

**THE ROLE OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAMS IN ADDRESSING THE
CHALLENGES THAT INHIBIT TEAMWORK IN MOPANI DISTRICT, LIMPOPO
PROVINCE**

By

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Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree

MASTER OF EDUCATION

in

EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

In the

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

At the


UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

DOCTOR R.I. LUMADI

OCTOBER 2020

DECLARATION

I declare that “*The role of School Management Teams in addressing the challenges that inhibit teamwork in Mopani district, Limpopo province*” is my own work and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated or acknowledged by means of complete references. I further declare that I submitted the dissertation to originality checking software.

Signed: 

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I glorify God, my creator, for giving me grace and wisdom during my learning journey. Through His mercy I was sustained as I navigated the demands of academia. Thank you, Lord.

I would like to convey my appreciation to my Supervisor, Dr R.I. Lumadi. Thanks for been there, guiding me so that I could accomplish this study.

Special thanks to Pastor Dr Ramalepe M.L. Your mentorship and assistance since the beginning of this research project is highly appreciated. Your immense contribution means a lot to me and has had a huge impact on my career development. May God richly bless you.

A big thank you to my lovely husband, Mr Sekgota Motlatso Samuel who have always been the source of my strength during the journey that was characterised by discouragement.

To my lovely children, Delight, Charmaine and Motsiri, as well as my grandson, Phapadi, thank you all for being there for me.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to powerful women in my life; my mother-in-law (Tshitshila Sekgota), my mother (Mathole Mokgadi Maria), my dedicated home assistant (Aunt Gladys Ramoshaba), and my three lovely sisters (Getrude, Precious and Annah).

ABSTRACT

Managing a school in South Africa has increasingly challenged schools to adopt a notion of teamwork. While teamwork is an appealing notion in theory, its practical implementation is not without challenges. Thus, this study explores the capacity of school management teams to address the challenges that hinder teamwork in eight purposively sampled schools in Mopani District. To obtain a comprehensive understanding of how SMTs address challenges that inhibit teamwork, this study was framed within the constructivist or interpretivist worldview. Individual semi-structured interviews and structured observations were data collection instruments used in this study. Triangulation was achieved by manually transcribing the interview data, and through three inter-related stages of analysis combined with data obtained through observations. The research question and sub-questions were used to guide the process of data analysis.

The study found that teamwork is perceived as a desirable notion in schools. The SMTs members affirmed their commitment to implementing teamwork in their schools. However, this study found that there are serious obstacles inhibiting the actual practice of teamwork in schools. It enumerated factors such as negative attitudes among members, and communication gaps and unwillingness by SMT members to share responsibilities. The SMTs offered critical ways of dealing with these challenges which involves consulting extensively, mentoring novice teachers, and enforcing policies. Taking the findings of this study into cognisance, several recommendations were offered to the schools and district for further research.

KEY TERMS

Decision-making, School Management Team, Shared-responsibilities, Team, Teamwork

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

DoE:	Department of Education
EEA	Employment of Educators Act
HOD	Head of Department
SACE:	South African Council for Educators
SMT	School Management Team
LDoE	Limpopo Department of Education
PLC	Professional Learning Community
SGB	School Governing Body
RCL	Representative Council of Learners

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CHAPTER ONE

ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

1.1. Introduction

The researcher's initial interest in the exploration of the school management teams in schools in Mopani District, Limpopo, to address threats to teamwork was aroused after my appointment as principal of one of the secondary schools in the district. A significant observation that came a few days after my appointment was that our School Management Team (SMT) was not operating as a team. Members were working in silos. No regular SMT meetings were held, and this had negatively impacted the realisation of school goals. The researcher further observed that the decisions were not taken jointly as a team, and the resulted in hostility between the members of the SMTs as the deputies and HODs sabotaged the decisions taken without consultation. There were also observable gaps in communication with the SMT, and teachers often complained of a lack of consultation when crucial decisions were to be made.

It is against the backdrop of the absence of synergy and collaboration within the SMT, and the evident lack of teamwork that gave rise to the investigation of the myriad threats that could be challenging team management and explore ways taken by various SMTs to address these challenges. Therefore, the exploration of various strategies employed by SMTs to address challenges that inhibit teamwork is necessary and opportune. It is assumed that school management teams who wish to achieve success would only do so if they are well positioned to address factors hampering teamwork. The realisation of a teamwork vision is only possible if SMTs create a culture that allows all involved in the activities of school to share leadership. To achieve this vision, SMTs should overcome factors that hamper team cohesion.

1.2. Research background

In South Africa, the importance of transition from an education system that projected the school principal as a sole manager to the one that emphasises a model of team management was broadly appreciated. The move saw the birth of an SMTs model in schools. This model emphasises that decision-making power is no longer situated only in the position of the school principal, but it is shared across many people (Department of Education, 1996). Therefore, the essence of this model is that "... all members have the right to be heard, to have their views considered, to express feelings, to offer knowledge and information" (Owens, 2001:288). This model finds expression in the school when the processes of crafting the school vision and decision-making rest with the schools' legitimate stakeholders (DoE, 2002:2). Thus, the team management model is characterised by aspects such as "participative 'democratic' management, collegiality, collaboration, schools as open and learning organisations, and, importantly, site-based management" (Van der Mescht, 2008:14).

The aspects of participation, collegiality and collaboration succinctly portray the SMT as a democratic structure that challenges its members to function in tandem as they provide the oversight over the school operations. Therefore, the nature of the team management paradigm is that power is distributed to others not saturated in the formal position of the principal. This distribution of power and responsibility ease pressure on the shoulders of the principal, thus, improving their administrative efficacy. According to Sergiovanni (1984:13), "the burdens of leadership will be less if the leadership functions and roles are shared". Ideally, whenever roles and responsibilities are shared amongst the people in school, shared leadership is in existence. Arguably, shared leadership becomes successful when people work together towards agreed objectives (Spillane, Diamond, Sherer & Coldren, 2005). A common goal or objective is one of the key elements of teamwork. Thus, the existence of the elements of teamwork in shared leadership (Ramalepe, 2015:633) makes teamwork critical in the exercise of leadership.

In the same vein, Medwell (2009) identifies common goals among other elements of teamwork such as communication, co-operation and making decision together. These

elements demonstrate why several studies observed that a “group of people were [is] not necessarily a team” (Van der Mescht & Tyala, 2008:232). In line with this, the researcher observed that most teams do not communicate effectively, co-operate and make decisions together in pursuit of a common goal. Therefore, here the indication is that not many SMTs have reached a stage of a complete synergy where they perform their roles as teams which are sparked by common goals. Ultimately, Ramalepe (2014) argues that the SMTs that effectively perform their tasks should have members who have come to trust and accept each other, people who interact with an aim of achieving a communal goal.

Researchers have documented several merits of teamwork which are worthy of exploring. Stott and Walker (1999:51) mention the following benefits of teamwork: “collaboration, empowerment, co-operation and consultation”. They argue that teamwork offers teachers an opportunity to engage decision-making process, thus, gaining control over their work environment. This argument is supported by Van der Mescht and Tyala (2008:230) as they assert that teamwork makes problems to be solved more creatively. In short, teamwork increases the decision-making power of the SMT, and the decision-making power needs “effective communication within the SMT” (Schaubroek et al., 2007:1022). Effective communication is possible in an environment where team members encourage the simultaneous flow of information which leads to realisation of school vision. In addition, Arcaro (2005:14) argues that teamwork facilitates for the effective realisation of the school’s mission and vision.

While there is a wide recognition of the benefits of teamwork by several researchers in the field of educational leadership, they have also identified its challenges. Notably, Tondeur (2008:301) identified “trust, communication lines, keeping moral, good leadership and responsible membership at a high level as challenges affecting teamwork”. In addition, team members’ levels of competence can threaten teamwork because allocating responsibilities to incompetent members might threaten the effective function of the school” (Van der Mescht & Tyala, 2008:230). Relying on members whose competence levels are low might fail the team because due dates of the department might not be honoured (Tonduer, 2008:302). On the other hand, Van der Mescht and

Tyala (2008:231) add laziness as a challenge and state that they just “want to do the basic minimum”.

With regard to trust, the researcher argues that there is not a single team that can flourish without mutual trust. Where there is no trust, it is difficult for school principals to delegate duties to other team members (Ramalepe, 2015:633). In line with this view, Tonduer (2008:302) argues that “some principals clearly find it difficult to trust all team members as they believe the job may not be done the way they would like it, they may not get that personal satisfaction”. He adds that “the need for personal satisfaction with a job well done could drive principals to tackle projects individually rather allowing participation of other team members”. Obviously, school principals who don’t fully trust their colleagues cannot share responsibilities with those colleagues. To overcome this challenge, schools’ focus should be on creating a culture premised on trust by initiating several human resource development programmes.

However, scholars have warned that it is always a risk to build a culture of trust in the face of accountability (MacBeath, 2005:354). As an ultimate accounting officer in the school, school principals should be careful not to bestow trust on people who do not respect that trust. Grant (2010:404) state that “in doing so, the principal is left accountable for the task poorly done”. However, it is equally unappealing to work in a culture of mistrust because “without mutual trust, relationships and respect are compromised and mistrust exerts a corrosive influence” (MacBeath, 2005:353). Unfavourability of working in a culture of mistrust makes development of mutual trust in schools one of the non-negotiables to ensure success in the practice of team management. This, according to Grant et al., (2010:404) poses a challenge to all people in the school, to “find areas of expertise in colleagues because trust and respect are earned through expertise”.

Taking the foregoing argument into consideration, the school principal’s challenging role is that of creating a culture of trust while, on the other hand, remaining a trusted accounting officer. Van der Mescht and Tyala (2008:227) call the harmony of creating trust-based culture and holding others accountable “a balancing role, where the principal is challenged to determine, in line with legislation, what practices can be distributed and

how the distribution will happen”. Ramalepe (2014:23) states that “when ‘a balancing role’ of the school principal is performed effectively, team members bond and respect each other while satisfying the expectations of the department”. It is against the background of these threats to teamwork that this research explores the role played by school management teams in addressing these challenges.

1.3. Statement of the problem

Although teamwork is a broadly perceived concept, its realisation within SMTs has been threatened by major challenges. There seems to be a knowledge gap in how SMTs handle these challenges within the contexts of their schools. While studies in educational management and leadership generally acknowledged the existence of these challenges, they have not provided explicit remedies to these challenges (Tyala, 2004:25; Van der Mescht & Tyala, 2008:231). Therefore, the exploration of this gap is necessary. Furthermore, it is necessary to explore this phenomenon because of the last decade saw a call by Limpopo Department of Education to improve school management (Limpopo Department of Education (LDoE), 2011:29). Essentially, this study assumes that SMTs in Limpopo schools can provide effective ways of addressing various threats to teamwork. Therefore, the study’s research question is: *How do school management teams in Mopani District address challenges that inhibit teamwork?* The question is divided into the following sub-questions:

- How do SMTs experience teamwork in schools?
- What are the benefits of teamwork in schools?
- Which factors inhibit SMTs from cultivating teamwork?
- How do SMTs overcome factors that inhibit teamwork?

