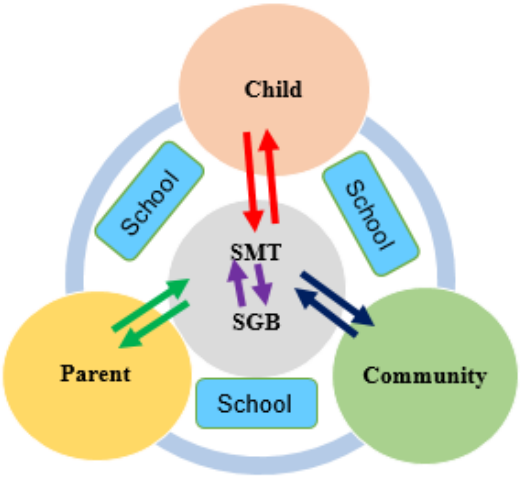
Moreover, Emerson et al., (2012) draw an important distinction that parents engaging in learning have a positive impact on academic achievement whilst involving parents in school activities serve a community and social role. Whilst this argument remains prevalent, another issue highlighted by Smith et al., (2011, p.77) is that the various names, "parent involvement"; "family involvement"; "parent engagement"; "parent empowerment" and "school-family partnerships" are used synonymously in readings, thus, in this study, the term "parental involvement" encompasses all the above.

2.3 Leading and Managing Parent-School Partnerships

From the literature, greater insights were formed into how functional and sustainable parent-school partnerships should be developed. Christie and Lingard (2001, p.18) argue that reforms and restructuring have made schools more accountable to external constituencies, parents, government and communities and the "notion of the school existing behind its walls – if it ever was true – certainly does not hold in these 'new times". Therefore, leaders and managers are challenged to position schools at a local level and grow collaborative partnerships with local communities within the boundaries of government policy.

Given this, Christie and Lingard (2001, p.18) advocate that individuals with different roles be tasked with leadership instead of "hierarchical notions" where principals are positioned at the "centre of the school", rather than "at the top", allowing for management systems and processes that are more flexible. Figure 3 is a visual representation which shows principal leadership and the school management team (SMT), "stretched and dispersed across different tasks and people", remain accountable for achieving

Figure 3: Principal leadership and role of SMT is "stretched and dispersed across different tasks and people"



goals within “multiple relations of accountability”, that is their “horizontal accountability” to learners, parents and community (Christie & Lingard, 2001, p. 20).

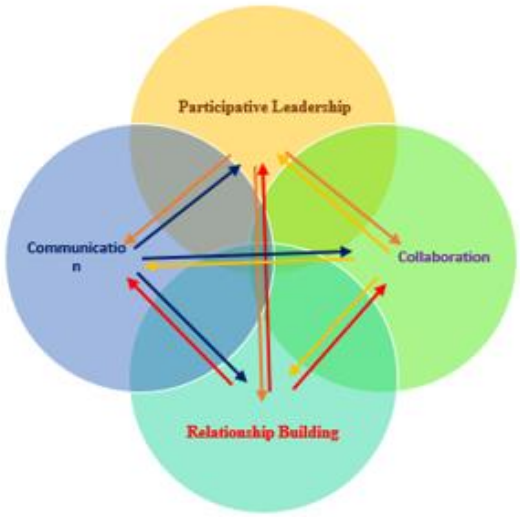
Principals are identified as key decision-makers and agents of change to support continuous improvement and the main drivers and initiators of home-school relations and programmes (NECT, 2016; Lemmer, 2007; Sanders, 2014). Myende (2018) adds that whilst principal leadership is vital at the initiation stage, the leadership of teachers is central to the continued functioning of partnerships.

According to Prew (2009), leaders and managers must make tactical and calculated choices over the organisation and ethos of the school and aim for what is most suited to their environment to be effective. Thus, principal agreement and commitment to establishing sound partnerships need to be established. Besides, Heystek (2004) cited in Mncube (2010, p. 235) adds that although the SASA clearly distinguishes between the roles of school governors, school management and parents in the School Governing Body (SGB), “the very thin line that exists between governance and management”, could lead to conflict excluding parents from meaningful participation.

Communication and collaboration are highlighted as two key strategies of decision-making (Lemmer, 2007; Mestry & Grobler, 2007; Myende, 2018). Participative leadership is a significant facilitator of parental involvement (Bush, 2007; Myende, 2018). Moreover, Myende (2018, p.7) views “challenging inferiority and superiority complexes” as crucial to sustaining partnerships, whereas, Warren, Stefanski, Valli, & Jacobson (2009) propose that addressing power struggles which close the gap in power and culture between stakeholders as one aspect of relationship building between parents and schools, parents themselves and empowering parents as leaders.

The authors view, incorporating strategies of participative leadership, communication, collaboration and relationship building are significant contributors that are interconnected, support and imply the role of all the others in a dialectic argument, facilitate the management of partnerships. The interrelation of these strategies are diagrammatically represented in Figure 4 and further expounded in the discussion that follows.

Figure 4| The role of enabling factors in managing parent-school partnerships



2.3.1 Participative leadership

According to Leithwood et al. cited in Bush (2007), participative leadership undertakes decision-making processes central to the group, consistent with democratic values, recognising the SGB's role and the standing of SMT (School Management Team). The principal, although a key agent, does not lead independently but is in participative and democratic leadership with and shares joint responsibility of all other structures (NECT, 2016). Thus, the burden on principals is reduced when stakeholders have a responsibility to lead partnership functions and roles are shared, concurring with Epstein's theory which underscores shared goals and responsibilities (Sanders, 2014; Myende, 2018; Bush, 2007). Participative leadership bonds role players and shapes relationships (Bush, 2007), therefore, "new conceptualisations of parent and community relations" requisite of school leadership affords parents "a more embracing citizenship role" (Christie & Lingard, 2001, p. 15).

2.3.2 Collaboration

Collaboration is defined as a process when role players with diverse competencies and proficiencies work together, to engender new resolutions to jointly defined problems through sharing power and authority to attain common goals that cannot be accomplished independently by individuals or organisations (Mestry & Grobler, 2007). Learning is improved when all stakeholders know their shared goals and responsibilities (Epstein, 2001 cited in Myende, 2018) and collaboration of all stakeholders promotes progress in any school maintain Mannathoko & Mangope, (2013) cited in Segoe and Bisschoff (2019).

Communication of vital and adequate information is a crucial factor for true collaboration to exist and collaboration facilitates setting goals and objectives, important in mutual participatory and sound decision-making process (Mestry & Grobler, 2007). Myende (2018) underscores the importance of genuine collaboration in planning and decision-making. Prew (2009) adds that when principals meet the needs and support community involvement, afford parents' leadership positions and responsibility, then greater team effort, more volunteering and a sense of ownership and genuine obligation are instilled, thus building stronger relationships. To be authentic partners, there must be a consistent and respectful invitation to parents to voice their opinions in a co-equal relationship (Meier & Lemmer, 2015).

To support this, Lemmer and Wyk (2008, p. 273) contend that an organisational structure "such as the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA)" with parent and educator representatives, which is part of, but not the same as the SGB, responsible for coordinating school-community partnerships, is central to the Epstein model. Okeke (2014) adds that whilst the SMT and SGB have legislated bodies with managerial responsibilities, the PTA engages in social and fund-raising activities, contributes a more supportive environment for home-school collaboration. Lemmer & van Wyk, (2004, p. 183) indicate that an "action team", comprising parents and teachers, evaluate, organise and co-ordinate practices regularly and the partnership program form part of a school improvement plan, linked to specific school outcomes (Lemmer, 2007; NECT, 2016). Mestry and Grobler (2007) add that coordinating activities requires the synchronised efforts of parents and school through monitoring, creating an awareness of the mission and expectations, informing through relaying policies, procedures, aims and expectations and participation through active engagement between roleplayers.

2.3.3 Communication

Hill et al., (2018) maintain that school-based involvement that largely incorporates communication, considering that information sharing is vital and connects the two spheres of home and school, should be understood independently. Keyes (2002) cited in Meier and Lemmer (2015) concur that communication, integral to the Epstein model, should be all-encompassing, infiltrating the other types of involvement which depend on communication. Further, Myende (2018, p.10) contends that "effective communication" involves a "two-way" engagement, crucial to establishing social cohesion among stakeholders and should be facilitated in a manner that "influences the recipient to buy-in and commit to the partnership ideas", making known the aims, expectations, shared goals and vision.

It is agreed that for effective two-way communication, a variety of home-school communication approaches is recommended (Sanders, 2014; Lemmer, 2007; Myende, 2018; Lemmer & van Wyk, 2008), therefore, greater opportunities be afforded for parent feedback, foregrounding communication in a "co-equal relationship", to effect school improvement (Meier & Lemmer, 2015; Lemmer & van Wyk, 2008, p.183). Parents will be more involved if communication is constant and "adequate communication" ensures that a "school reflects principles of social justice and democracy, in making all that happens at school transparent to them" (Mncube, 2010, p. 240).

2.3.4 Culture of Relationship building

Auerbach (2010) cited in Glickman, Gordan, & Ross-Gordan (2018) indicates that the highest level of parent-school partnership is characterised by an authentic relationship based on mutual respect, equality, sharing power and dialogue, reflective of a democratically led school. However, it is recognised that unequal knowledge and power makes it challenging to build collaborative and beneficial relationships (Warren et al., 2009) when teachers under their professional standing, may regard themselves as higher than parents, leading to power struggles because of such hierarchies (Lemmer & van Wyk, 2008; Myende, 2018).

Thus, Warren et al., (2009, p. 2244) advocate for a new collaborative approach where leaders are open to "learning to share power" and a relational approach that recognises conflict as nurturing the "power to" craft solutions together, adding that "dealing with conflict rather than avoiding it can often lead to stronger collaboration". Therefore, supporting parents' power through collaboration requires that schools enter genuine relationship building, engaging parents around their interests and valuing and respecting their contributions. Hence, relationship building with parents can be viewed as creating a foundation for long-standing and sustainable change and not a "quick fix" to problems (Warren et al., 2009, p. 2248). Besides, Prew (2009) asserts that community involvement in fundraising creates an avenue for relationship building between teachers and community members to engage in and unite on a common purpose, thus breaking down barriers that exist.

2.4 Challenges and Barriers to Forming and Sustaining School-Parent Partnerships

Partnerships need to understand and address challenges and barriers if long-term relationships are to be beneficial and successful. Sathiapama et al., (2012) maintain that dealing with diversity and establishing social cohesion in institutions can challenge the establishment of effective parental involvement in multicultural contexts in South Africa. This proves more complex given the differences in the cultural background of minority parents and the school organisation.

According to the NECT (2016, p.7), "lack of understanding of the heterogeneity of the South African parent body", "non-inclusive school practices and attitudes", together with not understanding how to deal with diversity, results in minority groups being "marginalised and excluded". As a result, "assimilation remains the dominant model of integration" meaning that "the values, traditions and customs of the dominant group frame the social and cultural context of the school", making authentic collaboration and communication a problem in a diverse society (Sathiapama et al., 2012, p. 64).

Okeke (2014, p. 3) claims that when parent's beliefs about schooling conflict with the school's philosophical standing, barriers result, thus "only those parents whose personal ideologies and beliefs align with those of the school may be encouraged to get involved; and those parents … in dissonance…shun involvement". Besides, Gordon and Nocon (2008, p. 322) highlight that "linguistic, cultural and socio-economic differences among parents can destabilise school communities", therefore, there is a need for new evidence that ascertain factors that influence the "internal dynamics of parent involvement" to make diverse communities more cohesive (Okeke, 2014; Harris & Goodall, 2008).

"Cultural capital" connected to "forms of knowledge, skills, education, or any advantage a person has which gives him or her a higher status in society", implies that the school system transmits cultural capital, propelling the dominant group to parallel "education with middle- and upper-class values and aims, consequently alienating parents of the lower class", resulting in ethnic communities experiencing greater hurdles in terms of language and cultural peculiarities (Okeke, 2014, p.3). Furthermore, "social capital" allows parents to connect with greater ease and confidence, thus, prejudicing children from lower-income groups and certain

backgrounds because some parents actively participate and others do not (Harris & Goodall, 2008, p. 280).

Sathiapama et al., (2012, p. 71) maintain that research internationally shows that “teachers are less likely to know parents who are culturally different from their own background” and few teachers have knowledge and training to deal with diversity. Thus, the education system aligns itself in a structure that distributes advantage to those who possess access to “social networks and organisations” and “attitudes, preferences, behaviours and educational background, linguistic competence and formal knowledge”, favouring those that possess social and cultural capital respectively, marginalising those that lack such capital (Gordon & Nocon, 2008, p. 323).

Furthermore, the “school’s ideological positioning within the larger society may equally act as a serious impediment”, noting parents that cannot attend meetings, possess feelings of inferiority, not being welcomed and teachers’ negative attitudes pose barriers (Okeke, 2014, p. 3). Moreover, not being fully conversant with English, poor literacy levels, personal issues such as divorce, financial problems, mental health issues and other difficulties (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011), a narrow understanding of parental involvement and a lack of effective implementation strategies, also pose barriers (NECT, 2016).

The impact of policy is felt at the grassroots level as policy and reforms redefine the roles of relationships and cause a redistribution of power which introduces conflict between stakeholders and challenges the autonomy of schools (Myende, 2018). Policies position parents as “key stakeholders, partners, consumers and decision-makers in school communities", however, policies “ignore the complexity of relations between schools and family, teachers and parents” (Blackmore & Hutchison 2010, p. 502). Thus, empowering people to practice and enact enabling factors of parent-school partnerships, such as relationship building, participative leadership, effective collaboration and communication should precede and work concurrently with policy imperatives.

2.5 Theoretical Framework: Epstein’s model of overlapping spheres of Influence

The literature reviewed by international and local authors including landmark studies, foreground the Epstein theory as the main conceptual framework that underpins research in this field (Lemmer, 2007). This study is focused on a partnership where stakeholders come together

to achieve a common purpose and goal. Therefore the Epstein model provides an appropriate framework and lens through which the nature of parent-school partnerships and how these relationships can be sustained are explored. In the South African context, this model is recognised as the most beneficial in expounding parent-school partnerships (Myende, 2018; Prew, 2009). According to Lemmer (2007, p. 218), the Epstein theory recognises children learn and grow in three major milieus of influence namely, family, school and community and postulates 'six types of parent and community involvement' that position relationships within the areas of *overlapping spheres.* The theory contributes to two important precepts, firstly, learning is more impactful when stakeholders recognise their shared goals and responsibilities and second, it is mutually beneficial and reciprocal (Myende, 2018).