1.4. Aim and objectives

The aim of the study is to explore the SMTs capacity to handle threats to teamwork, and the extent to which their strategies have enhanced teamwork in their school.

The objectives of this study are to:

- Examine the experiences of SMTs on teamwork in schools;
- Investigate the benefits of teamwork in schools,
- Investigate various threats that inhibit teamwork in schools,
- Investigate ways employed by SMTs to address challenges associated with teamwork;

1.5. Significance of the study

The role of SMTs in addressing challenges associated with teamwork in schools seems to be a gap that was never fully explored in South Africa with many studies only acknowledging that there are problems in cultivating teamwork (Ramalepe, 2014:24). For this reason, the study has the potential to share various strategies with SMTs, which will assist them to be effective when dealing with threats to teamwork in their schools. In addition, the study will contribute significant literature on the concept of teamwork. Finally, the study has the potential to provide the Department of Basic Education with recommendations on how to develop a framework assist in training SMTs to develop their capabilities or competencies relevant to achieving team building in schools. Most importantly, the current study is significant because no previous study has explored the concept of teamwork in relation to the role of SMTs in addressing challenges of teamwork in the context of Mopani District.

1.6. Research methodology

This study utilised qualitative research design. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000:19), a “qualitative researcher stress[es] the socially constructed nature of reality,

the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape reality". The study focuses on what the SMTs view as reality within their schooling context. This is a constructivist point of view where "reality is portrayed in the form of individual reality (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:19). Guided by this paradigm, the researcher effectively studied how SMTs experience the process of cultivating the spirit of teamwork in their schools. The rationale for using qualitative design in this research is to gather "thick descriptions" (Eisner, 1991:35). The thick descriptions helped the researcher to develop an explicit picture of the phenomenon under study.

1.6.1 Sampling procedures

This study included eight schools from which eighteen school members to be interviewed would be selected. The eight case study schools "just happened to be conveniently situated, spatially or administratively, near to where the researcher is conducting the data collection" (Marshall & Rossman, 2006:7). Furthermore, these eight schools were chosen on the basis of their "availability [willingness to participate], accessibility and theoretical interest" (Schwandt, 1997 140-141). Four primary schools and four secondary schools and their SMT members were selected using purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling allowed the researcher to select only information-rich participants. From each of the eight selected schools, a school principal or his deputy with at least three years management experience formed part of the sample. At the end, only eight school principals from eight schools were interviewed as participants. The participants were made up of five males and three female principals.

1.6.2 Data collection

In this study, individual semi-structured interviews and observations were used as data collection tools.

a. Interviews

Individual semi-structure interviews were the main data collection instrument. In this study, the interviews were used because “in order to find out about a phenomenon is to ask questions from the people who are involved in it” (Schalock, 2008:67). Kvale (1996:125) defines interview as “a conversation between two partners about a theme of mutual interest.” This is a specific form of human interaction which facilitates the coconstruction of knowledge through dialogue. Therefore, using interviews in this study allowed the to interact and converse with the participants as they shared their day-to-day experiences of teamwork and how they are challenged to the tensions of team management in their schools. Their responses reflecting their perceptions of the challenges inhibiting teamwork were tape recorded with the consent of the participants.

b. Observations

Schwandt (1997:106) states that “observation is a firsthand eyewitness account of everyday social action...”. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2006:257), observations are advantageous because “the researcher does not need to worry about the limitations of self-report bias, social desirability and the information is not limited to what can be recalled accurately by the participants”. Therefore, in addition to recording the SMT members’ behaviour as it occurs naturally, the observational method allowed the researcher to gather information that the participants felt “uncomfortable to discuss” (Creswell, 2009:180) or information that was missed during the interviews (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000).

Therefore, data collected during observations helped to strengthen the findings of the interviews and provided the possibility for triangulation. The observations of SMT

meetings, morning briefing sessions, and other intangible aspects of school climate was undertaken where feasible and possible. This study used structured observations in which "... the researchers identify pre-determined categories of behaviour that they would like to observe" (Maree, 2007:85). Data gathered from interviews and observations will supplement each other as part of the data analysis process.

1.7. Limitation of the study

The first limitation of this study relates to the sample. Since the study relies heavily on the views expressed by the participants purposefully sampled as information-rich respondents, the sample had been compromised. Thus, the compromised sample or reliance on a few individuals has two implications in this study. The study is open to the validity threat that most case studies suffer from. However, the use of multiple data sources and rigour in discussing the findings was able to sufficiently address this threat. Second, the results cannot be statistically generalisable, particularly because the study focussed only on Mopani district schools. However, despite this, the study's findings painted a picture that may in all likelihood be in existence in many schools in Mopani district.

1.8. Definition of key concepts

In order to clarify the parametre of the study, the definition of the following concepts is necessary.

1.8.1 Team

According to Ramalepe (2014:11), a team is made up of "active members who are involved in the process of pursuing team goals". O'Neil (2003:216) defines a team in terms of conflict resolution, asserting that "a team is a small group of people who recognise the needs of constructive conflict when working together in order for them to make, implement and support workable decisions". The researcher is of the view that

“team” can simply be defined by an acronym T.E.A.M which means Together Everyone Accomplishes More.

1.8.2 Teamwork

MacMillan and Schumacher (2001:173) define teamwork as “a group or team that contains common purpose, crystal clear roles, accepted leadership, effective processes, solid relationships, and excellent communications”. Similarly, Hellriegel et al., (2008:350) assert that “work teams [teamwork] consists of a small number of identifiable, interdependent employees who are held accountable for performing tasks that contribute to achieving an organisation’s goals”. Together, these definitions point to a notion that encourages individual experts holding well prescribed roles within the SMTs to coher, co-operate and communicate effectively, make decisions together, and share knowledge that allows them to stick together against all odds as they pursue goals they have internalised.

1.8.3. Shared leadership

Shared leadership can be described as “a leadership approach where authority, direction-setting and decision-making are democratic” (Duignan & Bezzina, 2006:5). Ramalepe (2014:12) argues that shared leadership is a byproduct of the continuous engagements amongst all school members as they go about the construction and reconstruction of a productive learning ecosystem. He adds that the value of this paradigm is that staff empowered to collaborate can create an excellence institution.

1.9. Chapter Summary

This introductory chapter presented the background, problem statement, followed by the research questions and the aim and objectives of the study. In addition, this chapter outlined the research methodology utilised to understand the phenomenon under study. Key terminologies were also clarified. Generally, the study posits that the efficacy of SMTs to achieve teamwork depends largely on leaders who are able to commit to addressing challenges derailing efforts for cultivating teamwork in schools. Building on the clarification given, regarding the concepts of teamwork, the next chapter presents the review of relevant literature.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

This study examines the role of SMTs in identifying and addressing challenges that inhibit teamwork in their schools. In this study, the postulation is that school improvement and effectiveness can only be realised within a context that fosters team management. Teamwork is an underlying element that promotes teamwork. Thus, in this literature review, the concept of teamwork is explored in relation to other interrelated concepts such as shared leadership and distributed leadership. The relationship between these three concepts clarify why SMTs can be regarded as a functional and structural space for team management in schools.

2.2. South African schools and team management model

The advent of democracy brought many changes to the South African education system. The notable change was a paradigm shift from a top-down, hierarchical leadership model to participative, democratic model in school leadership. During the apartheid era, educational leadership was top-down. The top-down approach was often understood in relation to the formal position of the school principal. According to Ramalepe (2014:16), the “emergence of passive teachers and parents is a practical symbol of the weakness inherent in the top-down school management system to effectively enhance leadership development in schools”. The approach created passive teachers and parents because the “educational system granted the manager in the school system the highest authority, having unassailable power and control over all activities within a particular institution” (Ramalepe, 2014:16). The system granted the principal’s position the right to make decisions all on their own without the involvement of teachers and parents. Normally, in this school management model, the principal’s dictates terms and the followers are not allowed to question the principals’ directives.

The ubiquitous weaknesses of the top-down model of school management led to several recommendations to transform the school management approach. One of this recommendation was found in the report submitted to the Department of Education by The Task Team on Education Management Development (DoE, 1996). The report argued for “an emphasis on relationship building, stakeholder participation, the management of diversity, and development” (DoE, 1996:25). Following the Task Team’s recommendations, “decentralised management structures such as the School Governing Body (SGB), School Management Teams (SMTs) and the Representative Council of Learners (RCL) were born” (Ramalepe, 2014:28). Central to this new notion was the emphasis that school management should no longer be “located only in the position of the principal but can be stretched over a range of people who have the interest of its clientele at heart” (Tyala, 2004:4). It positioned all legitimate stakeholders at the centre of school management or decision-making processes.

According to Van der Mescht (2008:14), this model reinforces the idea of having team management expressed through elements of “participative ‘democratic’ management, collegiality, collaboration ... and, importantly, site-based management”. The model is characterized by collegiality, collaboration and cooperation (Don & Raman, 2019). The implementation of this model presents a new demand on members of the SMT to embrace democratic approach to school management. Therefore, the new model of school management should be aligned with our country’s democratic principles. Not only that, it should also be propagated as an instrument to promote social cohesion in schools. Social cohesion is possible in a participative set up where a community share everything, including school management. Therefore, sharing leadership as a means of sharing the burdens and pressures of leadership not only improves schools but also achieves social cohesion facilitated through participative decision-making.

Several researchers concur that when people participate in the broader decision-making processes in the school, the decision is made within a short period of time because it involves the cooperation of all members (Don & Raman, 2019:16). In addition, the decisions become quality because different members contribute their expertise and insight (Okumbe, 2007; Phalane, 2011). However, the researchers also noted that there

are factors that facilitate and hinder team management in schools. Cohen (2006) mentions several factors that are counter-productive, those that hamper the efficacy of team management:

- Individual SMT members feeling that their primary role is to be a champion and defender of the area or function they are leading;
- Individuals relying on the principal to identify improvement areas and suggest solutions;
- A team that meets infrequently;
- A lack of commitment evident with respect to the decisions made by the team.

Fostering team management requires the creation of conditions that enable team effectiveness. The process should begin by diagnosing the challenges and provide appropriate remedy. Similarly, Okumbe (2007:40) identified critical conditions needed for the development of effective team management or teams:

- The manager had personal interest in each person's achievement;
- He took pride in the record of the group;
- He helped the group work together to set its own conditions of work;
- He faithfully posted the feedback on performance;
- The group took pride in its own achievement and had the satisfaction of outsiders showing interest in what they did;
- The group did not feel they were being pressured to change;
- Before changes were made, the group was consulted;
- The group developed a sense of confidence and candour.

2.3. The difference between governance and management of the site

In order to gain an insight into how team management model should look like in practice, understanding the difference between governance and management is needed. The governing body decides on matters that affect the governance of the sites while the

principal and the SMT or professional staff are responsible for the issues that relate to the daily school operations. Ramalepe (2014:26) states that “management of a site refers to the day-to-day organisation of teaching and learning activities”. The school principal and staff are responsible for the management function. Governance of a site includes the determination of policy. The aforementioned responsibility is assigned to the governing body. A closer look at these two functions makes one argue that areas of management and governance can sometimes overlap. The overlap makes the role of the principals, staff members and governing bodies confusing. This demonstrates the need for management and governance to converge to allow school principals, staff members and school governing bodies to work as team.

In table 2.1 below, the North West Department of Education (NWDoE in QLT/Limpopo/MST, 2004) indicates where both the governing body and the SMT work on different aspects of the same matter:

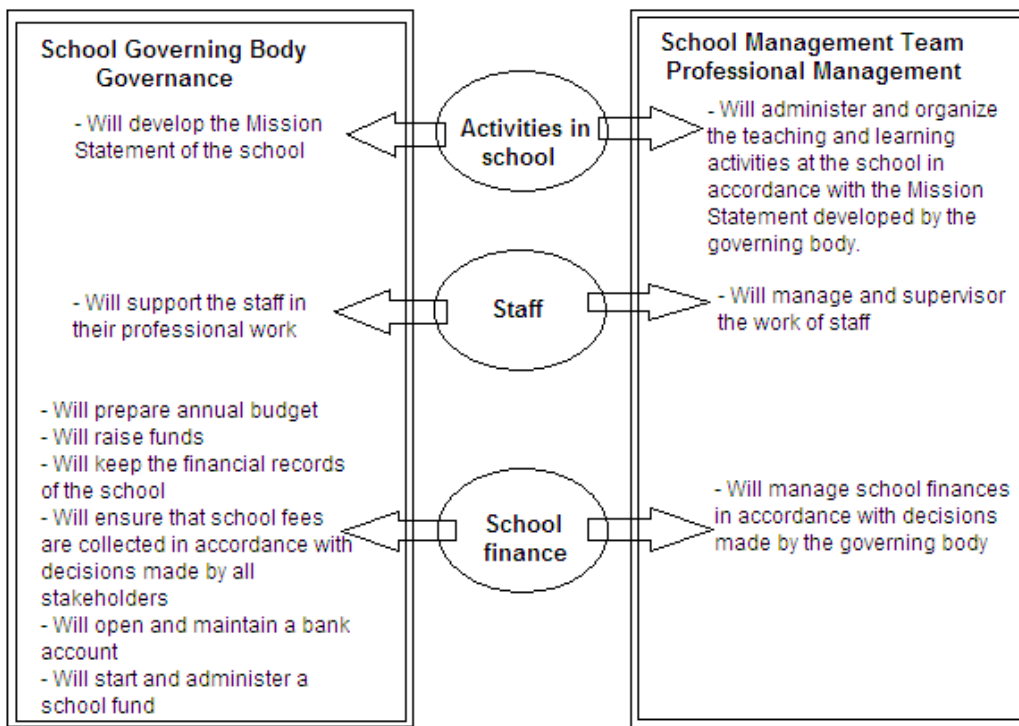


Table 2.1 How aspects of school management overlap with governance

2.4. School Management Team and its underlying leadership approaches

In the hierarchical management model employed by the South African school system, schools are led by a team commonly known as School Management Team. The Employment of Educators Act 76 of 1998 (EEA 76 of 1998) which contains Personnel Administration Measures (PAM) (1998) states that the SMT is constituted by school principal, deputy principal and Head of Department (RSA, 1998). According to Maja (2017), the constitution and core responsibilities of SMT demonstrate the importance of teamwork. For example, in the PAM 1998 4.2 – 4.4 in the Employment of Educators Act 76 of 1998 (RSA, 1998), the roles of the principal, deputy principal and head of department (HOD) are interlinked to promote teamwork. For instance, the school principal provides professional leadership and the HOD provides curriculum management.

The complementary nature of the SMT roles highlights the importance of participation, collegiality and collaboration in schools. Following this argument, this section seeks to contextualise team management within the research by conceptualising four approaches to leadership which are fundamental facets of the school management team (SMT) model. These approaches are transformational leadership, participative leadership, shared leadership based on collegiality, and distributed leadership:

2.4.1. Transformational leadership

Without a transformational leader, team management or teamwork is impossible to pursue in schools. The reason for this is that the transformational leader stimulates and inspires followers to achieve extraordinary outcomes (Robbins & Coulter, 2007). Schaubroek, Simons, and Lam (2007:1020) state that a transformational leader is “a leader who inspires followers to transcend self-interest and perceptions of their own limitation to become more effective in pursuing collective goals”. The transformational leader inspires or transforms the followers’ motivation, morale and performance through

connecting the follower's sense of identity with the collective identity of the organization (Odumeru & Ifeanyi, 2013:356):

In addition, McNatt and Judge (2004:550) state that transformational leaders “show concern for followers' needs, and promote a belief among team members that the leader will provide them with any support that they might need from him or her”. Thus, Warrilow (2012) identified the following four components of transformational leadership:

- Charisma or idealised influence – The degree to which the leader behaves in admirable ways and displays convictions and takes stands for followers to identify with the leader's values,
- Inspirational motivation – The degree to which the leader articulates a vision that appeals to and inspires the followers with optimism about future goals;
- Intellectual stimulation – The degree to which the leader challenges assumptions, stimulates and encourages creativity in the followers.
- Personal and individual attention – The degree to which the leader attends to each follower's needs and acts as a mentor or coach and gives respect to and appreciation of the individual's contribution to the team.

In light of these components, a transformational leader is what schools need to effectively cultivate teamwork. However, to successfully transform their schools into ecosystems that foster teamwork, managers should develop a challenging and attractive vision, tie the vision to a strategy for its achievement, and plan small steps to implement it (Yukl, 1999).

2.4.2. Participative leadership

At the heart of team management is participative decision-making which enhances relationships among different participants. This emerging paradigm puts “...emphasis on building relationships in education” (McLennan & Thurlow, 2003:6). Therefore, the development of SMTs provides the potential for participative leadership. Different scholars have claimed that school effectiveness and improvement can be associated

with participative leadership (Harris & Chapman, 2002). Ruddock and Flutter's (2004:133) research with students concluded that "opportunities for consultation and enhanced participation in schools have a direct impact on pupils' engagement." Leithwood et al., (1999:12) identify several assumptions that underpin participative leadership:

- Decision-making processes of the group ought to be the central focus of the group;
- Participation will increase school effectiveness;
- Participation is justified by democratic principles;
- In the context of site-based management, leadership is potentially available to any legitimate person.

In light of the above assumptions, participative leadership can potentially bring "staff together and in easing the pressures on school principals". Therefore, principals who embrace participative leadership have less burdens. Democratic structures that can be allowed to participate in school leadership are SGBs and Representative Council of Learners (RCL) in secondary schools. However, the participation of parents and learners depends on the willingness and co-operation of the school principals. In addition, thoughtful planning and parents' support or training is needed (Maile, 2004). Without these considerations, the relationship between the principal and parents or learners will be imbued by tensions. Accordingly, The Ministerial Review Committee's (2004:85) Review of School Governance suggests that "the ideal of participative decision-making is not yet a reality in many South African schools". This report cites lack of communication between the SMTs and SGBs as a key factor.

2.4.3. Shared leadership based on collegiality

Shared leadership is based on and promotes a notion of collegiality in school management. Collegiality as a key component of shared leadership is "a collaborative process that entails the devolution of power to teachers and other stakeholders in order

for them to become an integral part of the leadership of the school that are guided by that school's shared vision" (Sergiovanni, 2007:26). Singh and Manser (2002:57) add that "collegiality is considered as a process of assimilation that involves encouraging personal visions to become part of a shared vision built on synergy". Following these two arguments, shared leadership can be viewed as a notion that has at its heart collaboration of various stakeholders, which is driven by a shared vision. Shared leaders apply collegial strategies to mobilise all stakeholders to be part of the decision-making process in the school. Thus, Kouzes and Posner (1997:30) view shared leadership as an "art of mobilising others to want to struggle for shared aspiration".

Duignan and Bezzina (2006) view shared leadership as a notion which promotes democratisation of authority, direction-setting and decision-making processes in schools. The complexities of leading a contemporary school makes the idea of sharing leadership responsibilities desirable. Therefore, no school principal can claim to possess all needed capabilities or competencies to manage a contemporary school alone (Ramalepe, 2014). Principals in contemporary schools should not only exhibit disposition that freely allows for diversity in decision-making, which leads to commitment and ownership, but should also be willing to create an environment that fosters the sharing of values and ethics. By allowing different stakeholders to live out their values and ethics in the school, a positive whole school ethos and culture can be developed. Bezzina (2010) asserts that school transformation occurs when teachers live out their values and ethics as educative leaders.

2.4.4. Distributed leadership

Team management expresses itself through distributed leadership. Distributed leadership is a form of leadership underpinned by the assumption that "teachers can and must lead" (Spillane, 2006:15). This assumption challenges SMTs to stretch leadership over multiple leaders including teachers who are believed to have capacity to lead. The notion of stretching leadership over multiple leaders including teachers requires "letting go by senior staff rather than just delegating tasks and redistribution of power" (Grant, 2010:57). In distributed leadership, leadership responsibilities are

delegated beyond the formal positions in the SMTs. Teachers with certain expertise are also sought and engaged in school leadership. Thus, Harris and Muijs (2005:133) contend that “both senior managers and teachers have to function as leaders and decision makers and try to bring about fundamental changes”.

While there is a wide recognition that distributed leadership can potentially unlock teachers’ potential (Grant, 2010; Williams, 2011), Ramalepe (2014:29) warns that “inviting teachers into the practice of leadership does [should] not displace the crucial role of the school principal”. The South African education system has positioned school principals as ultimate accounting officers with statutory delegated authority. Therefore, in the distributed leadership practice, their crucial role is that of leading leaders (Ash & Persall, 2000, Harris & Lambert, 2003). To effectively play a role as a leader of leaders, school principals should establish a culture driven by mutual trust and mutual learning. According to Grant (2006), without a mutual culture and learning, distributed leadership is impossible to cultivate in schools. Furthermore, Fullan (2003:22) argues that “for distributed leadership to come to full fruition the structural framework which is provided by hierarchical forms of leadership is a pre-requisite”.

In view of the foregoing, Ramalepe (2014:30) asserts that “in practice, the SMT members serve as gatekeepers to distributed leadership in the school, and should, therefore, have a powerful and real relationship amongst themselves and teachers who take on leadership roles as they emerge”. It is also important for school principals to have a deep understanding of how to practice distributed leadership within the context of their schools, that is, how to distribute leadership responsibilities and activities. Researchers have suggested three ways of practicing distributed leadership (Spillane, 2006; Spillane, Diamond, Sherer & Coldren, 2005):

- Collaborated distribution – “characterises practice that is stretched over the work of two or more leaders who work together in place and time to perform the same organisational routine or task”;
- Collective distribution – “characterises practice that is stretched over the work of two or more leaders who co-perform a leadership routine by working separately but inter-dependently”;

- Coordinated distribution – “refers to situations where leadership routine involves activities that have to be performed in particular sequence”.