2.5.1 Establishing shared vision, goals, roles and responsibilities for partnerships

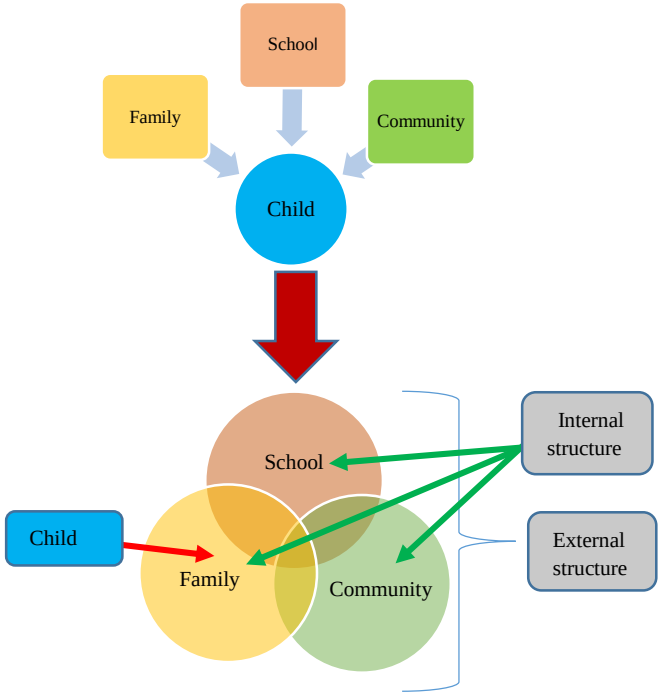
Epstein's theory posits that there is an overlap in the role of families and schools because of common goals and visions (Lemmer, 2007), thus most effective schools have *overlapping* shared goals and missions, recognising that some activities are conducted independently and some jointly (Lemmer & van Wyk, 2008). This implies that interests and influences over learning can be facilitated by both though similarities between the two milieus exist, the joint interests of the partnership can be successfully upheld by policies and programmes (Lemmer, 2007; Lemmer & van Wyk, 2008).

Thus, "parental involvement" now called "parent-school partnership" implies "shared and equally valued roles in education" (Glickman et al., 2018, p. 49) thereby concurring with Myende (2018) that partnerships that are overlapping domains are vital to learner's growth and positive learning. Goals can only be effectively established if and when school leaders have a deep understanding of the needs and goals of the school and community and Cave (1970) cited in Mncube, (2010) contend that both should assume joint responsibility given that the role of parents is vital.

Family, school and community are not independently influencing the child but have a combined influence as depicted by the *overlapping spheres of influence* in the Epstein model represented in Figure 5. The "external structure" demonstrates that the spheres may be "pulled together or pushed apart" based on policies and practices functioning within the framework and the "internal structure", powerfully likened to an "engine room", represented by the intersections

of the components, recognises the "interpersonal relationships and connections" and how these maximise learning and achievement (Myende, 2018, p. 3).

Figure 5: Epstein Theory of *overlapping spheres of influence*



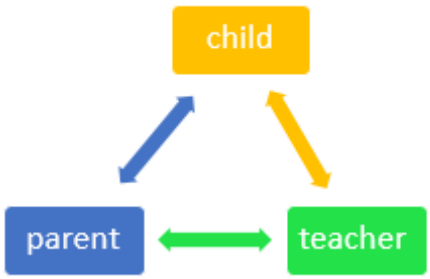
The "external structure" exemplifies the "actual components and how they link as they work together", showing that the intersection and movement of the constituents are flexible and move closer or further from one another, symbolic of the amount of "communication and collaboration" within the partnership and when the components are not in constant interaction, they become polarised (Myende, 2018, p. 4).

Sanders (2014, p. 234) incorporates the view of Epstein et al. (2009) and contends that "a goal-focused approach" to partnerships should be adopted to achieve quantifiable academic and behavioural results. Thus, a policy developed by the SGB should be determined collectively, incorporating a shared vision and mission, sharing "an understanding of the roles and responsibilities" of the various stakeholders (NECT, 2016, p. 13), to avoid tensions and conflicts which could compromise functional and sustainable partnerships (Myende, 2018).

2.5.2 Parent-School Partnerships as reciprocal and mutually beneficial

Meier and Lemmer (2015) posit that according to the Epstein model, parental involvement is conceptually underpinned by a reciprocal nature, governed by the need for partnership to benefit the child, which is largely determined by the quality of involvement that exists. Figure 6 depicts the child, teacher and parent as the key players in the reciprocal parent-school partnership.

Figure 6: The reciprocal nature of parent-school partnerships



Myende (2018) in line with Epstein's theory, reinforces that partnerships comprise mutual benefits where each role player is an equal contributor with equal influence to the dialogue. Therefore, teachers and parents should develop reciprocal relationships where there is sharing of expertise by the teacher, who in turn is informed by parents about the child, for the partnership to be productive (Glickman et al., 2018). Mestry and Grobler (2007) claim that parents are equally competent when sharing responsibility and accountability, therefore, empowering parents is potentially beneficial in keeping with the South African Council of Educators (SACE) that stipulate teachers develop collegial relationships and position parents as partners.

2.5.3 Parental Involvement is context-specific

Schools operate "within an ecology with a web of role players" which directly or indirectly affect and shape the education of a child, although communities and schools are separate units, "the boundaries between them are permeable", implying that they are "open systems", coexisting and influenced by its particular context Myende (2018, p.3). Crozier cited in Goodall and Montgomery (2014, p.400) caution "against a one size fits all interventions" for supporting partnerships, as parents are not homogenous and share the same needs, limitations or understandings of involvement. Thus practices should be specific to the culture and local context existent in a diverse and heterogeneous school community (NECT, 2016) and school

managers must “aim at the best fit with their environment”, in terms of its political and social context, involving a wide range of stakeholders, drawing deeper community involvement to be effective (Prew, 2009, p. 841).

While Epstein’s theory is widely supported, parent involvement practices and programmes vary as each school tailors their practices differently to meet specific needs of families relevant to the challenges and barriers that may be experienced (Lemmer, 2007; Lemmer & van Wyk, 2008; Sanders, 2014; Prew, 2009). Parent-school partnerships are integral to whole-school strategy directed at school improvement and for optimal realisation, school leaders need to first identify and assess problems and best address this using appropriate practices (Lemmer, 2007). This has a profound implication for policy development, showing that policy should be inclusive, devised from the point of departure of addressing local needs, take cognisance of unique factors, endorsing that ideas, customs, and social behaviour of society impact the interplay between parents and schools and that distinctive circumstances define how parental involvement is deliberated (Sathiapama et al., 2012).

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter delved into aspects that underpin parent-school partnerships to support understanding of the findings that were presented in practice. The multiple definitions of parental involvement and the role it entails are multifaceted, incorporating a comprehensive framework of involvement. The Epstein model (2001) of *overlapping spheres* provides a clear theoretical framework to explain parent-school partnerships indicating that where shared goals, roles and responsibilities are reciprocal and mutually beneficial, partnerships thrive. The pivotal role of collaboration, effective communication, participative leadership and culture of relationship-building that undergirds parent-school partnerships was also highlighted. Policy and practice of parental involvement are specific and dependent on the context in which the school and its community exist.

CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explains the qualitative research methodology utilising an exploratory case study design with social interpretivism adopted as a research paradigm. An exploratory case study design was regarded as most suitable to elicit data about the nature of parent-school partnership and how it is sustained as it acknowledges and recognises the multiple conceptualisations and experiences of parents within the given context. The chapter also gives a brief overview of the data collection instruments used and how the data will be analysed considering ethical issues, trustworthiness and limitations of the study.

3.2 Research Paradigm

This study ascribed to the general framework of the interpretivist paradigm based on the aim to gain insights, understand and make meaning of the reality and experience of those studied to determine what they do and how they do it (Cohen et al., 2018). This paradigm agrees that people derive meaning through their reality and existence within a given context and the creation of meaning provides the understanding and interpretation to the context. The interpretivist paradigm directs close interaction with a community of people to derive meaning socially bearing in mind that research outcomes are designed and confined by their paradigms (Cresswell, 2014). By embracing this worldview, the study's orientation was able to guide it towards interpretive understanding.

Thus this study embarked on exploring the social interactions within the context, to cultivate insights into how participants interact with their world and each other to make sense of their experiences. In line with this, this study into parents and management members' conceptualisations and experiences of parental involvement in the school. In doing so it aimed to understand how the role of the different stakeholders given their conceptualisations in the school context enhanced education and school policy. Therefore this study assumed an interpretivist approach which allowed the research process to be informed by and is reflective

of how that particular group of people make sense of the situation they encounter in their interactions.

3.3 Research design

The research design employed was that of an exploratory case study, where an in-depth, detailed understanding of managing parental involvement was explained. According to Cresswell (2018, p. 73), a case study approach allows the investigator to explore “multiple bounded systems (cases) over time” through comprehensive and “in-depth data collection” of an issue, making it suitable for the focus of this study. According to Scott and Morrison (2007, p.32), 'theory seeking' is also analogous to the term “exploratory case study research” that give rise to “generalisations” that are broad statements “with built-in uncertainties... an appropriate concept for [case study] research in areas like education where human complexity is paramount”.

Also, Scott and Morrison (2007) maintain that a case study is suitable to studies that aim to answer the how and why questions, thus making it appropriate for this study that asked, “How parental involvement is managed in a private primary school?” In the stage of exploring data to make meaning, the research procedure created a Geertzian “thick description” of the findings from the school understudy, which enabled the researcher to uncover the conceptual frameworks that underpin the study (Geertz, 1973, p. 321).

3.4 Research methodology

In adopting an interpretivist paradigm, the implication was that a rigorous qualitative research methodology was incorporated. According to Scott and Morrison (2007, p.195), “the focus is upon seeing the world through the eyes of those being studied”, meaning that the qualitative research approach is inductive with the researcher creating meaning from the data obtained (Creswell, 2018). The value being that only a qualitative approach allows for a detailed in-depth exploration of issues. Thus, to develop this concept further, the intricacies of a practical life embedded experience, in the social and educational context were explored (Scott & Morrison, 2007).

According to Cresswell (2014), qualitative studies allow one to understand how a problem or issue is addressed by participants in a given context, and to fully explore deeper thinking about

why people respond in a given manner. The research questions in this study were focused on answering the "what" and "how" of managing parental involvement and given that such questions can be best answered through a qualitative study, this approach was most appropriate.

3.5 Research Sample

This study explored parental involvement in a private, primary school context. Purposive sampling was used to choose the school and participants were pre-selected included only the principal, deputies and other management members. These participants considered being "information-rich" could provide detailed data on the research questions by virtue of their position, the roles they fulfilled and the required knowledge and experience they possessed (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). Thus, these participants fulfilled the criteria relevant to establish the 'what' and 'how' as they were part of the situation at hand, therefore, able to furnish depth on the crucial issues of the study (Minott & Willet, 2011).

Parent participants were classified as falling into a snowball sample subset as management members referred persons that could provide more detailed accounts and who were accessible for the research (Cresswell, 2018). This method of sampling determined the nature and the validity of the findings that were derived from the participation of the sample (Scott & Morrison, 2007). Due to the constraints caused by the Coronavirus pandemic and school closures, the study was confined to one school and the research sample was smaller than intended.

The sample comprised of five management participants M1 to M5 and nine parent participants P1 to P9, representative of all stakeholders in terms of race, culture and gender in keeping with the demographics of the parent population. In addition, there were more parent participants included given that parents are a majority of the stakeholder population. Table 1 provides more detail on the sample profile.

Table 1. Sample profile according to the role, gender and race

Participants					
Role		Gender		Race	
Principal	1	Male	2	White	9
Deputy Principal	2	Female	12	Black	2
Other management members	2			Indian	3

Parents representatives	9		
Number of Interviews			14

3.6 Data generation methods

The methods used for data generation included semi-structured interviews and document analysis as the research questions embarked on were qualitative. These methods allowed the researcher to delve into participant's insights on conceptualisations and experiences of parental involvement and the benefits, challenges and limitations experienced.

3.6.1 Semi-structured Interviews

The primary data were obtained through semi-structured interviews which support open-ended questions where respondents could elicit in-depth answers by drawing out detailed explanations on a question (Scott & Morrison, 2007). McMillan and Shumacher (2014) motivate that interviews allow for answers to be delved into to obtain greater elaboration and clarification. Research questions were prepared in advance and question prompts enabled the researcher to gain clarity. Probes allowed for participants to elaborate, provide more detail and qualify their responses, contributing to depth, detail and richness (Cohen & Manion et al., 2018). The same open-ended questions were posed in the same sequence based on the responses of the interviewees for all interviews to reduce the possibility of bias (McMillan & Shumacher, 2010).

Given that this research had to be worked around the situation with the Covid-19 pandemic, due to school closures, social distancing protocols and lack of access to participants to complete face-to-face interviews as was initially planned, online or virtual interviews had to be conducted. Thus, appropriate technology and platforms were chosen to support this. Salmon, (2010) proposes that the interview style should correlate to the choice of interview technology, thus the free-flowing dialogue that video conferencing offers support interviews because it allows for synchronous, focused communication and attentive participation in real-time, closely substituting for face-to-face meetings. The video conferencing software chosen as most appropriate was that of Google Meet which allowed for the natural back and forth, including verbal and nonverbal communication to be observed and visual and verbal data to be obtained, not possible with email, telephone or online interviews (Salmon, 2010). Thus, this form of technology enabled both access to participants whilst maintaining social distance.

Although interviews were conducted online, the approach of gaining the consent of participants was not done anonymously. Negotiating access, recruiting and request for participation was made by a management member within the school community. Since the person making the request was a known member, trust was established. In this way, participation in the research received due consideration instead of it being a 'cold' request through email (Salmon, 2010).

At all stages of the research process I was mindful of my position as a teacher within the school and located in the space that is being researched. Being cognisant of my positionality and insider knowledge and how this may influence the interactions I had with participants led me to undertake constant scrutiny and self-analysis to recognise subjectivity and bias which I consciously set aside. However, the detailed verbatim accounts that were collected from participants channelled objectivity into the analysis of the discussion and in this way judgement was reserved and greater awareness was given to listening. Therefore subjectivity associated with the "expression of voice" in the report, strongly reflected and resembled that of participants. It is also prudent to acknowledge that the researcher's beliefs, cultural background of gender, race, class, socioeconomic status and educational background are important variables that may affect the research process. As the participants' experiences are framed in social-cultural contexts, so too are those of the researcher.

In undertaking the research it also revealed to me as a teacher that trust needs to be established and relationships between teachers and parents are deeply shaped by parents' circumstances and the importance of developing a sensitivity around it.

3.6.2 Document Reviews

Document analysis was conducted in conjunction with semi-structured interviews to gain more detailed insights into parental involvement at the school. Documents such as the school's policies, newsletters, school magazines and blogs on the website were reviewed to provide further data around the school and parent community context and the parental involvement programme. These documents were systematically analysed and evaluated providing valuable information, context, background and historical information within which participants operate, thus extending the knowledge base (Bowen, 2009).

Document analysis used in combination with semi-structured interviews serve as a means of triangulation and corroborate findings across data collections and thus decrease the impact of possible biases that can present in a single study. However, document analysis does not provide adequate detail to provide complete depth to a research question (Bowen, 2009).

3.7 Data analysis

The study was a qualitative exploratory case study that used inductive reasoning where the phenomena located within its context were used to generate data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). An inductive analysis aimed to make sense of the key ideas that emerged (Creswell, 2016).

The data analysis process involved four stages (Cresswell & Cresswell, 2018). In the first stage, the raw data obtained from interviews and document analysis were prepared for analysis by transcribing interviews using a voice-to-text application. The transcripts were read several times whilst the researcher guarded against any preconceptions, bias or prejudices to get a general sense of the main ideas that emerged (Creswell, 2016). In the second stage, the transcripts were subject to a process of coding, which began with "sorting and making sense of the data collected" that involves data reduction which is "a process of selecting, focusing, abstracting, simplifying and transforming the notes" completed manually by the researcher (Scott & Morisson, 2007, p. 54). In the third stage, the codes in the data were assessed for similarities or main ideas and in the final stage, the data was disassembled, sectioned and grouped to form themes that were refined further following the research questions from which understandings and experiences emerged.

3.8 Ethical issues

Education research based on human subjects has an ethical-moral dimension that demands the rights and dignity of research participants be prioritised, thus ethical considerations and accountability were maintained throughout the study (Scott & Morrison, 2007). The research addressed the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants.

Research participants were invited to participate and through an information sheet, full details about the study were given before the interview. After participants agreed to participate in the

study, a consent form was signed, granting their informed consent and confirming to participants that confidentiality and anonymity would be maintained. Consent forms explicitly requested permission from participants for interviews to be recorded, before data collection.

Confidentiality was ensured in that interviews were conducted individually and data collected could only be accessed by the researcher and had been stored for safekeeping in a password-protected laptop and hard copies had been locked away. The anonymity of participants was safeguarded by not disclosing the identity of participants and the location of the study, thus pictures, the school logo, names of participants and school or any other relevant information have not been disclosed.

Ethical clearance was obtained from the University Human Research Ethics Committee (non-medical), which granted me permission to conduct research and obtain consent from all participants involved in the study.

3.9 Issues of trustworthiness

In qualitative research, issues of trustworthiness must be considered so that the study is reliable and valid. Validity was established by determining whether the findings are true from the perspective of participants, researcher and reader (Cresswell, 2018), thus the need for the study to coincide with participant realities (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014).

Validity was also strengthened by using multiple data generation methods, thus ensuring triangulation, which allowed the researcher to determine that there was agreement throughout the data. Verbatim accounts of the data were used to maintain the authenticity of the data and findings (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014).

Although reliability is often linked to quantitative research, it is directed at the consistency of the interpretation of the findings in the research (Cresswell, 2018). Also, multiple methods of data generation improve the reliability where external and internal consistency are determined through an agreement of accounts in a study and other similar studies (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). According to Shenton (2004), credibility considers how closely the findings resemble reality and transferability reflects on the degree to which the findings from one study can be applied to other conditions. In addition, it ensures that there are adequate findings to transmit insight from one contextual study to a similar context (Guba, 1981).

Dependability and credibility are closely associated and for dependability issues to be addressed more directly, detailed reporting of the processes are required for future researchers to closely follow the work as a prototype (Shenton, 2004). Finally, confirmability relates to whether the findings could be confirmed by other researchers (Lincoln & Guba, 1999).

3.10 Limitations of the study

Generally, studies tend to be limited by access, the credibility of data, time and resources (Vithal & Jansen, 2006). Limitations are the constraints that are beyond the control of the researcher that could impact the outcome of the study and this study had two main constraints which compromised its representativity. Firstly, lockdown measures and school closures because of the Coronavirus pandemic resulted in time constraints and limited access to schools, hence the study sample was confined to one school. It is recognised that a larger sample may have demonstrated different findings. Secondly, given that the study of parent-school partnerships is specific to the context, peculiarities and varying complexities existent in each school, this study limited its focus on parental involvement in one school, therefore the findings are not generalisable and representative of other schools.

3.12 Conclusion

The approach used to undertake the study has been discussed and the rationale behind the choice of a qualitative method and its appropriateness to the study. The methodology adopted as far as the data collection and analysis process used was also elucidated. The research sample, data generation methods and access and challenges of access of participants due to the Covid-19 pandemic were also clarified. Issues of trustworthiness and limitations were also dealt with to ensure the credibility of the research.

CHAPTER FOUR
DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings on parental involvement that emerged from the analysis of data collected and is structured along with the themes that have been identified. Firstly, the parents' conceptions and the multi-varied lived experiences of parental involvement are discussed. Secondly, parental involvement practices are delved into with consideration given to the diverse parental profile and how parental involvement can be facilitated and enhanced. Thirdly, parents' expectations of their involvement and their influence are considered. Fourthly, what parents and managers regard as the benefits, drivers and enablers of parental involvement is presented. Fifthly, consideration is given to what the challenges, limitations and barriers to parental involvement are and how this may be overcome. Lastly, another consideration to note is that the data represented reflect the experiences that participants had with children's learning during the 2020 academic year through the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The discussion is organised such that management member's insights followed parents' perspectives as a means to corroborate the understanding and role of leaders and managers in response to the various aspects of parent involvement that are existent.

4.2 Conceptualising parental involvement

From the multiplicity of responses from parent participants and their conceptualisation of parental involvement, it was apparent that there is diversity in the way the school engages with parents. This corroborates with Epstein's (2002) model that a broad conceptualisation of parental involvement is needed (Lemmer & van Wyk, 2008). Incorporating the six types of involvement, parents' involvement ranged from volunteering, monitoring learning, fundraising and serving as a representative on the PTA.

P5 contended that:

> *There are different types of parental involvement, you got the guy on the side of the rugby field that's screaming at the coach, or on an ongoing basis on an academic side and involved in committees like the PA or the fundraising committee…*

Whilst such involvement is considered important, P1 informed that:

> *There's a basic part of it, making sure that the kid gets to school on time, they have supplies and equipment and are responding to what the school sends home so the more logistical role.*

Thus fulfilling one's parenting obligations links parenting to children's success (Okeke, 2014).

P1 indicated that:

> *Involvement means attending the consultations, following up with teachers or asking questions if I'm concerned and parental involvement can be through the child or directly with the school. Also, reading the newsletter and participating where the school calls on us to...*

Therefore keeping up to date with regular communication, attending interviews and participating in functions is part of the involvement that parents undertake.

While keeping informed through communication is vital, P7 claimed that:

> *Parental involvement is being present in the school environment, involving yourself in community things…*

Thus the importance of parents' presence and involvement in community events, is also significant.

Respondent P3 informed that:

> *It's supporting the learning process, so being there when kids need you or the school requires your input, being able to respond…*

This corroborated with Myende (2018) who posits that *w*orking in collaboration to support children's learning is a priority.

Similarly, P4 succinctly stated that:

They need to draw an integration between home and school and that working together between parents and teachers…

This indicated that there is a need for the synchronised and combined efforts and the complementary role of parents and teachers.

Correspondingly, M1 contended:

Parents who are involved in supporting the school's decisions and buy into the values and what we stand for and when parents come to the school and get a brief tour, they know what it's all about…

Similarly, respondent M2 concurred with the statement made by M1 that the home and school culture should be aligned:

Parents being involved in the school life and culture and for the school and home to be aligned in one vision.

Thus management respondents also recognised and agreed on the importance of parents sharing in and taking ownership of the school vision by supporting school decisions, values and culture. Firstly, this is significant and correlates closely with the Epstein model that for the spheres to be drawn closer with greater overlap, the home and school must be aligned with a common goal and vision (Meier & Lemmer, 2015).

Furthermore, M3 claimed that:

Education is seeing the point of view of the child, the family and trying to relate what they are doing and studying at school to the home environment. We need parental input and co-operation with teachers and vice-versa because the child doesn't exist in isolation but as part of a home and a school.

Secondly, this view corroborated the Epstein model that education takes place on a continuum between home and school and the child co-exists between these two spheres which should not be compartmentalised, working in "silos", independent of each other (Myende, 2018, p.3).

Moreover, M3 contended that:

They have to make sure that kids are doing their work at home and it's not just happening at school. Parental involvement, basically practices, assures, consistency and discipline both at home and school.

Thirdly, this understanding supports Epstein's model indicating that parents should recognise and undertake their shared roles and responsibility by reinforcing and extending the work of the school.

Additionally, M4 argued that:

> *We talk about parent-teacher-child as a threesome that works together, but as teachers, we try to keep parents in their little box and they shouldn't interfere too much with our little boxes. That's why Covid-19 has been good because we had to rely on each other. They're missing out on that; they think it's a magic wand and it's not a magic wand. It's a whole process and when they're involved, they have a better understanding of it.*

Fourthly, M4 in agreement with the point raised by M3 recognises the internal structure of the Epstein model by reiterating the relationship that is activated when parents and teachers acknowledge that learning is not confined to the home nor the school but is influenced by the synergistic effects of the two spheres, working coherently together, making learning more impactful (Myende, 2018).

Also, M2 recognised that:

> *The world means it involves the community and because of failures in security and high crime rate in Africa, most kids' communities especially in private schools in the suburbs are practically just their families and close families which means parents have to be involved...*

This suggests that the context of the community may have been physically minimised by modern-day living, urbanisation and societal problems, making parental involvement a greater necessity. Thus fifthly, following Epstein's model it is recognised that schools and families are embedded within and exist as part of a community, implying that education is influenced by the context and milieu it exists in (Myende, 2018).

Correspondingly, M2 agreed that:

> *Parents are involved in the child's education, helping in any way possible because a child cannot be educated in isolation as much as some parents will argue that, I pay private school fees to ensure that you educate my child, that's not what education is about.*

Again this reiterated that education does not take place in isolation and is not limited to a financial transaction. Parental involvement is non-negotiable and parents' investment in private school fees does not substitute for parental support in the education process.

Members of management concurred that the role of parents is fundamental and education cannot and should not be the sole responsibility of the school (Mncube, 2010; LaRocque, Kleiman, & Darling, 2011). The multivariate conceptions of parental involvement are evident among parents whereas managers are focused on ensuring that the responsibility for education is extended through the involvement of parents especially focused on learning. The importance of integrating the three spheres of influence in a child's learning in line with the Epstein model, by management, was evident as the key element and significant, indicating the vested role of the school in involving parents.

4.3 Practises of parental involvement to meet the needs of a diverse parent population

This theme brought to light the different ways the school management through established structures and practices, provides opportunities to involve a diverse parent population. Management members detailed ways in which the school initiates involvement and how issues with diversity in the parent population are overcome. Parent participants indicated their experiences of being involved in their child's schooling.

Importantly, respondent M1 stated that:

> *The more you put out there, the more opportunities you create, even if 20% of parents read the article, you rely on that 20% to educate parents. We're dealing with a generation of parents that is online and reading, so they are pro-education.*

It is evident that parent education is ongoing through the sharing of current and relevant articles to enhance parenting and involvement. The Epstein model endorses a comprehensive programme of home-school-community involvement (Meier & Lemmer, 2015), where families are guided by schools on what constitutes good parenting, a type of parental involvement that includes creating an "enabling, academically-friendly home environment" (Lemmer & van Wyk, 2015; Okeke, 2014, p. 2). Such intervention strategies improve parents' role construction which augments parental involvement (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005).

Whilst parent education is high on the agenda, respondent P9 expressed satisfaction with the variety of involvement offered across different spheres of school life:

> *They do lots of reading and maths mornings and you can see what they're doing. Usually, there's all the extra-curricular stuff and their diaries are always full of music events, socials and sports. There's always lots going on and for me, it's been fun.*

Thus in-school involvement, facilitated through school functions assists parent education and presence in the school.

Whilst in-school involvement are significant, volunteering and serving are regarded as social duties to reciprocate, which proves rewarding and demonstrates good citizenship as indicated by P7:

> *I'm our class mom and it made her feel special and she valued it. So it's an element of my social responsibility. I'm thrilled to be involved…*

Thus volunteering, creates the opportunity to serve as class representatives on the PTA, "developing parent leaders and representatives at school" through "recruiting and organising parents' help and support" maintains Okeke (2014, p.2). In addition, Hoover-Dempsey et al.(2005) posited that child invitations for parent involvement may arise from the child's enjoyment of the parent being involved.