These three models of distribution provide a framework on how SMTs can select and distribute activities in their schools. Woods (2005:30) enumerated the following benefits of distributed leadership:

- It improves effectiveness;
- It increases engagement and self-esteem;
- It enhances organisational capacity;
- It leads to greater organisational capability to deal with challenges of complexity and work intensification.

However, in practice, distributed leadership is difficult to promote in schools, especially in rural schools (Grant, 2008). Williams (2011) identified three categories of factors that hamper the practice of distributed leadership:

- Context-based factors – These include the entrenched hierarchical management practices inherited from the apartheid tradition. At school level, these practices manifest through the authoritarian ethos exhibited by school principals;
- People-based factors – These are factors associated with the school principal that perpetuate “autocratic affinity in South African schools” (Grant, 2006:525). These factors include “authoritarian mentality, fear of the loss of power, values and skills as well as ethnicity, cultural and gender biases, a sense of insecurity on the part of the teachers” (Grant, 2006:525);
- Practice-based factors – These involve those factors which cause other members of the staff to become side-lined from participating in leadership and management activities or functions in schools.

2.5. Team management and learning organisations

The success of the team management model depends largely on the growth and development of educational leaders or managers. Schools develop to their full potential when they are led or managed by growing principals. These are principals who constantly develop and refine certain leadership competencies required of a leader in a learning organisation. When we talk of a learning organisation, we often refer to Senge's (2006) five disciplines:

1. Personal mastery – the ability to articulate what you want to be and what you want, and that is achieved through continuous learning;
2. Mental models – starts with understanding the difference between what people say they believe and what they really believe. It means that in order for people to learn, the assumptions they hold need to be surfaced and challenged, for example, by questioning. By doing so, their models are replaced by acceptance models.
3. Shared vision – means moving beyond the “vision thing”. Where the convention team leader furnishes a vision, and everyone marching in step. The entire team must take part in fashioning a new kind of idea. In such a process, shared pictures of the organisation of the future become the vision for everyone;
4. Team Learning – means that learning alone is important but listening to other people is even more important. Team members become attuned to and notice different observable facts of the same event;
5. System Thinking – is about seeing things as a whole and not as unrelated. It is also about seeing patterns or relationships rather than incidents, events or things in isolation.

2.6. Team development model

Team management is a complex phenomenon because it is influenced by the changes that schools go through. These changes influence how teams develop in schools. In this section, the researcher examines Tuckman's 1965 team development model to describe

the process of developing and implementing teamwork in schools. Bruce Tuckman's model is considered as the most famous teamwork theory (Buckley (2008:64), and it was described as "to be used to describe development of groups [teams] for the next 20 years" (Tuckman, 1984:14). Therefore, it is recognised as the guide to teamwork development. Generally, this model suggests that "teams grow through clearly defined stages" (Begg's & David's, 2009:62), with the life cycle of the team involving four stages:

a. Forming

Forming is the first and most important stage of team development. This is because it is during this stage that teams succeed or fail. Jones (2019:25) states that this is "simply because it can lead to success and harmony among team members or to the other direction of failure to achieve the desired outcome". It is during this stage where members discover the purpose of the team through socialization – members are also discovering their roles in the team. According to Jones (2019:25), the forming stage "develops participants' interpersonal skills, measures their behaviours, and enables their leadership skills". In light of this argument, forming allows people to come together and build relationships that foster effective teamwork. Through effective communication the team leader is able to align the team with purpose, which leads to results that are "meaningful and rewarding to the team" (Buckley, 2008:65).

b. Storming

During this second stage of the model, team members start to connect emotionally as they figure out how to work together. However, the pursue of emotional connection with each other may lead to conflict. Team members may come to an agreement and mostly disagreement (Jones, 2019:26). According to Buckley (2008:65) "conflict and confrontation typify this stage, as differences surface. This may result in some loss of performance or focus on the task – team members may challenge each other and the team leader about the task of the team, and how the tasks should be done". As the name suggests, storming happens as a result of team members resisting each other. The role of the school principal is critical at this stage to keep the team together despite the storm.

c. Norming

Performing teams have capacity to move from storming to norming. Norming is a second stage of the model. Norming, according to Tuckman (1965), is a phase where team members begin to create harmony and cohesion prevails. The members develop a sense of togetherness by resolving any existing conflicts, developing processes, clarifying roles, and deciding how things will be done. Accordingly, Jones (2019:26) asserts that during this stage there is “less conflict happening in this stage and more mind streamlining of thoughts and ideas.” Begg’s and David’s (2009:63) state that norming is “where SMTs need to come together in formal meetings and clarify the role of every member and also distribute their roles and responsibilities accordingly”.

4. Performing

When the process of norming has been fully completed, teams can move to the performing stage. Tuckman (1965) refers to stage as ‘functional role relatedness’. This means that at this stage team members exhibit great energy and support each other to perform their roles. Jones (2019:26) states that all focus during this stage is “channelled towards achieving the ultimate desired goal with the involvement and participation of all”. SMTs that have reached this stage experience a great deal of synergy. This synergy results in optimum team performance delivered through effective collaboration. The school principal and SMTs at this stage play a critical role of monitoring the attainment of the set targets and staff support by allocating resources efficiently.

2.7. Teamwork within the school management teams: Implications and benefits

The term ‘team’ is widely expressed by people in different sectors as a notion that stresses teamwork stimulated by school vision and goals. Teamwork within SMT lubricates effective communication, shared responsibilities and decision-making powers. Team are called teams because of the expectation that it should make and implement decisions together. Mendwell (2009) views teamwork as the gathering of workgroup of individual people by prescribing purposes or goals and encouraging

effective communication and co-operation within the workgroup. Flowing from this definition, effective teams have common features, namely “a willingness by members to share, even to sacrifice, having an agreed purpose or mission, and the team achieving more than the sum of its constituent parts” (Darren, 2010:71). The Education Law and Policy Handbook adds that effective teams “have common purpose, clearly defined roles for each team member, a leader, team members that support one another, a free flow of information, set ways for resolving conflict, and members who can see benefits in working together” (DoE, 2000:26).

In the light of the foregoing, the implications for the teamwork within the SMTs and schools include (Piercey (2010:114):

- Clearly defined goals and roles;
- Mutual support and motivation;
- Joint decision-making;
- Unified commitment;
- A collaborative climate;
- Standard of excellence;
- Evaluation, achievement and celebration;
- Taking positive action in implementing decisions;
- Willingness to listen and work together;
- Getting the job well done;
- Competent members;
- A result-driven structure;
- External support and recognition; and
- Principled leadership.

2.7.1. The benefits of teams and teamwork in schools

There are several benefits of teamwork that are fully documented in the literature. The main ones are “collaboration, empowerment, co-operation and consultation” (Scott & Walker, 1999:51). The other notable benefit of teamwork is problems are easily and creatively solved when teamwork exists within the SMT (Van der Mescht & Tyala, 2008:230). Decision-making process becomes effective because during the creative problem solving process the team members’ talents and creative skills are harnessed and maximized. Participation of team members in the problem-solving process makes team members to own the problem and view it as a team problem that requires team effort, expertise and capabilities to resolve. In addition, teamwork offers teachers an opportunity to significantly participate in the school decision-making process. Whenever teachers take part in decision-making process they gain control over their work environment.

Teamwork allows members to share their knowledge and expertise during problem-solving process, and such sharing makes teams learning units.

Furthermore, teamwork can lead to a reduction in team errors and provide opportunities for continuous improvement (Ballangrud, Husebo, & Hall-lord, 2017, Polega, Neto, Brilowski & Baker, 2019). The growth through teamwork is important for the success of the school because it leads to good teaching (Cherkowiski & Schnellert, 2018). Good teaching through teamwork can be associated with greater impact on learning and achievement. The reason for this is that teamwork have a potential to nurture and optimise the talents and skills of those involved in them. Not only does teamwork allows for the sharpening of members’ talents, but it also provide an opportunity for members’ capabilities to be evaluated throughout, and in so doing adjustments could be made in order to have them functioning to their maximum (Tyala, 2004).

2.7.2. Threats to teams and teamwork in schools

Notwithstanding the popularity of teams due to the benefits they have to school management, researchers and scholars have also identified factors that inhibit teamwork in schools. The commonly identified challenges include “trust, communication lines, keeping morale, good leadership and responsible membership at the highest level as challenges affecting teamwork” (Tondeur, 2008:301). Tondeur (2008) further uses three main categories of challenges to delineate the types of trends that inhibit teamwork in schools or within the SMT. There are (a) challenges associated with people who compose the team, (b) challenges associated with people behind effective teams, and (c) challenges associated with the optimisation of team performance. These categories foreground the discussion about the threats to teamwork in this study.

Thus, one of the common threats to teamwork relate to “various levels of competence among team members” (Van der Mescht & Tyala, 2008). Realising team effectiveness will be hard without competent members. For example, team members who cannot communicate, collaborate and understand, and appreciate diversity in the team will negatively impact team effectiveness. These members threaten the effective functioning of the school because assigning responsibilities to incompetent individuals might affect the team’s timeline and as a result the team might fail to meet due dates. However, Van der Mescht and Tyala (2008) state that incompetency is not the only challenge affecting teamwork. They argue that even competent teachers who are lazy affect teamwork because they want the basic minimum. Lazy team members often fail the team because their responsibilities are not executed on time and other team members who voluntarily assist end up being overloaded.

Furthermore, trust fuels teamwork. Trust determines success or failure in relationships. In leadership, trust is a driving force of participative and shared leadership. School principals can only delegate duties to teachers they trust. However, MacBeath (2005) forewarns that before delegating duties to teachers, building a culture of trust is necessary. This is so because the risk is always that placing trust in people who do not honour it may lead to bad workmanship. When this happens, school principals are called upon to account for the poor performance of the team members. While it is difficult to

create a culture of trust, school principals who seek to cultivate teamwork should at all cost mobilise efforts to develop mutual trust among the team members. This can be achieved through consultation. Regretably, lack of consultation was found to be one of the challenges affecting teamwork in schools (Tonduer, 2008). School principals who constantly look for ways to consult with others create a culture of trust because consultation is an expression of respect for colleagues. Colleagues who are respected trust more.