Further, respondent M2 stated that learning at home a type of involvement, where improving understanding and assisting with strategies to support learning was encouraged, proved to be invaluable when the COVID -19 pandemic became a reality and parents were required to assist with children's learning:

> *They've Maths morning where parents see how we teach Maths in JP so when they're doing homework or when Covid-19 happens and they have to explain to their kids, they don't explain concepts the way they were taught because education evolves and there're better ways to do things.*

Thus sharing expertise and equipping parents to help their children learn, an equally important accompaniment and reinforcement to learning at school are of paramount importance (Okeke, 2014; Lemmer & van Wyk, 2015; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). While empowering parents is vital, M1 stated that addressing the needs of diverse groups, called for a change in insights, accommodating divergent needs and deliberate decision making:

Make sure you've got activities that suit different types of parents. Think of events, clothing, uniform, food supply because you can't have events for the whole school where you don't cater to partial religions. Then things you do subconsciously, you need to be more caring, more deliberate about…Which stories do I talk about at assemblies? Who are the kinds of people to speak to children?

It is therefore evident that a comprehensive and inclusive parental involvement programme gives parents a continuum of involvement and school functions should appeal to and accommodate diversity in the parent population (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Furthermore, it is posited that certain school practices entrench the privilege of certain groups which replicate existing inequalities based on class and gender that remain embedded in the school system when activities cater for people as fairly homogenous groups and should be deliberately uprooted to embrace diversity at a deeper level (Harris & Goodall, 2008).

Moreover, M1 argued that issues of diversity are not always apparent and to get this right, school committees should represent people from diverse backgrounds:

In your PA or PTA, one needs to have a diversity of parents represented, otherwise, you get a skewed angle of what function will work to get parents involved. The more diverse people the better, they think of things that you don't know and bring things to the table on decisions that need to be made…

It is therefore evident that when minority parents are represented, a greater understanding of culture prevails between role players and involvement increases (Smith, Wohlstetter, Ally Kuzin, & De Pedro, 2011).

While greater representation remains key to resolving issues of diversity, M1 informed that:

Having an open-door policy. Please tell us what you're feeling and what you're unhappy about and accepting that without being threatened.

Thus schools should be open to discussing issues that parents experience as one way to unpack and address concerns. In support of this, Hoover and Dempsey et al., (2005) posit that principals who maintained a positive and welcoming school climate and considered needs genuinely enhanced the involvement of diverse families (Harris & Goodall, 2008).

Whilst an open door policy allows for a conducive environment to aid open discussion, M3 claimed that:

The code of conduct is important and policies around discrimination and diversity. We're not just talking about racial diversity; we talking diversity of families where we have two mothers, no father and mixed-race marriages and gay fathers who have three children…people are entitled to our respect.

It was apparent that incorporating issues of diversity and discrimination facing society into policy and code of conduct are important to create tolerance and acceptance in a school community.

Although instituting an inclusive policy on discrimination and diversity is crucial, M4 indicated that:

One should be cognisant of religious or cultural holidays because we are not a religious school we don't necessarily know what religion parents and children necessarily are, so when we schedule events for parents we need to be aware of cultural practices in our community…

Thus greater consideration should be given to cultural practices and religious holidays when scheduling events in the school calendar.

Importantly, M2 contended that respecting and being tolerant of differences is fundamental to democracy in our multicultural society:

We are a rainbow nation, everyone has different backgrounds, different beliefs, unique belief systems and different ideas of where we want our kids to be. We say this is our vision but to get there, you have to respect the person's differences, beliefs and religion.

Thus accommodating diversity means being cognisant of and providing for the needs of distinct groups of people.

In addition, M2 argued that:

They want to have that sex conversation with their kids. Whereas as a school, it's part of the CAPS curriculum to educate on sex and same-sex marriages, etc. But, because of the belief system, because they are Christian, they don't want the school to be involved.

Thus people from different backgrounds view things differently and parent's perspectives should be embraced on curriculum matters that posed a conflict to beliefs or religious values. Whilst the school recognises the need to embrace diversity, there are limits to what can be accommodated.

Furthermore, M2 maintained that parents should be cognisant of the type of education they want from the outset and align their decision to this:

> *The biggest thing is to align the beliefs of the school to home. So, if a parent is religious and the extreme Christian or Catholic, they expect their kids to be educated in that before they even join the school, we make our value system clear that we are accommodating a very broad range of people with different cultural systems, so, as the school community, we agree on this value system.*

It is important therefore for schools to create the awareness of the religious and cultural stance it upholds so that parents decide upfront if the school system suits their expectations.

Moreover, respondent P9 strongly contended that drawing a firm line with regards to school policy is integral:

> *You can't as an institution bend to the whim of every individual. The institution has guidelines and policies and the ways they deal with things that have to apply to everybody. One set of parents saying no, I want you to do this and another set saying no I want you to do that, doesn't work. The school has to decide what its stance is and stick to that.*

Therefore not every parents' viewpoint can be accommodated and school policies should determine the final decisions.

As a point of crucial significance, P8 informed that:

> *Training for teachers on how to deal with different personalities because people are diverse. You might experience difficulties in dealing with a specific type of people and because bias is involved, it can roll over to differential treatment. Therefore training on how not to be biased is needed.*

Thus one should first recognise one's own biases, as one's actions may be misconstrued as differential treatment and schools should recognise that this warrants training for teachers and implement strategies to deal with parent diversity

Importantly, M2 argued the importance of engaging in discourse with parents to deepen understanding on issues:

> *Take every challenge as an opportunity to engage with parents. The more you engage no matter how uneasy it is, the more you get an understanding of their belief system and the more they understand the schools' belief system as well. We have to*

keep on communicating and engaging in challenges and topics, it's the only way we can move forward.

Consequently, schools should have tough conversations around diversity to resolve conflict.

In light of these arguments, it is evident that educational institutions are challenged to change the status quo and break the mould of old practices and traditions to make room for accommodating a wider, more diverse populace, thus creating "newly evolving spaces", for new thinking and practices. It is recognised that these transitions do not occur easily and overnight but through trial and error over a passage of time, as these practices are unclear and need to be deliberately 'unearthed' from the entrenched practices that many schools find themselves in.

4.4. Expectations of parents and its influence on parental involvement

This theme reveals that parent's involvement is entwined with and influenced by firstly, expectations they have of the school, hence factors that contribute to school satisfaction and secondly, expectations of children's educational outcomes. Lastly, it is about the motivations for their expectations.

Firstly, for quality schooling to be delivered, school satisfaction should align closely to parent's expectations and school leaders and managers should be cognisant of the factors that constitute school satisfaction, given its influence on parents' choice of school (Friedman, Brobrowski, & Markow, 2007).

Parent participants highlighted many factors that they perceived contributed to their conceptualisation and expectations of school quality. P4 indicated aspects that contribute directly to the child's learning environment as important:

The school keeps up with what we need from education in the method and approach perspective. So, our kids get the best of everything; the best teachers, infrastructure and environment. Obviously, fairness and diversity are big things.

Likewise, P2 argued the importance of class sizes:

One thing about a private school is that we expect class sizes to be small and manageable because children benefit from that so that basic education is attained and to keep up with education worldwide.

Thus it is evident that a favourable teacher-pupil ratio and staying abreast with global trends are significant factors that are sought by parents in a private school context (Southall, 2016).

Similarly, P8 concurred that class sizes play a determining factor in the level and quality of interaction between teacher and child:

> *I expect the school to view my child holistically. So, every child is different with unique abilities, different strengths and different development areas. So, to understand those, to get to know our child, their strengths, weaknesses and provide opportunities accordingly, especially from a private school perspective with 18 to 20 or 22 kids in a class.*

This argument endorses that individualised and holistic education hinges on differentiated opportunities afforded to children, based on their uniqueness in abilities that are facilitated by small group settings.

Moreover, M5 expressed that elements of care, safety and inspiration that should be demonstrated as vitally important:

> *Parents expect us to care for their children, to give it all and see their children as individuals, not just part of a whole and provide a safe environment and stimulating people...*

Thus schools should be places that nurture, stimulate and explore the individuality of the child (Hampden-Thompson & Galindo, 2017).

In addition, P4 indicated that being kept informed of progress is essential:

> *Keep us informed of the challenges that our kids have and of their well-being and ensure that the child is taken care of academically.*

Therefore the need for communication from the school on matters and ensuring that the child's academic needs and well-being be taken care of is a significant factor for parents.

Also, P4 stated that:

> *Foremost to provide that education, but also give them a balanced approach in life, it's not just academic, but an overall balance in terms of them growing up.*

It was evident that a well-rounded education that extends beyond academics is expected to cater for all aspects of the child's development.

Likewise, respondent M3 concurred with P4 that all-round education is important:

They're looking for a wide variety of education. So, they're not just looking for the classroom; many of them have high expectations of children on the sports field.

Correspondingly, M5 concurred with M3 on the expectation for sport:

I know the sport; that's probably one of the biggest. There's a lot of sporting expectations.

Participant M2 agreed that a complete education is what the school strives to offer:

That's one of the schools' selling points that we grow a child holistically, whether it's culture, sports or academically, they're expected to take sports and cultural activities and still do well academically.

Therefore a holistic education, taking into consideration the physical, social and emotional factors focusing on three main areas, academics, sport and culture attracts parents and these offerings should be of a high standard.

Further, M1 reflected that parent expectations extend beyond education to parenting as well:

Some parents want you to do everything, educate and teach values, ensure they get fed. It's not only education, it's parenting as well.

Similarly, P5 concurred with M1:

Parents these days expect the school to do everything for their child, including instilling values, morals, manners and all that you're supposed to get at home.

It was evident that the school is expected to play a role in character development as well.

Likewise, M4 contended that parents' expectations are far-reaching for any school to fulfil completely on its own:

How do you get everything done if nothing's done at home? It's not just academics, but also behaviour, responsibility, independence and all...You can't teach all those soft skills then, the academics will fail too.

Thus it is evident that parents expect an inclusive offer ranging from fulfilling basic parenting, education and instilling values, which is cognisant of the times we live in given that many families have both parents working.

Additionally, participant P5 delved into the important socialisation role that is expected of schools to fulfil:

A child needs to learn how to engage with other children, other people and learn the political structure of friendships, teachers, seniority and arguments. That kind of engagement is part of being at school, learning how you fit into a society or structure.

From the responses from parents and management members, it was evident that school climate is influenced by teaching, learning, the standard of instruction, leadership, professional level of teachers, relationship factors such as valuing diversity and provision of a clean, spacious environment with sufficient resources, should be maintained to a high level of satisfaction (Hampden-Thompson & Galindo, 2017).

Frequent communication is integral and a hallmark of quality education that sets private schools apart stated M3:

They're looking for high-quality education and communication from the teacher. If you're paying a lot of money, you're entitled to have their feedback. That's what sets us apart from many government schools is that we have constant interaction.

Thus another area where service delivery, quality and high standards are measured aligning closely with school satisfaction, is the domain of communication and collaboration (Hampden-Thompson & Galindo, 2017; Friedman et al., 2006).

On a more current note, P2 contended that the ability for the school to demonstrate resilience, adjust swiftly to challenges and implement contingency measures to overcome threats to its operation as with the Covid-19 pandemic, is integral:

We expect the school could roll with the punches in March. It's been phenomenal how this school has just kept educating our children.

Additionally, M1 corroborated with the statement made by P2 that a hybrid model was adopted during the pandemic to continue the academic program:

With the Covid-19 situation, the major challenge was to change a curriculum and school set up to meet so many diverse needs…to have two schools. To be open and honest with teachers and parents about what you can realistically offer… Schools have gone with the aim, I'm going to make every parent happy and offer all these different things, but with time you realise it's not sustainable.

Although education continued unhindered on this platform, schools had to constantly re-evaluate their offerings to remain sustainable in the long term.

In addition, M2 stated that parents want an inclusive offering:

> *They (parents) are glad that the service is of a high standard because they looking at what I am paying for and getting in return. Whether I'm interested or not, I am paying for the full package. Because of the economic climate, private schools provide what parents' want; we changed our offering…*

Thus the standard of educational delivery should be high and offer value for money to parents who are "fee-paying consumers", implying that education is a commodity where consumer demands dictate quality (Lemmer & van Wyk, 2008, p. 263; Friedman et al., 2006). Besides, "user fees reflect the deregulation of education provision and ensure that the quality of education is correlative of the price that is paid" (Lemmer & van Wyk, 2008, p. 263).

The statement made by P5 drew this correlation that the quality of education should be in keeping with the price that one pays:

> *I've chosen a private school because I expect more than a government school could give. I expect an extension of my child's skills through technology or all the extra things that we can afford at a private school. I expect that that's why we pay these fees…*

Similarly, respondent M4 corroborated this argument:

> *…also expectations go up with the money they pay …*

It is therefore evident that parents expect that the quality of private school education to far exceed that of a public school, where higher demands by parents translate to and are justified by the higher cost.

In keeping with this argument of higher fees, P8 claimed that:

> *Parents feel a very strong locus of control; we're paying these school fees. We've got our kids in a private school; they must do what we expect of them.*

Although parents must get a return on their investment, fees attached tend to give parents leverage on their rights and prerogative as consumers to wield influence and control outcomes, indicating a power shift.

Another point of contention is that by "buying" quality education, parents impose high expectations, not necessarily in keeping with the child's capabilities, stated M2:

Across the board, parents have unrealistic expectations of their children. They want them to be the best at sport, academically and don't accept that maybe there are limitations or the child needs support…

It is evident that the unrealistic expectations are often because of a lack of parent-child collaboration on school and learning activities, which influences parent and child expectations more strongly, aligning parents' expectations with what children are capable of (Beutel & Anderson, 2008). As M4 concurred with the statement made by M2:

Parents put too much pressure on their children and they are not fully aware of the complexity of education. They think it's a matter of learning something and doing it. There's always going to be things that children need support with…

Thus there was a consensus among management members that parents have unrealistically high expectations of their children across all spheres of schooling. Beutel and Anderson (2008) posit that this is irrespective of race and parents from higher socioeconomic status, determined by parents' education, occupation and income, augment high expectations that children have for themselves.

In contrast to parents who put "too much pressure" on their children's learning, some parents are content when their children develop at their own (children) pace as argued by M1:

Other parents are happier for children to learn and develop, as they place more trust in their children, are more hands-off and allow them to make mistakes…

The basis for parents being happier for children to learn and develop maybe because there is a more trusting relationship between parents and child. Although some parents are supportive in this way, M4 argued that some parents have uninformed expectations that paying more money will eradicate problems that the child experiences with learning:

They don't understand they got limited potential that you can't expect the child because you're paying more, they will not repeat or have academic issues. If I'm paying a lot of money, it should be that there aren't any problems…

They believe this is a consequence of paying high fees and this transactional relationship will overcome any academic issues. The argument by M4 suggests that high expectations are consequences of a transactional as opposed to a trusting relationship. They believe this is a consequence and this transactional relationship will overcome academic issues.

Similarly, M1 corroborated with the statement made by M4 and argues that the basis for these high expectations and pressure is that problems are eradicated and parents expect their children's performance will change significantly regardless of their natural aptitude:

> *If children are weaker, some parents have the expectation of you making them better, wrong. They don't realise that where there is a lack of potential, it's going to take longer than they thought…*

It is therefore evident that such unfounded expectations on the part of parents do pose challenges for the child and the school in that a child can be given the best support in the learning process, however, the child can only perform to the best of their ability.

Also, M1 claimed that most parents are prepared to invest in their children's education based on their belief that a good education paves the way for their child's future:

> *Most parents believe an excellent education is that their child can do whatever, wherever they go. Then cultural differences are massive, how people view the importance of education, how some parents spend every single penny on it…*

Thus according to Southall (2016) and Irwin and Elley (2013), parents believe that education is the vehicle that takes their children places and unlocks the opportunity to obtain jobs of higher status than themselves. In addition, parents across ethnic groups use their personal stories, experiences and success achieved by extended family as the narrative in decisions and to communicate the value of education for future success, known as academic socialisation which relates strongly to achievement than other involvement (Hill et al., 2018; Smith et al., 2011; Irwin & Elley, 2013). Furthermore, it is evident that parents' expectations are rooted in their motivations that stem from their "social location, gender, 'race', class and geography" (Reay, 1996; p. 590; Irwin & Elley, 2013).

Furthermore, M4 contended that parents' expectations are in keeping with the level of education of parents:

> *Also, expectations go up with the level of education of parents because parents know how important it is to be well-qualified for whatever you do…*

This view is corroborated by Harris and Goodall (2008) who posit that children shape their aspirations based on parents' expectations and parental involvement is based on parents' beliefs and educational goals consistently displayed through parental enthusiasm and their experiences of education. Also, Southall (2016, p. 97) concurs that education is closely connected to social class and it facilitates upward class mobility as "life's chances are heavily dependent upon

education and qualifications". Thus, parents with greater educational attainments have grander expectations because they are more aware that qualifications are important (Garbacz et al., 2015).

In addition, respondent P8 demonstrated motivation for involvement through high parent role construction and self-efficacy:

> *I do daily check-ins of my child and once a term check-in with the teacher. If my child is struggling with a subject or a specific thing, if there's a gap and the teacher has a plan on filling that gap, then your involvement is minimised.*

Consequently, two factors contribute to parent's motivation for involvement; parental role construction is when parents view that supporting their child's learning is part of their job and parental self-efficacy is when parents believe their actions can assist their child's learning as influenced by the school (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Hill et al., 2018). So parents that set "higher educational aspirations" may be motivated to be involved, despite other limiting and constraining factors and when role construction and efficacy are high, parent's motivation for involvement increases (Irwin & Elley, 2013; Anderson & Minke, 2007, p. 312).

Further to this, M1's observations indicated that parents own educational background has an impact on parents' educational expectations:

> *I think social and cultural…If parents come from a background where they never had a good education, they put more emphasis on excellent education. Although their definition of what an excellent education is can be skewed because they may see it as I'll get some A's, rather than an all-round education and what education means.*

Thus in the South African context, social and cultural backgrounds have a huge bearing on parent's expectations. Coloured parents form expectations based on socioeconomic background and the child's academic performance; white parents use the child's academic performance, the child's and parents' educational expectations, but black parents use only the family social capital to determine educational expectations (Beutel & Anderson, 2008). Also, the authors indicate that school quality is more important to expectations of South Africans of colour, given that schooling opportunities were limited for these racial groups during apartheid which may largely account for M1's observations.

Conversely, M1 indicated that if parents themselves had an excellent education, they may be less anxious and more aware of what it entails:

> *Some parents who had a very good education or an upbringing where they had very strict parents may be very relaxed.*

Furthermore, M1 stated that some wealthier parents tend to dictate and spell out demands to steer one in the direction that they deem fit:

> *Wealthier parents and this is a huge generalisation, feel they've been successful and want to make sure you do what's best for their child. I'm employing you to make sure this happens, but according to how I want it to happen…*

In contrast, M1 argued that parents from less privileged backgrounds may make fewer demands and want their child to be successful in a way the school chooses to:

> *Whereas parents who have poorer backgrounds or fewer privileges, say help my child, do whatever you need, to make sure that this child is going to be more successful than I ever was.*

Thus, these two opposing situations exist among parents from the opposite spectrum of the economic scale. Therefore, middle-class parents are better positioned to ensure educational attainment as they have greater opportunity and skill to access social and cultural capital, whilst parents from lower socioeconomic status increase involvement when successful outcomes are demonstrated (Gordon & Nocon, 2008; Smith et al., 2011).

Additionally, M2 contended that wealthier parents who may have enjoyed a good education are more knowledgeable and better positioned to gauge academic standing:

> *Certain parents because of their backgrounds have gone to private school, their parents have gone to private schools, understand academically where the child is at. Whereas certain parents expect that I want my child to be educated and have private schooling, whether they understand what it means.*

Thus socioeconomic standing and educational background give parents a more informed perspective on educational standards.

Similarly, M1 contended that some parents live through their children and expect them to transcend and be better than they were:

If parents are living through their children now because they weren't successful at school so the child has to be good or they never got into the A team netball and cricket because they weren't given the opportunities…

Thus experiences of parents with their education and schooling also affect involvement and expectations.

In this theme, it was apparent that parent's expectations give a deeper insight into parents' perspectives and what they hope to obtain from the school and education itself. Although the motivation of parents is largely generalisations, they remain a valid experiential reference point to parent's expectations and its intimate connection to parental involvement. Schools need to fully understand the motivations and aspirations that parents embody for their children's prospects and how this facilitates parental involvement. From the responses, socioeconomic status, social class, cultural background and education level of parents are the main contributing factors. Management perceptions on parents' expectations and factors that constitute school satisfaction were aligned with that of parents which augurs well for the school to steer and grow the effectiveness and vision, as both aspects facilitate parent-school partnerships.

4.5 Benefits, drivers and enablers

The theme benefits, drivers and enablers are aspects identified that contribute positively, support and facilitate parent-school partnerships. These factors vary and should be harnessed purposefully by schools to contribute fully to the desired outcomes in the partnership. Although benefits, drivers and enablers reinforce the partnership, each is recognised as subthemes, as each contributes differently and has different points of departure.

4.5.1 Drivers

Within this subtheme, drivers are recognised as foundational principles established to propel and channel parent-school partnerships. Firstly, the school vision recognises the need for a relationship between role players, secondly, the analogy of the emblem closely parallels the Epstein model and thirdly, the school motto reiterates the necessity for partnership in guiding the child. Fourthly, the school values facilitate relationships.

Firstly, M2 claimed that:

> *Our goal, mission and vision is a driver. To get to our vision and what we want to be, we use communication and parent involvement.*

Thus the school vision and ethos embrace the culture of being a "family-like" school, underscoring family through sound relationship building, creating a welcoming environment, recognising that the vision and ethos are largely driven by the involvement of parents (Lemmer, 2007 p. 220).

Furthermore, M2 stated that:

> *We're trying to educate the child holistically and if we need to involve as many people as possible, we're going to involve them, but the biggest driver is the child's well-being.*

Thus in keeping with the school vision that every aspect of the child and learning is to be facilitated with genuine care, requires the involvement of all the respective stakeholders (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018) therefore positioning partnerships as crucial to driving the vision.

Secondly, M3 concisely established the mutual and complementary roles of teacher and parent:

> *We've always worked on the three stars, the children at the top, supported by parents and teachers... For the child to be the best he can be, we need the parents. That's our badge, the one star is higher than the other two and that's the point from which I hope we all move on, that the child is the focal point.*

This statement is significant in that the "three stars" in the school logo closely resembles the triad of a parent, child and teacher in the Epstein model, recognising the joint effort between parents and teachers that positions the child higher and central. Thus the child remains the focus of mutually reciprocal efforts that provide the momentum to drive learning which is symbolic (Meier & Lemmer, 2015, Myende, 2018).

Thirdly, the portrayal of the school's loving and nurturing disposition towards the child as a fundamental characteristic, integral to parent-school partnership is strongly evident in the school motto, "Holding the hands that hold the Future". Further, this demonstrates a future perspective of a relationship evolving and focused on achieving a common goal, implying that the guidance offered now is an investment in future leaders, responsible for shaping the world. Fourthly, the six values including community, collaboration, trust, tolerance, life-long learning and perseverance, the school embraces are core to instilling habits and mindsets that hold a

community together. Thus, establishing positive relationships with others is fundamental to partnerships, reiterating the internal structure of the Epstein model (Myende, 2018).

The strong focus of the school on its vision, emblem, school motto and values in all aspects of its operations and decisions, propels the importance of these core mechanisms that drive parent-school partnerships, as a significant contributing factor to achieving successful outcomes.

4.5.2 Benefits

Within this subtheme, benefits revealed the positive impact on the child and the mutual advantages achieved for all stakeholders when parents get involved in their child's schooling. Thus, the major benefits included a child's academic progress, welfare, physical, social and emotional development attained.

Participant M1 claimed that when parents and teachers support each other constructively, the child benefits:

> *The more involvement, as in constructive involvement, the better the child does because if the parent has a concern about something it's open communication. The child feels the parent and teacher are on the same page and not working against each other.*

Therefore learner performance increases and is optimally supported when parents showed an interest and assist their child (Singh et al., 2004; Mncube, 2010) and where home-school geniality exists, free of discord or conflict (Okeke, 2014). Thus school cultures supporting academic achievement are facilitated through the principal's leadership and where parent-teacher relationships are strongly supported, the greater the likelihood for sustainable programmes to be developed (Lloyd-Smith & Baron, 2010; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005).

Similarly, M2 stated that parent's involvement reinforces teacher support:

> *Knowing the parent is on board and involved in the child's education helps with reinforcement of concepts…the benefit for teachers is that the child is progressing and getting the help they deserve beyond school. It's a win for all.*

Therefore when parents are involved, teachers are better supported, more effective, have a greater understanding of the child and can "generate unique, rather than routine, solutions to classroom problems" and involved parents have a greater appreciation of their role in their children's schooling, benefitting the child more (Mncube, 2010, p. 234).

Likewise, P1 corroborated the view of M2 that teachers need to feel motivated and supported:

> *We are involved, interested and present parents and I want the teachers to feel motivated. Hopefully, that's a benefit to feeling they're not alone and parents support them.*

Participant P4 corroborated the point made by P1 that:

> *The more involved you are the better, so, you'll pick up issues that may arise in their learning. From the teacher's perspective, they need to know you're engaged and want to be involved.*

Therefore it is evident that greater involvement results in increased awareness of a parent's role in learning and staying informed of issues (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018).

Furthermore, P1 claimed that:

> *I hope it's benefiting my child directly both in them seeing the involvement and appreciating that when I participate in the fundraising committee, it is contributing to the improvement of the school and community.*

Thus involvement through investments of time and energy informs children that parents value education, are giving back to the community and this expands parental influence and **s**trengthens parent-teacher cooperation (Stacer & Perucci, 2013).

Moreover, P7 concurred that:

> *Children need to see their involvement. It demonstrates an interest in giving back and the better we support the system, ultimately we all benefit …*

Although the primary reason for parents and schools initiating involvement is to benefit the child, the benefits of parental involvement extend to all stakeholders and have mutual value for all.

It is therefore evident that parent-school partnerships thus support the child's progress, the teacher's role and the school as a community, mutually benefit from it.

4.5.3 Enablers

The subtheme enablers refer to structures, practices, policies and mechanisms in place to assist, establish and support parental involvement. Under this theme, communication, collaboration

and organisational structure of the PTA emerged as significant contributors to sustaining parent-school partnerships.

Communication forms one of the key types of parental involvement (Meier & Lemmer, 2015). M1 stated that it is the parent's prerogative to address issues directly with the school using the correct communication channels:

> *It creates an open-door policy, so if you got any issues, come to the teachers and it keeps parents informed as well on what's happening in the child's life. To address things with the school when things don't go according to plan.*

Generally, when healthy communication channels exist to elicit parent's input through an open door policy when effecting long-term decisions for ongoing school improvement, regular parent surveys become useful and it contributes to cohesion and parents' satisfaction with the quality of education (Meier & Lemmer, 2015).

Further, M3 contended that communication on academic progress as part of school policy should be promptly initiated and conducted:

> *Communication from the teacher that face-to-face is important, but also responses to emails, feedback on how their children are doing, so regular communication… If you get an email from parents, you set up that interview, that's very important that parents know they are heard. It is our policy that we interview every parent of a child who is experiencing difficulties. It's a definite beginning and ending interview. We open doors to anybody else who would like to come in, we don't say we won't see you.*

Thus the partnership should be characterised by frequent and consistent dialogue based on an equal relationship to support the functioning of the school (Lemmer & van Wyk, 2004). Explicit invitations from the school, teachers and children are powerful and influential on parent involvement and should be extended before being perceived and a strong correlation exists between regular teacher communication and parents' choice to be involved (Anderson & Minke, 2007; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005).

Participant P4 corroborated these points indicating that:

> *Some teachers are proactive in reaching out to you first, even if there isn't an issue, your kid is doing well in this and that. It's not always negative, you always hear*

negative feedback and on the positive side, you want to get involved.

Therefore communication through proactive, positive feedback, pre-empts and prevents further problems and discontent; it serves as a bridge and builds rapport between the two parties, however, when the context is always negative, it distances families and schools, confining each to their spheres (Hill et al., 2018). Thus, effective communication "reduce antagonism" and parents become successfully involved when teachers display encouraging attitudes (Segoe & Bisschoff, 2019, p. 168; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011).