2.8. Chapter Summary

This chapter examined the development of team management within the South African school context. It has also explored the inter-connected approaches which underlie the notion of school management which came about as a replacement of ineffective hierarchical, one-man leadership model which gave the school principal power over every activity at the school. Transformational, participative, shared and distributed leadership approaches as underlying elements of team management were also discussed. These elements are explored as leadership approaches which promote and justify the use of teams in schools and clarifies the benefits of teamwork. Team development and effectiveness was also discussed. Finally, teamwork and its implications in the SMTs was examined.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

The study examines how SMTs address challenges that inhibit teamwork in schools. To examine the purpose of this study, the research methodology that was used during the study is discussed in this chapter. The study follows the qualitative research design to understand and interpret the school managers' experiences of teamwork in their schools. Thus, the study is based on and influenced by the interpretivism or constructivism paradigm. This worldview helped the researcher understand the participants view as reality within their schools. This was achieved by using a case study design. Employing semi-structured interviews and observations to allow for the collection of more data from different sources. In addition, the study used a multiple-method approach to analyse data. Through this approach triangulation was achieved when data gathered observations supplemented data obtained through the interviews. The chapter concludes with a description of the ethical considerations considered before conducting the study, as well as the delimitation and limitation of the study.

3.2. Research Design

The study utilised qualitative case study design. To fully understand the rationale for adopting this design, the following aspects are discussed:

3.2.1. Worldview: Constructivists or interpretivist perspective

This qualitative case study was influenced by and conducted within the interpretivist paradigm. The complexity of school management informed this choice because schools are complex organisations and in order to understand their processes and people, conducting an interpretive research was necessary. According to Rubin and Rubin

(2005:43), “interpretive social research emphasises the complexity of human beings, and attempts to construct and understand their worlds”. Positioning this study as an interpretive study allowed the researcher to enter the context in which SMTs operate and attempt to comprehend their experiences of teamwork. The meanings that the SMTs assign to teamwork as a phenomenon under study helped the researcher to uncover how they make sense of their reality (Maree, 2014). Therefore, “...the central endeavour in the [this] interpretive paradigm is [was] to understand the subject of human experience (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007:22).

As an interpretive researcher, the researcher asked questions and observed the study contexts with a hope of changing the contexts (Bassey, 2007). The interpretivist approach was suitable to assist the researcher to “write the lives of individuals, groups, and collectives, grounding social theory in people’s experiences and celebrating diversity and multiplicity” (Richardson, 1991:175). The researchers’ interactions with the SMTs facilitated further construction of reality because “social interaction of people is a cornerstone of individuals constructing meaning and reality of their surroundings” (Bassey, 2007:45). Through these interactions, members of the SMTs were able to express their lived experience, leading to a “multi-faceted socially constructed and multiple realities” (Maree, 2014:61). Therefore, by listening to the views of the school managers about the challenges of teamwork in their schools and how they overcome them, multiple realities were socially constructed. Figure 3.1 below represents the socially constructed and multiple realities intended in this study:

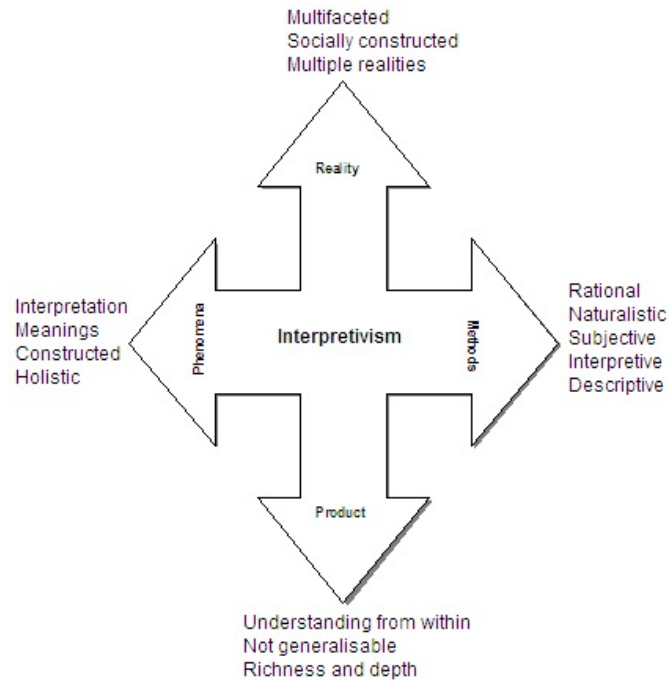


Figure 3.1 Representation of interpretivism

3.2.2. Qualitative research

The qualitative research design was the most suitable approach to interpret and understand the SMTs experiences of teamwork. According to Maree (2014:50), qualitative research is a “research that attempts to collect rich descriptive data in respect of a particular phenomenon or context with the intention of developing an understanding of what is being observed or studied”. Accordingly, Spencer, Ritchie, Lewis and Dillon (2003:3) view the aims of qualitative research as “to provide an in-depth understanding of people’s experiences, perspectives and histories in the context of their personal circumstances or settings”. The authors further identified some key features which characterise qualitative research design, namely “concern with exploring phenomena from the perspective of those being studied; with the use of unstructured methods which are sensitive to the social context of the study; and the capture of data which are detailed, rich and complex”.

Based on the foregoing, rich descriptive data was obtained from the social context by establishing “relationships with people, places and performances” (Ezzy, 2010:xii). This is one of the advantages the design offered the researcher in this study. In addition to these advantages, Marshall and Rossman (2011:3) clarified what was performed by the researcher through providing the following key characteristics of the qualitative researcher:

- The qualitative researcher views social phenomena holistically;
- The qualitative researcher systematically reflects on who she is in the inquiry;
- The qualitative researcher is sensitive to his personal biography and how it shapes the study;
- The qualitative researcher uses complex reasoning that is multi-faceted and iterative.

In light of the above, the researcher preferred using qualitative research in this study because of its flexibility that allows for the interview questions to be refined during the data collection phase. The researcher’s initial plan is not tightly prescribed. This means that all phases of the research process are allowed to change or shift after the researcher has entered the field and began to collect data (Creswell, 2009:176). Since variables in the quantitative technique are pre-determined, the use of quantitative design was not going to allow the researcher to holistically understand the problems confronting SMT members when practicing teamwork. Thus, the qualitative design helped the researcher to develop an explicit picture of the problem confronting SMTs in the promotion of teamwork in their schools. In essence, the qualitative research design afforded the researcher an opportunity to sketch the larger picture that emerges as members of the SMT construct their realities.

3.2.3. Case study

The research study used a case study design. Maree (2007:75) states that a case study is a “systematic inquiry into an event or a set of related events which aims to describe

and explain the phenomenon of interest”. “Case study research provides a detailed account and analysis of one or more cases” (Christensen & Johnson, 2004:327). Yin (2009:93) maintains that “a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident”. In this study, an in-depth analysis of the role of school management in eight schools yielded a better understanding of each school as a separate case. Yin (2009:93) maintains that a “multiple case design has its advantage in constructing a framework in which either literal replication predicts similar results across multiple cases or it aims at theoretical replication whereby different results are likely for theoretical reasons”.

To achieve a multiple-perspective analysis in this study, four primary and four secondary schools were used as a case study. According to Maree (2014:75), case study offers the researcher “a multiple-perspective analysis in which not just the voice and perspective of one or two participants in a situation is considered, but also the views of other relevant groups of actors and the interaction between them”. The actors in this study are the school principals and HODs, and their interactions with the researcher assisted the researcher in understanding the dynamics of their schools. Furthermore, the case study research in this qualitative design will allow the researcher to frame analyses so it focuses on one phenomenon, which the researcher selected to understand in depth regardless of the number of sites, participants or documents (McMillian & Schumacher, 1993).

3.2.4. Sampling

According to Maxwell (2008:121), “sampling is the process of selecting a number of individuals for a study in such a way that they represent the larger group from which they were selected. A sample comprises of the individuals, items, or events selected from a larger group referred to as a population”. Similarly, Maree (2014:79) defines sampling as “the process used to select a portion of the population for study”. The purpose of sampling is to gain information about the population (Maxwell, 2008).

Generally, participants in qualitative research are recruited to a study because of their exposure to or their experience of the phenomenon in question.

Therefore, purposive or purposeful sampling was used to select eight schools where members of the SMTs were interviewed and observed. Purposive sampling ensured richness of the data gathered because it allows for the selection of participants according to “pre-selected criteria relevant to a particular [research] question” (Maree, 2014:79). To answer the research question, eight school principals were selected. Using a simple purposive sampling technique means that only information-rich participants were selected, and they generated useful data for the project. What was of critical importance is that data gathered from participants was built on the information obtained from previous subjects and the accumulated data offered a significant depth of information on the phenomenon.

The study’s research objectives and the characteristics of the study population (such as size and diversity) determined which and how many people to select. Initially, eighteen school managers who included eight school principals or their deputies and eight HODs were selected. However, the study sample was reduced to only eight school principals as the HODs were busy with the moderations. The selection of site and sampling in this study began with accessible sites (convenience sampling) (Marshall & Rossman, 2011:107). In addition, the schools that were sampled were willing to participate in this study.

3.2.5. Data collection and triangulation

This section discusses two techniques that was employed to collect data in this study. Like most qualitative studies, this study was guided by the criterion of saturation of data (Maree, 2014). This means that the two data collection instruments were used to collect data until no new ideas and insights emerged. The two instruments were used to achieve triangulation.

3.2.5.1. Semi-structured interviews

Using semi-structured interviews as main data collection tools was necessary to determine the SMTs views about teamwork. An interview is defined as “an interpersonal situation, a conversation between two partners about a theme of mutual interest” (Kvale, 1996:125). Teamwork is a mutual theme of both the researcher and the school managers in this study. Therefore, interviews facilitated a dialogue that assisted the researcher to collect multi-layered data through the lived experiences of the SMT members. To find out about the experiences of school managers regarding teamwork, it was necessary “to ask questions from the people who are involved in it in some particular ways” (Schalock, 2008:67). SMT members’ day-to-day activities require that they function as a team. Therefore, asking them questions about challenges inhibiting their practice of teamwork was important because “events cannot be understood unless one understands how these events are perceived and interpreted by people who participate in them” (Harries, 2008:36).

Therefore, the use of interviews to collect data in this study enabled interaction between the researcher and participants. Interviews offered the SMT members an opportunity to indicate what they know about challenges facing the SMTs in cultivating teamwork. The features of semi-structured interviews are as follows (Gillham, 2005):

- The same questions are explored with each participant;
- The questions are developed to ensure their focus remains on the key themes under investigation;
- Approximately equivalent interview time is allowed in each case.

Maree (2007) adds probing as another feature of semi-structured interviews. Probing serves to clarify answers given by the participants. Therefore, using probing helped the researcher to uncover rich descriptions in the data. Prior to data collection with interviews, pilot interviews were conducted with SMT members in two schools that were not participating in the study. This was done to re-organise and restructure the interviews based on what the researcher learnt during the pilot interview – this reduced excessive

probing. Piloting the interviews minimised mistakes during the interviewing process and validated the interview schedule. The interview schedule was used to help the researcher focus and not wander and ask irrelevant questions or pose misleading probes. The interview schedule was useful as it served as a checklist of what the researcher needed to ask, moreover, it helped the researcher to work systematically.

3.2.5.2. Observations

In this study, observations were used to strengthen the findings obtained through the interviews and to provide the possibility for triangulation. Schwandt (1997:106) defines observation as “a firsthand eye-witness account of everyday social action”. Similarly, Maree (2014:84) refers to observation as “an everyday activity whereby we use our senses (seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, testing), but also our intuition to gather bits of data”. Essentially, observation provided the researcher with a possibility to have an insider perspective of the group dynamics and behaviours in different settings (Maree, 2014). Observation of SMT meetings, morning briefing sessions, and other intangible aspects of school climate were undertaken where possible to gain insider perspectives of how teamwork is promoted in schools. Since not many studies in South Africa focussed on how school managers address challenges confronting teamwork in schools, it was predicted that most participants would be unfamiliar with strategies used somewhere else. Therefore, using observations was recommended to uncover strategies employed elsewhere to mitigate the challenges of teamwork.

The researchers’ role was to witness and record the behaviour of the SMTs firsthand without necessarily communicating or questioning them. The researcher recorded the behaviour of the SMT members as “it occurred naturally” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:257). An observation schedule was developed to guide the observation process. Maree (2014:84) argues that “before you use observation as a data gathering technique, make sure that you define the purpose and focus of the observation and that you know exactly what you want to observe”. This approach is referred to by Cohen et al., (2000) as ‘structured observation’. According to Robson (1993: 206), structured observation “...

is a way of quantifying behaviour”. The researcher attended meetings to observe the processes and procedures detailed in the observation schedule. The use of an observation schedule meant that the researcher went into the schools knowing in advance what they were looking for.

The observation schedule was designed to cover three important categories of behaviour. The determination of categories was as a response to Maree’s (2007:85) advice that when using structured observations, “the researchers [should] identify pre-determined categories of behaviour that they would like to observe”. The first category captured the observation of the members’ behaviour in meetings with major focus on the key procedures or elements that facilitate healthy relationships. This involved observing whether members share their ideas freely without any fear of prejudice or if their opinions are respected. The second category focussed on observing behaviours related to leadership practices. In this category, the researcher observed evidence of the presence of teamwork. The evidence included looking at the values and aspects underpinning teamwork, for example, how team members communicate and manage interpersonal differences. This category further observed the involvement of teachers, learners and parents in school leadership. In the last category, the researcher broadly observed several aspects of school climate such as respect for meeting times and voluntarism attitude to resolve conflicts.

3.2.5.3. Triangulation

The use of interviews and observations as data collection tools provided a possibility for triangulation in this study. Rubistein (2009:7) further provides the following aims of triangulation:

- To address possible biases that comes from one perspective;
- To cross-check data;
- To confirm the findings;
- To obtain deeper insights from apparent inconsistencies;
- To add depth to the study and a richer understanding.

In this study, triangulation was achieved by assessing themes from interviews conducted with school principals and heads of department, and comparing these patterns with those emerging from the observation. Therefore, triangulating the data sets gave the researcher a broader picture of what the participants perceive to be true because the research questions were approached from different angles.

3.2.6. Data analysis

Qualitative data analysis is a process that “involves attempts to comprehend the phenomenon under study, synthesise information and explain relationships, theorise about how and why the relationships appear as they do, and reconnect the new knowledge with what is already known” (Ary, Jacobs & Razavieh, 2006:490). The process of data analysis in this study was an “on-going, cyclical process that is [was] integrated into all phases of qualitative research”. Data analysis did not only occur at the end of the study but was done simulatenously with data collection. This approach to data analysis finds support in Maree’s (2014) assertion that qualitative data analysis is non-linear process in which data collection, processing, analysis and reporting are intertwined. It took the form of systematically “examining, selecting, categorising, comparing, synthesising and interpreting data to address the initial propositions of the study” (Yin, 2003:109).

The interactive model below shows how data was analysed in this study:

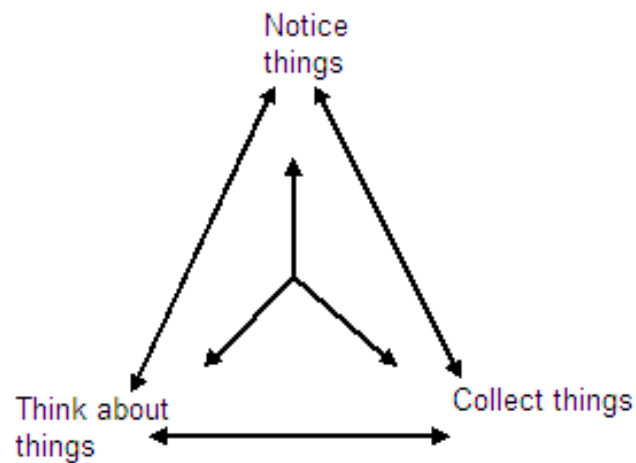


Figure 3.2 Data analysis process (Seidel, 1998)

The researcher followed the three inter-linked elements of the model to capture an understanding of data collected through interviews and observations. During data analysis process, the researcher reflected on the data and noticed some gaps in the data collected through semi-structured interviews and then went back and collected it. When the researcher was satisfied with the collected data, she ordered data in relation to the research sub-questions in order to make the analysis easy. The researcher used codes to order the data, presented in the form of categories. Hancock, Windridge and Ockleford (2009:24) refer to coding as labelling and categorising ‘content analysis’”. They define ‘content analysis’ as “a procedure for the categorisation of verbal or behavioural data, for purposes of classification, summarisation and tabulation” (Ibid). Therefore, the interview transcripts were examined and notes organised, “reducing the information into smaller segments from which the researcher can see and interpret patterns and trends (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:364). The observations field notes were also analysed in conjunction with the interview data.

3.2.7. Trustworthiness of the study

To ensure the trustworthiness of the study, the researcher employed three key measures, namely, credibility, dependability and transferability. Korstjensa and Moser's (2018) strategies of prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and triangulation were used to establish credibility. For example, the researcher persistently observed the activities in the Digital Storytelling workshop and spent prolonged engagement with participants throughout the action research process. As already discussed in sub-section 3.2.5.3, the researcher established credibility by applying triangulation. Triangulation allowed the researcher to achieve cross-validation among data sources, data collection strategies and theoretical schemes (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). The cross-validation of data sources assisted the researcher to present accurate descriptions of the SMTs experiences of teamwork. By cross-checking the theme of "digital storytelling" was done by comparing data obtained from semi-structured interviews and observations of SMT meetings.

In addition to using credibility to achieve trustworthiness, the researcher used the measure of dependability. Dependability is established when the process of study is consistent and reasonable over time and across researchers and methods (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that dependability includes the aspect of consistency. To achieve dependability, the researcher transparently described the exact methods of data collection, analysis and interpretation from the start of the project to the development and reporting of the findings (Korstjensa & Moser, 2018). The dense descriptions of methods and data collection tools used by the researcher provides information as to how repeatable the study might be (Kielhofner, 1982). Therefore, establishment of dependability convinces the reader that the findings indeed occurred as the researcher says they did.

Finally, the researcher used transferability to establish trustworthiness of this study. Transferability refers to the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be transferred to other contexts or settings with other participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1995). To ensure that the findings of this research are transferred to other contexts or settings, the researcher used rich, thick, descriptions of the participants and contexts by

supplying a large amount of clear and detailed information about the SMT members' views regarding moral purpose as well as the settings in which they live and function (Creswell, 2003). By describing not just the behaviour and experiences of the SMT members, but also their context would make the SMT's behaviour and experiences meaningful to an outsider.

3.3. Limitations of the study

Punch (2000) defines limitations as those factors or conditions that are unavoidably present in the research. The first limitation in this study was the degree to which the SMT members would contribute meaningfully and honestly to the research through semi-structured interviews. Particularly, the degree of respect and loyalty or friendship present within SMTs would make members less likely to be open about their true experiences regarding teamwork in their schools. Some were not willing to reveal the realities of how teamwork is impacted at their schools and seemed to conceal certain facts about the operations and motivations of each other. However, these limitations were sufficiently addressed by using multiple data collection techniques as other data sources, especially observations, will offset the anticipated challenge of interviews. Therefore, by observing the members of the SMT interacting in a meeting provided the opportunity to identify behaviours exhibited by members of the SMTs that shed light on the kind of relationship that exists amongst the team members – this allowed the researcher to treat the emerging data with caution.

3.4. Delimitations of the study

Punch (2000) defines delimitations as the boundaries the researcher places around the study to ensure it remains manageable. Three delimitations were set for this study: (a) examination of teamwork phenomenon was limited to only four primary schools and four secondary schools within Mopani District, (b) avoiding using the researchers' school as a formal context for the research, as this would have run the risk of becoming subjectively involved, leading to researcher bias getting due to her personal

observations, and (c) limiting the amount of data collection by restricting the examination of the role of SMTs to the views of the principals in the interviews. However, deputy principals and HODs were observed during meetings.

3.5. Ethical considerations

The study used interviews and observations as data collection instruments. Both the interviews and observations in qualitative research can give rise to ethical dilemmas if strict guidelines are adhered to (Ryan, Coughlan & Cronin (2007:741). This study applied the guidelines offered by Johnson and Christensen (2000:69) to address the dilemmas and ensured that the study was ethically acceptable and that participants were ethically treated:

- a. Before data were collected, the researcher obtained permission from Mopani West Educational District and schools to conduct the study. Furthermore, informed consent was obtained from the participants before engaging them;
- b. The research participants were informed in advance that they will be free to withdraw from the study at any time and shall not be prejudiced for doing so;
- c. The research participants were protected from physical and mental discomfort, harm and danger that could have arose from the study's research procedures;
- d. The research participants confidentiality and anonymity was protected;
- e. Before conducting in-depth interviews and observations, an information sheet was sent to participants to highlight key aspects of the study including the purpose of the research, the amount of time likely to be required for participation, the expected risks and benefits, including psychological and social, and how confidentiality will be protected.

3.6. Chapter summary

This chapter presented a detailed description of the research methodology employed in this study. The chapter first examined the adopted research design which is qualitative design. This design is influenced by and based on interpretivist paradigm. This paradigm describes how reality is constructed within the SMTs context. Interviews and observations were used to collect data, the justification for using them was provided in this chapter. Furthermore, this chapter included the data analysis process and issues around trustworthiness. It concludes with a discussion of ethical considerations, as well as the limitation and delimitation of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1. Introduction

The main research question upon which this research was designed seeks to answer how school management teams in Mopani district address challenges that confront teamwork. Thus, this chapter presents the responses drawn from the interviews and observations. As a chief data collection tool, interviews present the main data. In order to achieve the completeness of raw data, the interview data were complemented by data obtained through the observations. However, observation data was reported where the researcher believed it presented a phenomenon under investigation in a more comprehensive manner. By closely reading through the interview transcripts and field notes, themes that emerged were categorised according to the research sub-questions. Table 4.1 below shows categorization of themes that emerged from data:

Research sub-questions	Category	Emerging themes
How do SMTs' experience teamwork in schools?	Teamwork within School management teams	1. Perceptions of key expressions of teamwork 2. Perceived ingredients of team effectiveness
What are the benefits of teamwork in schools?	Teamwork and its benefits in schools	3. Participative decision-making and problem-solving
Which factors inhibit SMTs from cultivating teamwork?	The constraints of cultivating teamwork	4. Threats and challenges inhibiting teamwork
How do SMTs overcome factors inhibiting teamwork?	The capacity of the SMTs to overcome constraints of cultivating teamwork	5. Methods of addressing factors affecting teamwork

Table 4.1 Research sub-questions, categories and themes

To distinguish participants from each other and their schools and to ensure confidentiality and anonymity, the following keys were used (e.g. School A, School Principal A).