Whilst proactive, quality communication is important, M3 indicated that less formal communication also has a place:

> *The visibility of management, so normally we're out on the sports field, seeing that everything's on hand and parents feel they could stop and have a conversation. I don't believe management can sit in an ivory tower, you have to be on the ground…*

Therefore the visibility and access to management members make schools more open and permeable places.

Furthermore, M3 stated that the communication channels that need to be followed:

> *The structure starts with the class teacher, if you are unhappy move on to the grade coordinator, then to the deputy head and then to the head. It allows parents a different avenue and structure is important.*

Similarly, respondent P4 corroborated the response of M3 that parents know the reporting line:

> *From the hierarchy from the principal to the various teachers, everybody is involved in the communication. We know who we should go to if there's an issue, or who to escalate it to. There is some order, it's structured and it's a good thing.*

Thus establishing a chain of command and protocol in the organogram guides information to relevant people enabling efficient and appropriate resolution of issues.

Communication took on greater significance during the Covid-19 pandemic when the classroom was transposed to the home and parents had to be hands-on in assisting their children as indicated by P8:

In the first three weeks there was a lot of hand-holding and click here, click there. It was more navigation of the device besides the check-ins because she had learned how to use the iPad.

Distinctly greater involvement was required from parents, to ensure that children had resources including data, wi-fi and devices to engage with online learning and assist younger children to navigate online learning platforms.

Whilst the communication demands were greater, M3 contended that the experience and engagement with online learning gave parents a better perspective of the teaching and learning process, as parents could see their children's shortcomings first-hand.

We've had parents say, now I understand what you mean about my child's comprehension, concentration or ability to sit still. So it's been positive from that point of view.

Furthermore, M2 indicated the extensive need for more and better communication between stakeholders:

The biggest concern as much as we making improvements in communication, we still find parents and teachers complaining about communication. They'll never have enough and the best communication because we all come from different backgrounds…

Although communication is an enabler to parent-school partnerships, gaps arise because of various factors, making this an area constantly prone to problems. According to Hill et al., (2018, p. 24), "tacit communication" implicit within culture refers to assumed rules and knowledge communicates "tacit information", the assumed understanding of parent's roles and responsibilities about how to work around "explicit rules", not necessarily written down, shared or apparent to all. Thus, such tacit communication embedded in an organisation, not perceived by role players, becomes a stumbling block to involvement and requires communication strategies with greater resonance to overcome limitations.

Whilst recognising and overcoming the gaps in communication is vital, communication is further underscored because it facilitates collaboration between stakeholders. In this way, communication draws the *spheres of influence* closer together (Meier & Lemmer, 2015), facilitating collaboration, a type of involvement necessary between stakeholders. Okeke (2014)

highlights that collaboration encompasses assimilating resources and expertise from the community to support school programmes.

Participant M1 claimed that:

The PA or PTA in a school is a big thing and their arrangement of functions…

So parent representatives from each class from all grades are organised and formalised through the PA, making decentralisation an effective strategy in joint decisions, recruiting parents and organising school events (Lemmer & van Wyk, 2008).

Similarly, M3 corroborates the view of M1, indicating that school functions are an enabler as it allows parents the opportunity to participate as a community:

The wide variety of functions we have to involve parents being there.

Further, P9 in agreement with M1 stated that parents are also able to engage socially, strengthening the ties of the community:

They make quite a big effort to enable parents to have the opportunity to interact…

Within the subtheme, communication emanated as a major enabler and was seen to permeate all operations and functions of the school. There is a need for scaffolding communication by ensuring that all parties at different levels of the hierarchy work on the same premise in their communication with parents, making policy guidelines vital. Collaboration and the organisation structure of the PA as enablers and its dialectic link with communication were evident. The benefits, enablers and drivers of partnerships lie in the school's domain, therefore schools should be consciously aware of the driving force these aspects add to sustaining and mobilising partnerships.

4.6. Challenges, limitations and barriers to parental involvement and how this is overcome

This theme serves to outline findings, school management and parents, identified as impediments to the formation and continuation of effective parent-school partnerships. The challenges, limitations and barriers that are experienced are two-fold, firstly, expressing those aspects that the school management identified as obstacles in getting parents involved and secondly, the issues parents face in their capacity of becoming involved. As Hornby and Lafaele

(2011, p. 50) indicate, much of the "gap between rhetoric and reality" of effective parental involvement can be explained by various obstacles that negatively impact it.

4.6.1 Challenges

In this subtheme, challenges are characteristic of any partnership where people dynamics and power issues come into play and the roles and responsibilities of role players are not fully understood and parent-school partnerships are no exception. Lack of agreement on decisions, different mindsets or personality clashes can hinder the mutual working that should characterise the partnership.

Although education is a joint activity, the mutual vision that parents and the school share is not always recognised as M1 argued that:

> *Parents don't realise that what we (the school) want for their children is also what they want, but it's how to get there that's different. So parents want the child to succeed, we want the child to succeed but how they think you get it is different from how the school thinks you get it, to try and get the meeting of minds…*

Thus, partnerships become challenging when parents do not recognise that the school's decisions are based on educationally sound principles and judgement (Meier & Lemmer, 2015). Therefore, trust and agreement where each sees the others' good intentions are vital to establish the way forward (Anderson & Minke, 2007).

Similarly, M3 claimed that conflict arises when teachers have to share "bad news":

> *The biggest challenges are giving bad news, we have to teach our teachers how to interview. The tendency is to get defensive and answer while parents are sounding off so I say to teachers, just let them say what they have to say and then you say, I take your point and now let me explain this…*

Therefore children's performance becomes a conflicting factor when parents and teachers do not share the same view about a child's academic ability (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Thus, teachers should be empowered by making the involvement of parents a regular part of planning (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005) in conjunction with training and coaching teachers on "fostering effective communication and conflict resolution skills" (Anderson & Minke, 2007, p.321).

It is evident from the discussion that challenges arise from many avenues and no ready solution exists to remedy all problems, however, much of the solution lies in enforcing the roles and

responsibilities of role players and being proactive to avoid pitfalls. Also, ensuring that school personnel is vested in relationship building and deepening relationships based on trust and value, providing pastoral care around crises, plays a huge role in creating a nurturing environment and family-like school.

4.6.2 Barriers

The subtheme, barriers to parental involvement emanates from deeper underlying personal circumstances or contextual issues because of factors or experiences that compromise parents' involvement, resulting in partnerships not evolving to the level required for a beneficial exchange to take place. Many barriers can be resolved although this is not always the case.

Participant M1's observation highlighted that parents do not realise schools are more flexible and inclined to helping parents than in the past:

> *So if they (parents) did poorly in school or were at a school where punishment was meted or if they feared teachers or heads of schools, they'll come in with a very aggressive, anti-institution view. You have to empty everything that happened to them in the past and show that education has changed over the years…*

Thus parents' perceive that previous negative experiences with their child's school, the nature of the parent-teacher relationship or their own educational experiences with the school will be the same, thus impacting current involvement (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Anderson & Minke, 2007; Hornby & Blackwell, 2018).

Similarly, M1 stated that:

> *Anything the child does wrong is an indication of how good a parent they are and that's wrong because children will do wrong things. That's part of growing up, they should be testing the values…*

It is apparent that child factors and behaviour problems act as barriers because parents feel they may be judged or are under the misconception that a child's wrongdoing reflects their parenting ability (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011), but should realise that children are still establishing their own moral beliefs,

Likewise, M1 highlighted:

> *The family set up so, parents have gone through a divorce, sometimes purposefully go against each other and they're not doing things for the best interest of the child.*

Therefore many life contexts such as family circumstances and other situations in parents' lives also impact involvement (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Hornby & Blackwell, 2018).

Furthermore, M3 pointed out that:

> *Some parents are very busy and the school must do what they need to do and meet their expectations, but don't worry me about interviews or problems. I'm paying for results, so there is that element…*

Therefore work commitments largely consume parent's time and pose as barriers. Although involvement largely depends on parent's role construction, parents should make a conscious choice to be involved, but some parents do not reciprocate involvement and lack ownership of their shared role and responsibility (Emerson et al., 2012).

In addition, M4 concurred that:

> *The 'busyness' of lives and the demands of the workplace. From an economic point of view, they're both working and moms have high-powered jobs…*

Likewise, M3 corroborated the point made by M4:

> *Due to financial commitments, many parents both work full-time to be at a school like this and pay the fees. It goes with the times, so mums are career moms out of a financial necessity to pay school fees*.

Thus time is part of a more complex social and economic framework, given that both parents today work out of necessity to sustain their families (Harris & Goodall, 2008).
Given that time is a major constraint, school activities must take cognisance of the pressures of modern-day life, be practical and ensure equal access to all families (Lemmer van Wyk, 2008).

Furthermore, P6 posited that class differences also translate to the amount of time parents have to become involved:

> *The culture of working where there are a lot of middle-class working parents, who don't have the luxury to offer more time and help out at events and get more involved. People just don't have the time to give.*

Thus class differences also engender different mindsets and attitudes, where the attitudes of working-class parents, one of "separateness" contrasts to middle-class families, one of "interconnectedness", indicating that white-middle class parents hold the cultural capital, means and influence to be more fully involved (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011, p.41). Therefore, class differences aligned to socioeconomic status explain the difficulties that parents from lower socioeconomic status experience with the usual barriers of lack of time, both parents working and lack of resources to child care (Anderson & Minke, 2007).

Similarly, M1 contended that the cultural divide that exists leaves a barricade:

> *We will have cultural barriers because we don't know enough about everyone's culture and we're open to it and our biases. It's subconscious because you see things through your eyes and until you start experiencing things, seeing things or communicating with people informally in terms of what their cultures are unless you look wider than your little sphere or comfort zone, barriers will exist...*

Consequently, cultural barriers evident in people's biases is something deeply and experientially embedded in one's subconscious, therefore a lack of cultural perspective poses a conflicting stance. One needs to step out of one's comfort zone, unearth things embedded in one's thinking and truly grasp the essence of what people from other cultures experience.

Similarly, M3 identified with M1, the ambivalence that one experiences when engaging with people of different cultures and emphasises the need to listen with empathy, more so, if one does not share the same cultural background:

> *The other challenge definitely in our multicultural society is respecting where other people are coming from because I don't think we understand where people are coming from and we are only going to learn if we listen. We've got to be careful of what we say and how we say it and again it goes back to training.*

Likewise, M4 shared a similar argument on the diversity of culture, reinforcing the divide that one may experience because of differences that will always pose as barriers:

> *There is the diversity of our society and the latest uproar about racist issues are faced by all schools and it's something to get to grips with. We have to put ourselves in other people's shoes and parents think we don't understand and they are right, I don't think they understand where we're coming from either.*

The barriers included parents' past negative experiences with schools or their schooling experiences, time constraints, socioeconomic issues and the cultural differences existent in the school.

4.6.3 Limitations

Limitations refer to situations where parents are involved, however, it does not lead to a beneficial and positive outcome, leaving the parent-school partnership compromised and the child does not derive the benefit of a positive resolution. Issues such as not knowing how to get involved, over-involvement or excessive demands made by overpowering parents, pose limitations to the partnership.

Parents view education as important and want to get involved, however, it is not always apparent how, as some parents are intimidated by the mechanisms operating within schools (Okeke, 2014). When different conceptualisations of parental involvement are not acknowledged, school-based involvement can become an area of dispute, arising from a lack of communication and clear understanding of shared roles and responsibilities (Anderson & Minke, 2007; Emerson et al., 2012).

One aspect identified is when parents become over-involved and confuse their child's schooling with their schooling as P3 informed that:

> *I am sort of walking the line to not getting over-involved, not confusing it with your schooling…*

Similarly, M2 contended that:

> *Mothers who are over-involved in the child's education, question every wrong answer, every mark and the child does not get to defend or fend for himself and that's over-involvement.*

Likewise, M1 indicated that:

> *Parents who want their child to be A average, first-team sports person, tend to be all the time monitoring, checking, watching from the side, querying every little thing, tend to be around all the time…*

Emerson et al., (2012, p. 32) indicate that "surveillance" type parenting can harm learning outcomes. Hornby and Blackwell (2018) depict parent's increased aspirations, not being fearful of education and the demands of more affluent parents to be kept informed of everything.

Besides, the excessive demands, M4 contended that some parents place undue stress on teachers, resulting in a situation that is counter-productive and detrimental to the child:

> *It's too much to continually stand up to parents so the easy option is to give them what they're asking for. Although academic standards can suffer in a situation where parents have those excessive demands because teachers who might be relatively inexperienced or have a need to be liked can give into that pressure…*

Likewise, M3 posited that teachers are not equipped to deal with overpowering parents:

> *It's a daunting prospect for younger staff to manage overpowering parents. Staff who are less confident, talk through an interview before they meet parents. It's the training of teachers because you don't learn that at university.*

Teachers lack expertise and training to deal with overpowering parents which leads to a challenging experience (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011), thus limiting the possibilities that a healthy parent-teacher relationship can foster. Although there is a dire need for training programmes to address the competencies needed to deal with families, such opportunities are limited, as a result, teachers rely on "anecdotal knowledge about families" (Lemmer, 2011, p 96).

This sub-theme on limitations, therefore, does not produce successful outcomes, as decisions are taken disadvantage and compromise the child's position and the teacher-parent partnership is left destabilised because of ongoing power struggles.

The main points on benefits, drivers and enablers together with the challenges, barriers and limitations of parental involvement are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2: Benefits, Drivers and Enablers of Parental Involvement versus Challenges, Barriers and Limitations of Parental Involvement

Theme	Drivers	Barriers
School Level		
Vision & Ethos	Relationships and environment are of caring and nurturing.	Parent buy-in to the school vision is required.
School logo	Represents the triad: parent, child and teacher.	The parent's role and responsibility should be aligned with this.
School motto	"Holding the hands that hold the future" reiterates the partnership between school and parents.	The parent's commitment to the child's schooling and education is needed.
School values	Impresses the need for community and collaboration.	Home values and school values should be aligned.
Cultural differences	Recognise and take into account diversity among parents.	Lack of consideration given to the diversity of parents.
Parent Level		
Parent's education and experiences	The parent's level of education corresponds to involvement.	Parent's past negative experiences with schools negatively impact involvement.
Parent/Family circumstances	Parents have more flexible opportunities to be more involved.	Single-parent households and divorce have greater constraints.
Socioeconomic Factors	Wealthy parents have fewer constraints on involvement.	In middle and low-income groups, both parents work with greater time constraints on involvement.
Class differences	The attitudes of working-class parents are one of "separateness".	The attitudes of middle-class families, one of "interconnectedness".
Cultural differences	Open to and have a good understanding of different cultures.	Lack of cultural perspectives leads to bias and prejudice.
Child Factors	Realistic expectation of child and child achieving well at school.	Behavioural problems with children.
Theme	**Benefits**	**Challenges**
School Level		
Learning	Learning is better supported when roles and responsibilities in the partnership are maintained.	Lack of common agreement and understanding of roles and responsibilities.
Teacher support	The teacher is motivated, informed and supported by parents.	Teachers are not equipped and empowered to engage with parents.
Child's school life	Parents are a part of the child's school life.	Parents are not part of the child's school life (even in the context

		of online education) due to other responsibilities.
Build a community	Form meaningful relationships with others.	No school policy to guide and recognise the diversity and circumstances of parents.
Theme	**Benefits**	**Challenges**
Parent Level		
Learning	Parents are informed of the child's capabilities and progress.	Unrealistic expectations of the child.
Teacher support	The teacher is kept informed of the child circumstances.	Overpowering parents make excessive demands on teachers.
Child's school life	Parents are informed of all aspects of the child's development.	Over involvement and engage in "surveillance" type parenting.
Build community	Parents connect with other parents.	Parents lack time built in to do this, due to obligations and commitments.
Theme	**Enablers**	**Limitations**
School Level		
Communication	Establish structures to maintain two-way communication.	Parents do not reciprocate and use the correct channels of communication.
Policy and Practice	Policy establishes parent's roles and responsibilities and an open door policy to discuss concerns.	No school policy to guide and recognise the diversity of parents circumstances.
Organisational structure	PA organise school functions to facilitate parent involvement.	Parent involvement depends on availability and commitment to attend functions.
Training of teachers	Training of teachers on how to handle issues concerning parents.	Teachers not empowered to deal with parents.

4.7 Conclusion

The challenges, barriers and limitations posed interesting scenarios, although widely experienced in schools, is not critically analysed in studies. The barriers that hinder involvement cannot be easily overcome as some are permanent or ongoing contextual factors that need to be navigated and the limitations identified need to be dealt with using strategies such as training of teachers and parent education.

Chapter Five
Study Summary, Conclusions, Recommendations and Implications for future research

5.1 Introduction

This chapter draws conclusions, recommendations and implications for policy based on and informed by the findings of this qualitative exploratory case study on the conceptualisations, practices, expectations and factors that support or challenge parent-school partnerships. The context of a private and urban school setting was explored and insights were gleaned from management and parent participants to determine how parent-school partnerships are managed.

5.2 Study Summary

In chapter one, a background of school-parent partnership as a concept, its significance to improve education outcomes and its benefits to schooling function was explored. A brief historical perspective on educational imperatives before and post-democracy in South Africa, shows policy advocacy for parent-school partnerships, included context to the study.

Chapter two presented the literature review in line with research questions, detailed the varied definitions and practices of parent-school partnership, an outline of Epstein's model of types of involvement and the enablers and barriers that facilitate leading and managing of parent-school partnerships. The chapter then expounded on the theoretical framework of the Epstein model.

Chapter three informs the design, methodology and data generation methods implemented in this qualitative case study, including a brief explanation of sampling, trustworthiness, ethical issues and data analysis.

The themes established in the findings were presented in chapter four after the data was coded, analysed and interpreted according to the research questions chosen to direct the study. The themes relate to how the theoretical framework was operationalised in the data and what the actual findings of the study were.

5.3 Conclusions

This study worked on the premise that education is a complex phenomenon that extends beyond the curriculum, classroom and school and the factors that influence a child's learning extends beyond teaching and learning. Given this, policymakers should address the challenges that extend beyond the curriculum and classroom by exploring the potential of non-curriculum matters such as partnerships with parents.

Parent-school partnerships are conceptualised and practised as multidimensional and relative to the needs of the school. The way parent partnerships were established was dependent on how schools understood and enacted their role within their context. The strategies employed to sustain partnerships are integrated into the functioning and deliverables and not a separate add-on strategy. Participant responses show deep insights into the complexities that exist, indicating that sustainable and functional partnerships were maintained as integral to the schools' role. It was evident that the agency and impetus for partnership are instigated by the drivers and enablers vested in the schools' vision, ethos, logo, motto, values, organisational structure together with the strategies of communication and collaboration that augment it.

The defining elements of shared vision, two-way communication and collaboration through participative leadership that promote the sustainability of effective partnerships (Myende, 2018), were effective if challenges that destabilise relationships were sufficiently addressed. Given that schools are a microcosm of society, societal and diversity issues are intrinsic to the functioning of schools. Therefore the need to address deeper social transformational issues are ongoing for strong partnerships to be maintained, as the equilibrium of partnerships is contingent on parents' socioeconomic status, class, culture and expectations arising from school quality and satisfaction. These dimensions create dynamic shifts in power and add complexity to the relationship, therefore navigating power struggles through relationship building and successful programmes is a central driving force.

Parent partnerships are complex and not formed naturally, therefore establishing effective partnerships are not an easy feat and should be done so purposefully. In this way, it narrows the gap between rhetoric and reality or policy formulation and implementation. It was determined that the vision and goals of the partnership should be clear, concise and agreed upon with mutually beneficial outcomes, for shared ownership to take place and to remain sustainable.

5.4 Recommendations

This study established that parent partnerships are mutually beneficial for all role players to maintain school improvement and achieve outcomes. Therefore, parent partnerships should be deepened by engaging actively in dialogue to highlight their perspectives to ensure representativity and mutual agreement about understanding and addressing contextual issues as key to sustaining partnerships. As established in the findings, maintaining functional parent-school partnerships are an ongoing process given that programmes are to be monitored, examined for sustainability and adapted to suit changing contextual factors. While this study establishes that not all parents will be equally vested in partnership programmes, it is recognised that through the creation of awareness and platforms for engagement, the buy-in is attainable.

Furthermore, this study can be viewed as a catalyst for further research to inspire new initiatives, practices and policies that recognise and promote diversity, equity and transformation in partnerships. Firstly, given that schools in South Africa vary in contexts, determining how various contexts of schools impacts and influences parent-school partnerships offer a more in-depth understanding of managing partnerships. Secondly, a sharp focus on social transformation issues of inclusion and diversity in schools need to be examined, given that it has a huge bearing on parent-school partnerships. Thirdly, the data suggest that socioeconomic status, culture, race and social and cultural capital are underlying issues that influence parent-school partnerships, which are often perceived as superficial barriers instead. Fourthly, parent expectations and school satisfaction are seen to be significant factors that influence and impact parent-school partnerships. Lastly, teacher factors that contribute to the effective parent-school partnership were outside this study as data from teachers was not included although the perspectives of these citizens are warranted.

It is recognised that parent-school partnerships will remain a stumbling block if teachers lack expertise, skill and awareness to overcome the impact of their “psychological and cultural barriers” when relating to parents (Lemmer, 2011, p. 95). Therefore, it is imperative that professional training and development of staff is undertaken, recognising that this ties in with social and transformational issues. Moreover, parent-school partnerships are constantly evolving in line with political, economic, social and global influences, therefore, school management and education authorities need to be relevant to changing contexts. This implies that research in this field has to be ongoing to better inform policy and practice so that schools are equipped to deal with new challenges.

Lastly, great attention has been drawn to digital learning platforms because of the dire need for remote learning due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Although the advantage and benefits these platforms offer have been recognised, the drawbacks, limitations and increased need for supervision, responsibility and accountability this poses on parents has also been recognised. Thus, the social interaction required for learning and facilitation and the management role of teachers in overseeing learning has been realised and appreciated, whilst many have pursued online schools as a way forward. Thus, future research on the new dimensions that the Covid-19 pandemic has brought to learning and schooling and its concomitant impact on parent involvement would make for informative insights.

5.5 The implications for future research

This study developed understandings into the management of parent-school partnerships in a South African private school and some potential implications for education policy were identified. Given that the scope and depth of this study are limited to a particular setting, it is recognised that findings may not necessarily be representative of all schools.

The analysis for policy determined that partnerships are effective if they are appropriate to the needs and contexts in which they exist, implying that state-driven policy initiatives and policymakers cannot develop a blanket policy, but should be supporting agents that assist schools to develop and initiate strategies that encourage and deepen parent-school partnerships (NECT, 2016). A policy should be formulated as an enabler, accommodating barriers unique to each context on which partnerships are contingent from the outset. Thus, "backward mapping" recognises that organisations have different contexts that influence decisions, goes against "top-down" methods (Elmore, 1979, p. 604), be part of policy formulation that creates an enabling environment which better supports partnerships and implementation levels.

Partnerships are not a simple and absolute or black and white issue that can be easily delimited by policy but a complex, evolving and multifaceted field characterised by challenges. Schools should "tailor" policy to accommodate the specific needs of parent constituents, taking cognisance of parent's expectations, class, socio-economic status, race, culture and all factors pertinent to the diversity of its population. The policy should stipulate, how committees are constituted, how they should function, the appropriate code of conduct and the extent of overlap of domains by establishing respective roles and responsibilities. In this way, a policy is a

mechanism by which contextual and social issues can be addressed to create more inclusive schools and societies where social justice prevails.

REFERENCES

Anderson K.J. & Minke, K. M. (2007). Parental Involvement in Education: Towards an Understanding of Parent's Decision Making. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 100(5), 311 – 323.

Beutel, A. M. & Anderson, K.G. (2008). The educational expectations of parents and children: The Case of South Africa. *The Sociological Quarterly,* 49, 335–361.

Blackmore, J. & Hutchinson, K. (2010). Ambivalent relations: the 'tricky footwork' of parental involvement in school communities. *International Journal of Inclusive Education,* 14(5), 499-515.

Bohm, A. (2004). Theoretical Coding: Text Analysis in Grounded Theory. *A Companion to Qualitative Research.* 270-275.

Bush, T. (2007). Educational leadership and management: theory, policy, and practice. *South African Journal of Education*, 27(3), 391 – 406.

Christie, P. & Lingard, B. (2001). Capturing Complexity in Educational Leadership. Paper presented to the American Educational Research Association Conference Seattle

Christie, P. (2008). Policy discourse, concepts and theories. In Open the Doors of Learning: *Changing schools in South Africa*, 115 -133. Johannesburg: Heinemann Publishers.

Christie, P. & McKinney, C. (2017). Decoloniality and "Model C" Schools: Ethos, Language, and the Protests of 2016. *Education as Change,* 21(3), 2332 – 2353.

Cohen, L., Manion, L. & Morrison, K. (2018). Research Methods in Education. New York: Routledge.

Creswell, J.W. (2014). Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design. Choosing among five approaches. London: SAGE Publications.

Creswell, J.W. (2016). Research Design. (4th Ed) Qualitative, Quantitative, & Mixed

Methods Approaches. London: SAGE Publications.

Creswell, J.W. & Creswell, J.D. (2018) Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Methods Approaches (5th Ed) London: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Christie, P. & McKinney, C. (2017). Decoloniality and "Model C" Schools: Ethos, Language and the Protests of 2016. *Education as Change*, 21(3)

Department of Basic Education (DBE), National Development Plan 2030, National Education Community Trust (NECT). (2016). School – Parent – Community Framework.

Department of Education. (1996). South African Schools Act, No 84 of 1996.

Elmore, R. F. (1979). Implementation Research and Policy Decisions. *Political Science Quarterly*, 94(4), 601 -616.

Emerson, L., Fear, J., Fox, S., & Sanders, E. (2012). *Parental engagement in learning and schooling: Lessons from research Family-School & Community Partnerships Bureau. familyengagementcircle.org.au* Retrieved from http://familyengagementcircle.org.au/application/files/3414/9845/6720/parental-engagement-in-learning-and-schooling_4.pdf

Friedman, B.A, Brobrowski, P.E. & Markow, D. (2007). Predictors of parents' satisfaction with their children's school. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 45(3), 278-288.

Garbacz, S.A, McDowell, P.S. & Sheridan, S.M. and Welch, G.W. (2015). A Multi-dimensional examination of parent involvement across child and parent characteristics. *The Elementary School Journal*, 115 (3), 384-406.

Geertz, C. (1973). Thick description. *In The Interpretation of Cultures.* New York: Basic Book

Glickman, C.D., Gordan, S. P., Ross-Gordan, J.M. (2018), Supervision and Instructional Leadership: A Developmental Approach. New York, Pearson.

Goodall, J. & Montgomery, C. (2014). Parental involvement to parental engagement: a

continuum. *Educational Review*, 66(4), 399 – 410.

Gordon, V. & Nocon, H. (2008) Reproducing segregation: Parent Involvement, Diversity, and School Governance. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, 7(4), 320 -339.

Hampden-Thompson. G. & Galindo. C. (2017). School-family relationships, school satisfaction and the academic achievement of young people. *Educational Review*, 69(2), 248 – 265.

Hands, C. M. (2010). Why Collaborate? The differing reasons for secondary educators' establishment of school-community partnerships. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 21(2), 189 -207.

Harris, A. & Goodall, J. (2008). Do parents know they matter? Engaging all parents in learning. *Educational Research*, 50(3), 277-289.

Hill, N. E., Witherspoon, D.P. & Bartz, D. (2018). Parental Involvement in education during middle school: Perspectives of ethnically diverse parents, teachers, and students. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 111(1), 12 – 27.

Hoover-Dempsey, K.V., Walker, J. M. T., Sandler, H. M., Whetsel, D., Green, C.L., Wilkins, A.S. & Closson, K (2005). Why Do Parents Become Involved? Research Findings and Implications, *The Elementary School Journal*, 106(2), 105 – 130.

Hornby, G. & Lafaele, R. (2011). Barriers to parental involvement in education: an explanatory model. *Educational Review*, 63(1), 37-52.

Hornby, G. & Blackwell, I. (2018). Barriers to parental involvement in education: an update *Educational Review*, 70(1), 109-119.