4.2. Schools and participants in the study

Out of the 18 participants selected to be interviewed, only eight school principals were available to be interviewed. Since the interviews took place during examinations, the HODs were unavailable. However, in schools where observations of meetings were conducted, all SMT members (principal, deputy principals, HODs) were available. Table 4.2 offers a simple referencing list of participating schools and members of school management teams who took part in the study.

School	Primary/ Secondary	No. of SMT members	SMT Meetings Observed?	Participant (Pseudonym)	Gender	Interviewed?
School A	Primary	3	Yes	School Principal A	Male	Yes
School B	Primary	4	Yes	School Principal B	Female	Yes
School C	Secondary	3	No	School Principal C	Male	Yes
School D	Primary	5	Yes	School Principal D	Male	Yes
School E	Primary	5	Yes	School Principal E	Female	Yes
School F	Secondary	4	No	School Principal F	Male	Yes
School G	Secondary	2	No	School Principal G	Female	Yes
School H	Secondary	2	Yes	School Principal H	Male	Yes

Table 4.2 Profile of schools and participants

4.3. Research sub-question 1: Teamwork within school management teams

This research question sought to explore the school principals' perceptions with regard to teamwork within the context of their learning ecosystem. A major focus of this research question was to examine what principals understood by the concept

'teamwork' and the degree to which they had experienced or observed its expression within their school. The emerging themes from this research sub-question were:

- Perception of teamwork and its key expressions
- Perceived ingredients for team effectiveness

4.3.1. Perceptions of teamwork and its key expression

The present dynamics in schools pose a challenge to school principals to cultivate and nourish teamwork in order to improve efficacy of their school. The participants interviewed were expected to identify and explore teamwork as expressed in their school and how adoption of teamwork has influenced the principals' leadership approach. However, the responses given by five out of eight participants tended to focus on emphasising the importance of teamwork rather than the influence of teamwork on their leadership approach and how teamwork is expressed in their schools. Generally, the responses generated within this theme suggest that the concept of teamwork was the most preferred approach among school principals and its adoption led to a significant improvement in school management. Thus, majority of school principals perceive teamwork as a catalyst for excellent learner achievement, particularly for Grade 12 learners.

The five participants were able to give an explicit account of teamwork and identified key issues pertaining to it and showed similar evidence of commitment to identify and nourish it. School Principal B associated teamwork with learner achievement in Grade 12, "... *Contribution to teamwork in my case, I see it worked because ever since the year 2000 we have been producing positive results because of teamwork...Our target is 90% and we feel that one day we will get there because of teamwork*". School Principal

D espouses that *“When I arrived at School E, the SMT and the teachers were divided, but I managed to convince the SMT to join hands and convinced the teachers to have the same focus as the SMT which led to unity at the school and which made a positive mark towards learner achievement”*. According to the principal, learners have been performing well in their Grade 12 examination results.

It was apparent in the data that school principals interviewed view excellent matric results as the main benefit of teamwork. Perhaps, the good Grade 12 results are as a result of the fact that teamwork also assists the SMT to effectively monitor teachers’ work leading to effective curriculum management. According to School Principal C:

“When it comes to curriculum coverage, I realised that the SMT is doing quite well when it comes to monitoring teachers’ work or audit of written work. When it comes to curriculum coverage monitoring, teamwork in the SMT has ensured that our teachers cover prescribed content in their subjects and this helps the school to achieve good results in Grade 12”.

Generally, the principals in this study perceive that teamwork is important in ensuring effectiveness in curriculum management. As teachers collaborate, learners excel. According to Principal G, *“Teamwork as a form of collaborating, it offers teachers opportunity to sharpen another’s skills. As a result, learners benefit.”*

In terms of the expressions of teamwork, it emerged that there are three key expressions of teamwork, namely consultation, delegation and collective decision-making. First, School Principal D viewed effective consultation as one of the key expressions of teamwork in his school. He stated, *“Consultation... there is too much of consulting in terms of dealing with issues in our school”*. School Principal C added that consultation is a very important expression of teamwork, *“Consultation is a critical expression [of teamwork] because normally we consult. When I want to do something, I normally consult them [SMT and teachers] before I implement so that they don’t get surprised. In*

fact, whatever we do here at School C, we consult, there is no single activity that we do that is known by the principal alone, everyone has to know before we implement it". This claim was confirmed by the researchers' observation of a morning briefing session at School C where the school principal was consulting teachers on the new paving project that was to be constructed. School Principal H highlights the importance of the relationship between consultation and transparency. She stated, "Teamwork greatly influences the leadership of a principal because every time you need to take a decision, you would have to consult other people. This keeps the staff together when they know that there is no hidden agenda. Everything is transparent to everyone. Transparency keeps the teams together".

Second, delegation emerged as a key expression of teamwork in this study. School Principal B, who has recently been appointed as a new school principal stated, "*I think teamwork is expressed through delegation in our school. When I arrived at this school, I realised that there was a gap, some duties were not delegated to the SMT. I succeeded in making a point that the SMT should perform its duties as a team, delegating some of my responsibilities to other members. By so doing, I realised that things are a better in working as a team". School Principal E espoused, "One way we can see teamwork is when I delegate duties to all the members of the SMT. This has contributed positively towards making the school successful. He added, "... And through delegation, I am relieved because the principal cannot do everything on his own. Sometimes he is in meetings and some activities need to be done on time. This in its own implies that teamwork is effective when, as a principal, I trust my SMT and teachers enough to delegate some of my duties to them". It was important to note that this school principal mentioned the need for a trusting relationship to exist before duties are delegated to members.*

In what sounded like abdication, School Principal C indicated, *“If you come here, you might not see that I am the principal of the school, everybody is the principal. I delegate tasks, I say do this, do that, and they come and report back and I simply approve”*. Obviously, monitoring, support and reporting emerged as critical aspects of delegation. School Principal B stated, *“I delegate duties, then I just monitor”*. School Principal D added, *“... And those who are given responsibility are not tampered with. If I delegate responsibility to you, I don’t come and tamper with what you are doing. I just give support. Once you start to interfere, they say why don’t you do it on your own, and then it is going to affect teamwork in the long run”*. The importance of monitoring and support was also reflected in the response of School Principal F, *“The key thing is delegation. Those who are required to perform delegated duties must be fully supported and monitored”*.

Finally, collective decision-making emerged as one of the key expressions of teamwork. School Principal C stated, *“The best memory of when I contributed positively towards teamwork in my school is when I ensured that we hold regular meetings. The SMT meet regularly and in those meetings we collectively take decisions on how to run the school”*. The idea was succinctly pointed out by School Principal E who expanded, *“One of the expressions of teamwork is when we collectively take decisions and collectively implement them”*. According to School Principal C, teamwork has influenced his leadership approach. He said, *“Teamwork has indeed influenced the way I approach leadership in the sense that I don’t just take decisions unilaterally. I consider different stakeholders who will be affected by my decision. It is a collective decision-making that works to ensure teamwork”*. However, he agrees that it is not possible to involve everyone in every decision that should be taken. He argued, *“Sometimes you are bound to take unilateral decision considering the urgency of the matter. After having taken such*

decisions when you need to report to the SMT and teachers you find that they are aggrieved.”

The importance of collective decision-making in aiding teamwork was reflected in the responses of School Principal A. He said, *“In our school, how decisions are taken demonstrates teamwork. Decisions are taken collectively and everyone who is part of that process has no choice but to commit fully to the decision. We all unite around that decision and this has made a positive mark towards learner achievement”*. Normally, people who were part of the decision rally behind the decision. School Principal D supports this, *“If we don’t involve them [teachers], we won’t succeed reaching our goals and targets. But I have seen it in our school. When they are included in decision-making with regards to the setting of targets, no-one pulls in a different direction. We move together towards the target”*. It was clear from these responses that participating in decision-making process fosters co-operation and collaboration during the implementation phase.

4.3.2. Perceived ingredients for team effective

Generally, three catalysts for team effectiveness were identified in the responses given by the participants. First, school principals’ responses highlighted the importance of effective communication as a key factors that can ensure effective teamwork. School Principal C stated, *“Adoption of teamwork has improved my communication skills because for teamwork to work you need to communicate effectively. So, the first thing in teamwork is communication. As a head master, you need to listen to everyone you are working with. Thus, good communication skills are important to ensure effective teamwork”*. This communication element was confirmed by the researcher’s

observations of two SMT meetings in Schools C and School D. In both meetings the school principals chaired the meetings and created opportunities for staff members to contribute their ideas. They listened to their views and respected them. Generally, the school principals were communicating effectively. Furthermore, the minutes from two staff meetings reviewed by the researcher demonstrated that in cases where the school principals were chairing the meeting, they were not dominating the meeting.

Thus, School Principal D states:

“Communication is important in teamwork. Even when we hold a meeting, I don’t dominate the meeting but I allow teachers to contribute their ideas. I also encourage my HODs to allow teachers in their departments to participate during their strategic meetings. They should let them talk, and they must listen to them. I think this has made our meetings vibrant with different ideas from everyone. Even during staff briefings, we exchange ideas”.

Generally, as reflected in the participants’ remarks, effective communication plays an important role in enhancing teamwork. The essence of this reflection that *“Communication as one of the key processes of team effectiveness”* is reflected in the perception of school principals in another study (Ramalepe, 2015). According to principals in this study, effective teams have, in addition to an effective leader, free flowing information and set of ways to resolve conflicts.

Amidst the interview data, school vision and mission were accepted by participants interviewed as an enabler for teamwork. School Principal B states, *“If you want to work effectively as a team, you must make sure that all the team members understand the vision and mission”*. He further adds, *“You show them the plan and where you would like to go, the targets you’d like to achieve, and how we can achieve it. You convince them so that they can buy into your vision. Once you can succeed in that, all of you start working toward the same vision and goal”*. In their meeting, Principal D restated:

“Our vision is to create an excellent school community through excellent teamwork that allows everyone to achieve and grow together in order to empower our learners with the 21st century skills”.