Irwin, S. & Elley, S (2013). Parent's hope and expectations for their children's future occupations. *The Sociological Review*, (61), 111-130.

Jansen J. & Taylor, N. (2003). Educational Change in South Africa 1994-2003: Case Studies in Large-Scale Education Reform. *Education Reform and Management Publication*

Series, 2(1), 1-47. & Taylor, 2003).

LaRocque, M., Kleiman, I. & Darling, S.M. (2011). Parent Involvement: The Missing Link in School Achievement. *Preventing School Failure*, 55(3), 115-122.

Lemmer, E. (2007). Parent involvement in teacher education in South Africa. *International Journal about Parent in Education.* 1(0), 218-229.

Lemmer, E. & van Wyk, N. (2008). Schools reaching out: Comprehensive parent involvement in South African primary schools. *Africa Education Review.* 1(2), 259-278.

Lemmer, E. (2011). Making it happen: A grounded theory study of in-service teacher training for parent involvement in schools. *Education as Change*. 15(1), 95-106.

Lloyd-Smith, L. & Baron, M. (2010) Beyond Conferences: Attitudes of High School Administrators Toward Parental Involvement in One Small Midwestern State, *The School Community Journal*, 20(2), 23 - 44.

McMillian, J. & Schumacher, S. (2014). Research in Education: Evidence-based inquiry (7th Ed.). Essex: Pearson Education Limited.

Meier, C. & Lemmer, E. (2015). What do parents really want? Parent's perceptions of their children's schooling. *South African Journal of Education,* 35(2). 1 – 11.

Mestry, R. & Grobler, B. (2007). Collaboration and communication as effective strategies for parent involvement in public schools. *Educational Research and Review,* 2(7), 176 - 185.

Minott, M. A. & Willet, I. L. (2011). "Students-Teachers' Supervision as a Professional Development Activity: Building Work-Related Skills." *Professional Development in Education,* 37(4), 537-550.

Monama, T. (2020, July). Cosas marches to private schools to close them but find them empty as they're on holiday. *The Star*. Retrieved from https://www.iol.co.za/the-star/news/cosas-marches-to-private-schools-to-close-them-but-find-them-empty-as-they're-on-holiday

Mncube, V. (2010). Parental Involvement in school activities in South Africa to the mutual benefit of the school and the community. *Education as Change*, 14(2), 233 – 246.

Mncube, V. (2009). The perceptions of parents of their role in the democratic governance of schools in South Africa: Are they on board? *South African Journal of Education*, 29, 83-103.

Myende, P.E. (2018). Creating functional and sustainable School-Community Partnerships: Lessons from three South African cases. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 20(10), 1-19. doi: 10.1177/174114321878107

Neuman, W.L. (1997). Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Nieuwenhuis, L. (2007). Qualitative research designs ad data gathering techniques. First steps in research, 69 – 97.

Okeke, C. I. (2014). Effective home-school partnership: Some strategies to help strengthen parental involvement. *South African Journal of Education*, 34(3), 1-9.

Pathak, N. (2020, December). Coronavirus and Covid-19: What you should know? *WebMD Medical Reference*. Retrieved from https://www.webmd.com/lung/coronavirus#1-2

Prew, M. (2009). Community Involvement in School Development. Modifying School Improvement Concepts to the Needs of South African Township Schools. *Educational Management Administration and Leadership*, 37(6), 824-846.

Rakometsi, M. S. (2008). The Transformation of Black School Education in South Africa, 1950 -1994: A Historical Perspective. Retrieved from http://hdl.handle.net/11660/1449

Reay, D. (1996). Contextualising Choice: social power and parental involvement. *British*

Educational Research Journal, 22 (5), 581 - 596.

Salmons, J. (2010). Designing and Conducting Research with Online Interviews. Retrieved from https://www.betterevaluation.org/sites/default/files/43888_1.pdf

Sanders, M.G. (2014). Principal Leadership for School, Family, and Community Partnerships: The Role of a Systems Approach to Reform Implementation. *American Journal of Education*. 120, 233 – 255.

Sathiapama, M., Wolhuter, C.C. & van Wyk, N. (2012). The Management of Parental Involvement in Multicultural Schools in South Africa: A Case Study. *C.E.P.S Journal*, 2(1), 57 – 83.

Savides, M. (2020, March 15). Schools to close as Ramaphosa declares coronavirus disaster. *Times Live.* Retrieved from https://www.timeslive.co.za/news/south-africa/2020-03- 15-

Scott, D. & Morrison, M. (2007). Key Ideas in Educational Research. London: Continuum International.

Segoe, B. A & Bisschoff, T. (2019). Parental Involvement as Part of Curriculum Reform in South African Schools: Does It Contribute to Quality Education? *Africa Education Review*, 16(6), 165–182.

Shenton, A. K. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for Information*, 22, 63–75.

Shiffman, C. D (2013). Locating Common Ground: An Exploration of Adult Educator Practices That Support Parent Involvement for School-Age Children. *School Community Journal*, 3(2), 185–206.

Singh, R., Mbokodi, S.M. & Msila, V.T. (2004). Black parental involvement in education. *South African Journal of Education*, 24(4), 301-307.

Smith, J., Wohlstetter, P., Ally Kuzin, C. & De Pedro, K. (2011). Parental Involvement in

Urban Charter Scholls: New Strategies for Increasing Participation. *The School Community Journal*, 21(1), 71-94.

Southall, R. (2016). The New Black Middle Class in South Africa. South Africa: Boydell & Brewer.

Stacer, M. J., & Perrucci, R. (2013). Parental involvement with children at school, home, and community. *Journal of Family and Economic Issues, 34*(3), 340–354.

UNICEF. (2009). Manual Child-Friendly Schools. Chapter 4 School and community. New York.

Vally, S. & Spreen C. A. (2010). The School-Community Nexus in South Africa. *Our Schools /Our selves*, 19(4), 125 – 144.

Vithal, R., & Jansen, J. (2006). Designing your first research proposal. Landsdowne: Juta & Co Ltd.

Warren, R., Stefanski, A., Valli, L., & Jacobson, R. (2016), Beyond Involvement and Engagement: The Role of the Family in School–Community Partnerships. *School Community Journal*, 26(2), 135 – 160.

Appendix A: Ethics clearance certificate

Research Office

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)
R14/49 Savary

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	**PROTOCOL NUMBER: H20/03/24**
PROJECT TITLE	The Role of School Leadership and Management in Parental Involvement: A case study of two private primary schools in the Johannesburg East district
INVESTIGATOR(S)	Mrs V Savary
SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT	Education/
DATE CONSIDERED	13 March 2020
DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE	Approved Risk Level: Low
EXPIRY DATE	11 May 2023

DATE 12 May 2020 **CHAIRPERSON** _____
(Professor J Knight)

cc: Supervisor : Dr B Johnson

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR(S)

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** returned to the Secretary at Room 10004, 10th Floor, Senate House, University. Unreported changes to the application may invalidate the clearance given by the HREC (Non-Medical)

I/We fully understand the conditions under which I am/we are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I/we guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee. **I agree to completion of a yearly progress report.**

_____ _____/_____/_____
Signature **Date**

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES

Appendix B: Turn-it-in certificate

turnitin

Digital Receipt

This receipt acknowledges that Turnitin received your paper. Below you will find the receipt information regarding your submission.

The first page of your submissions is displayed below.

Submission author:	Vanessa Savary
Assignment title:	Master of Education Research Repo…
Submission title:	1015417:Research_Report_-_draft_…
File name:	7734b-968c-455d-9178-98e6ae4a7…
File size:	511K
Page count:	85
Word count:	23,563
Character count:	137,542
Submission date:	07-Mar-2021 09:50PM (UTC+0200)
Submission ID:	1526498893



Management of Parental involvement: A case study of a private primary school in South Africa

Appendix C: The permission letter to the school's principal



LETTER TO THE PRINCIPAL, HEAD OF SCHOOL, BOARD DATE: 20/03/2020

Dear Sir/Madam

My name is Vanessa Savary. I am a student at the School of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand. I am researching Parental Involvement in private schools as part of a Masters degree.

My research involves investigating the role of leaders and managers in parental involvement in particular. My research will entail interviewing the principal, deputy principal and two other management members to gain further understanding of what leaders understand parental involvement and how they experience their role. Four parent representatives will be interviewed to gain further understanding of how the role of leadership and management is perceived. Further to this, I will need to look through policies and other documents that may be relevant to parental involvement.

The reason why I have chosen your school is that this research is relevant to a private school. Also, this private school is representative of many other private schools in the area where it is well established and a widely sought after institution, offering a high-quality private education. I am inviting your school to participate in this research and would appreciate your consent to conduct this research at your school. The research participants will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way. They will be reassured that they can withdraw their permission at any time during this project without any penalty. There are no foreseeable risks in participating in this study. The participants will not be paid for this study.

The names of the research participants and the identity of the school will be kept confidential at all times and in all academic writing about the study. Your privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study. All research data will be destroyed between 3-5 years after completion of the project.
Please let me know if you require any further information. I look forward to your response as soon as is convenient.

Yours sincerely,

SIGNATURE

NAME: Vanessa Savary
EMAIL: vanessasavary7@gmail.com
TELEPHONE NUMBERS: 0833044094

Appendix D: Participant Information Sheet



Dear Sir/Madam

My name is Vanessa Savary and I am a Masters student in Education at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. As part of my studies, I have to undertake a research project and my topic of investigation is, Managing Parental Involvement: A case study of two private, primary schools in the Johannesburg East area, under the supervision of Dr B Johnson.

As part of the project, I would like to invite you to take part in an interview. This will involve a single interview for under an hour, at a scheduled time that is convenient for you. It will be a virtual interview and with your permission, I will also like to record the interview using a digital device.

There will be no personal costs for you to participate in this study. You will not receive any direct benefits from participation but there are no disadvantages or penalties if you do not choose to participate or if you withdraw from the study. You may withdraw at any time or not answer any questions if you do not want to. The interview will be completely confidential and anonymous as I will not be asking for your name or any identifying information and the information you give me will be held securely and not disclosed to anyone else.
If you have any questions during or afterwards about this research, please feel free to contact me on the details listed below. This study will be written up as a research report and will be available online through the university library website. The data collected from this report will be stored in a password-protected laptop, accessible only by me and will be kept for five years.

If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the ethical procedures of this study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), telephone +27(0) 11 717 1408, email hrec-medical.researchoffice@wits.ac.za

Yours sincerely

Vanessa Savary

Vanessa Savary, 1015417@students.wits.ac.za, 083 304 4094

Dr Bernadette Johnson, Bernadette.Johnson@wits.ac.za, 011 717-1000

Appendix E: The Informed Consent Letters



Consent Form for School Management members

Title of the research: An investigation into the Management of Parental Involvement: An exploratory case study of a private, primary school in South Africa

Name of researcher: Vanessa Savary

I, _____ agree to participate in this research project. The research has been explained to me and I understand what my participation will involve. I agree to the following:

(Please circle the relevant options below)

By completing and signing the consent below, I acknowledge and confirm the following:

I agree that my participation will remain anonymous Yes □ No □

I agree that the researcher may use anonymous quotes in his/her research report.

Yes □ No □

I agree that the interview may be audio recorded. Yes □ No □

I agree that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason. Yes □ No □

I agree that the information I provide may be used anonymously after this project has ended, for academic purposes by other researchers subject to their own ethics clearance being approved. Yes □ No □

Name:

Signature:

Date:

Name of person seeking consent:

Signature:

Date:

Appendix F: The Informed Consent Letters



Consent Form for Parent Participants

Title of the research: An investigation into the Management of Parental Involvement: An exploratory case study of a private, primary school in South Africa. Name of researcher: Vanessa Savary

I, _____ agree to participate in this research project. The research has been explained to me and I understand what my participation will involve. I agree to the following: (Please circle the relevant options below)

By completing and signing the consent below, I acknowledge and confirm the following:

I agree that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason. Yes ☐ No ☐

I agree that my participation will remain anonymous. Yes ☐ No ☐

I agree that the researcher may use anonymous quotes in his/her research report. Yes ☐ No ☐

I agree that the interview may be audio recorded. Yes ☐ No ☐

I agree that the information I provide may be used anonymously after this project has ended, for academic purposes by other researchers subject to their own ethics clearance being approved. Yes ☐ No ☐

Name of Participant:

Signature:

Date:

Name of person seeking consent:

Signature:

Date:

Appendix G: The Interview Schedule for all Participants

Interview Schedule – Management Members and the Principal

1. What is your understanding of parental involvement?
2. In what ways are most parents involved?
3. How is parental involvement encouraged?
4. What are the main expectations of parents at your school?
5. How do these expectations influence parental involvement?
6. How does the expectation of parents from different social backgrounds vary?
7. What factors influence parent involvement in your school?
8. How does parental involvement benefit all role players, namely, pupils, parents and teachers?
9. How is parental involvement encouraged?
10. What are the drivers of parental involvement in your school?
11. What are the enablers of parental involvement?
12. What are some of the main challenges that you encounter when managing parents?
13. How do you overcome these challenges?
14. What are some of the factors that limit parental involvement?
15. How do you encourage parents that have too little or no involvement?
16. Elaborate on the main barriers to the establishment of effective parental involvement identified in your parent community?
17. What are some of the main aspects that need to be factored in with regards to catering for a diverse group of parents?
18. How has this been implemented at your school?
19. Given your experiences and practices in parental involvement, what recommendations do you have for policy?

Interview Schedule – Parents

1. What is your understanding of parental involvement?
2. Describe your involvement as a parent?
3. How is parental involvement encouraged by the school?
4. What are your main expectations of the school?
5. How do these expectations influence your involvement?
6. What motivates you to be involved in the school?
7. In what way does parental involvement benefit all role players?

8. How does the school encourage the involvement of parents?
9. What are the drivers/enablers of parental involvement in school?
10. What are some of the main challenges that you encounter with parental involvement?
11. How do you overcome these challenges?
12. What are some of the factors that limit your involvement?
13. Elaborate on the main barriers to the establishment of effective parental involvement?
14. What factors should the school take into account in catering for a diverse group of parents?
15. How has this been implemented at school?
16. Given your experiences and practices of parental involvement, what recommendations do you have for policy?