School Principal D espoused that the motto of their school is *“Togetherness”* and it is derived from what he calls shared vision, *“It is our shared vision that encourages us to work together as a team. Thus, I introduced teamwork to respond to our school vision and so far we are reaping the fruits”*. He added, *“You cannot do anything alone. So everyone needs to know that it is our vision to work together with others to achieve our common goal”*. Although he seemed to use vision and goals interchangeably, School Principal D’s remarks demonstrated that successful teamwork requires a shared vision. Thus, School Principal E states, *“... Since everyone is aware of our target, our vision, there is unity in our school. And I can see that teamwork also encourages volunteerism. If one teacher is absent or sick, another teacher takes his or her class. This is because we share the same vision of achievement and teamwork”*. These responses were echoed by School G’s school principal who stated that *“Every year we set team targets and goals. We share this vision so everyone is aware of it, and throughout the year we pursue this vision as a team. When we achieve success, we achieve it as a team and if we fail, we fail as team”*.

Drawing from the above comments, the school principals clearly perceived shared vision as a key driver of teamwork. However, they also acknowledged that it was not easy to share a vision. School Principal C asserts that, *“When I came to this school I encouraged teachers to support a vision of working together but some were not ready to embrace teamwork. If you cannot convince them [teachers] to buy into the vision of working together, one group will pull in this direction and another in a different direction. Thus, you will not arrive at the same destination”*. It was clear that any vision to effectively facilitate teamwork needs buy in from the different stakeholders involved. In support of

this, School Principal D explained that *“I am convinced that teamwork in our school will continue to improve because everyone has accepted our vision. It is no longer my vision but our vision”*. It is clear from these remarks that it is until a vision of teamwork is widely shared that it starts to produce the required fruits.

4.4. Research sub-question 2: Teamwork and its benefits in schools

In this section, one theme is explored. The focus is on the participative decision-making and problem solving. Another principal (School Principal D) espoused that, *“Our SMT has benefited from teamwork in many ways. First, we plan together. Second, we monitor the implementation of those plans together. For example, we plan how many times we will conduct class visits or inspect written work in books, and then monitor the effectiveness of this plan. It is the monitoring and support of teachers that has improved curriculum implementation in our school”*. My observation of School D’s SMT meeting confirmed the above statement. In this meeting, the HODs were reporting on content coverage for different subjects. It emerged from this meeting that teachers, especially in scarce skills subjects such as Mathematics and Physical Sciences, have a substantial number of informal tasks given to learners. The SMT also checked if the term targets for each subject were met. School Principal C explains how they go about ensuring effective curriculum management: *“As a team [SMT], we manage curriculum collectively and we report to one another. We ensure that the staff [members] also come on board and understand our expectations”*.

With regards to team target, School Principal B stated, *“So, teamwork helps all of us to work towards the same team target. And if we achieve success, we achieve it together, if we fail we fail together. All of us share responsibilities to succeed in attaining*

performance targets for the school". According to School Principal G, school targets can only be achieved when roles are well described and responsibilities are shared:

"Every year different departments in our school sit and set targets for their subjects as teams. Then, we work together as teams to achieve these targets. It is not possible to achieve these targets if roles are not well defined and individuals in the teams don't know their responsibilities. Fortunately all our teachers have signed job descriptions the department has given us. It is easy to work as a team because we all know our responsibilities and we share them well to achieve our targets".

In line with this, School Principal B added, *"What I can see is that everybody knows his or her responsibilities. I am no longer taking charge of every activity in the school, it is easy to work as a team when we all know our responsibilities"*. During the observations of school B management team, there was a discussion of duties which were allocated to teachers according to their abilities, and that different teams were placed under the leadership of HODs or senior teachers. School Principal B emphasised that, *"Team members feel accepted and they are motivated. When they feel motivated, they perform their duties well. Then, our targets are achieved"*. Teacher motivation emerged as a critical benefit of teamwork in this study with School Principal H saying, *"When all of us contribute to teamwork, we get encouraged"*. Although School H is underperforming, with regards to Grade 12 results, the observations showed that the prevailing culture indeed motivates teachers to do their best. Thus, School Principal H confidently said, *"We are confident to turn things around"*.

There was also a sense that another benefit of teamwork is that it facilitates effective problem solving. According to School Principal A, *"There are quite a number of skills you don't have as a principal. So, teamwork makes it easy for me to solve problems because when there is a problem in our school, the SMT discuss and ensure we arrive at the best solution"*. School Principal C adds that, *"High schools are institutions that*

have a lot of challenges. I have noticed that without teamwork, it would be difficult to resolve all these challenges. It [teamwork] makes things simpler; in fact, the school is running smoothly. It is a well-oiled machine that overcomes its challenges because of teamwork". He adds that, *"Many a times, they [other SMT members] are able to solve problems in my absentia because they were empowered to do so by solving problems as a team".* School Principal G shared the same sentiments, *"Together with my team, despite the challenges, we try by all means to overcome whatever challenge we come across. We don't always overcome all the challenges we come across, but we are doing our best".* Problem-solving emerged as an important benefit of teamwork in most of the effective schools in this study. Thus, School Principal E stated, *"We were able to overcome many challenges as a team."*

4.5. Research sub-question 3: The constraints of cultivating teamwork

In this research question, threats and challenges that inhibit teamwork in schools were explored. All school principals, irrespective of whether or not teamwork was effectively cultivated in their school, perceived that there are crucial challenges that inhibit teamwork in their schools. The challenges identified by school principals are generally associated with the different role players (such as teachers) who are expected to assist in cultivating teamwork in schools. There was an overwhelming acknowledgement that a negative personality is a major challenge that inhibits teamwork. Although the negative personality of an individual can be exhibited in several ways, the principals' responses in this study focused on several manifestations which affected team effectiveness. Generally, these included attitude issues, non-cooperation, selfish traits, sabotage,

communication gaps, not sharing responsibilities, negative influence, and dishonesty and integrity aspect.

School Principal G stated, *“Some of the things that may inhibit or pose as a challenge to teamwork relate to individual personality. Generally, there are people who cannot naturally follow in the mood of the masses or they take time to understand the programme that needs to be embarked on. These negative attitudes become a stumbling block”*. This remark showed that every school is made up of different personality types which can lead to conflict and failure. Thus, School principal C accentuated that, *“There are those with a great or positive personality who positively influence teamwork in our school. But the problem is teachers with negative attitudes. They turn to influence colleagues negatively. But we deal with them so that teamwork may prevail”*. School Principal H echoes this sentiment by indicating that, *“People who are negative, teachers or SMT members who influence others negatively against the school vision and mission make us fail to cultivate teamwork”*. He further said, *“These people are a thorn in the flesh”*.

These remarks demonstrated how negative people can hinder teamwork. School principals need to deal decisively with teachers who bring negative energy to the school. However, School Principal E indicated that, *“Those negative attitudes will be the reason you don’t cultivate teamwork. So, if we overcome them, teamwork will happen. But it is not simple to overcome these negative influencers because working with people of different cultures and different beliefs is always a challenge. You get frustrated and helpless sometimes as a school principal, and this on its own serves as a stumbling block”*. The principal’s frustrations are even worse when he or she has to deal with negative attitudes within the SMT itself. School Principal F’s remarked, *“I have some SMT members who have negative influence, influencing teachers to sabotage our plans.*

And dealing with these individuals has proven to be a nightmare because teachers listen to them". He, however, accepted that, "... I need to find a way to deal with them".

Expanding on the issue of attitude and negative influence, School Principal C stated, *"I have noticed that we lack support from parents. Some of the affluent parents like to influence SGB members and teachers or even SMT members so that they do not support what we have agreed on."* She added, *"Sometimes we have teachers who give wrong information, especially those who are in the teacher component of the SGB. They will share information with one group, and the wrong information to another group".*

Obviously, this attitude issues or negative influence can potentially cause discord in school teams. Hence, School Principal D accentuated that, *"For teamwork to work, you need everybody on board, the SGB, SMT and teachers. However, the problem arises when there are people who sow disagreements within these groups".* Perhaps, the remarks of School Principal H explain the reason why individuals develop negative attitudes. He states, *"People who are selfish make teamwork a very difficult exercise".* Selfish people turn to focus on themselves rather than the teams.

The aspect of dishonesty and integrity also emerged from the data. School Principal C's responses succinctly highlighted the frustration of having to deal with dishonest members who do not have a common good in mind who are not truthful in the course of one's job:

"The behaviour that challenges teamwork in our school is when members are not implementing the decision taken by the team. Some members end up not implementing the decisions of the team. When we monitor or convene for reports, it comes to light that the SMT member did not comply with the agreement. This affects in a way that when you agree to implement a strategy to improve, for instance, learner performance, the SMT member doesn't cooperate".

Another extended quote that shed light about the manifestation of dishonesty or lack of integrity is taken from School Principal D:

“I remember, for instance, when the behaviour of SMT members challenged teamwork. I wouldn’t be at school because I’m requested to attend a meeting, for example, I would then have to delegate somebody to act as the principal on that particular day. Each time I return I receive reports that the acting SMT member held a meeting with teachers to demonstrate his dissatisfaction with regard to how the principal is conducting things. When there is an issue to solve, he would say the principal is not here, forgetting that I have given him and other SMT members the power to take decisions when necessary.”

The two extended quotes above show how people who lack integrity can sabotage the work of the team. These kind of behaviours seemed to be common in schools where new principals had just been appointed. Thus, School Principal D admitted that there is, *“As a newly appointed principal in this school, I always thought that perhaps the SMT members sabotage me because they are upset that they didn’t get the post. But I now realise that there are people who just have integrity issues”*. Another newly appointed school principal (School Principal C) echoed this response *“... you might find that we also have different members in the SMT who are beyond repair when it comes to issues relating to honesty. They just can’t be honest. They are two-faced. In the SMT meeting they agree with us, but when they go out, they do the complete opposite”*. The remarks from School Principal D and School Principal C highlighted the challenges facing newly appointed school principals in cultivating teamwork.

However, it can be misleading to conclude that only teachers or other members of the SMT are capable of displaying a negative personality that leads to team ineffectiveness – the quote below provides a typical example of how school principals themselves can exhibit personality traits that inhibit teamwork:

“There are times when you realise that if you had communicated better or consulted others, the problem would have being prevented. When I first arrived at this school, I experienced serious problems and I had to learn how to share information and consult with both teachers and parents”.

School Principal D supported this and added that, *“Sometimes we take unilateral decisions, and after having taken such decisions, when you report to the SMT you establish that indeed you ought to have consulted them first. Those are some of the things that I think inhibit teamwork”.* The most serious personality-related factors are those inherent in the leader himself, and these include communication gaps and not sharing responsibilities. School Principal C admitted that, therefore, teamwork thrives in an environment characterised by effective communication and consultation by the school principal.

4.6. Research sub-question 4: The SMTs’ capacity to overcome challenges that inhibit teamwork

School principals won’t successfully cultivate teamwork within schools that are characterised by issues of non-cooperation, dishonesty, sabotage, and negative attitudes and influence. To ensure that teamwork flourishes in schools, the school principals together with their SMTs and teachers take a decisive action every day in order to overcome these challenges. Thus, the fourth research sub-question explores the capacity of SMTs to overcome the challenges that inhibit teamwork in their schools. Under this sub-question, only one theme that explores methods or strategies employed by SMTs to deal with challenges of teamwork is discussed. The capacity of SMTs to deal decisively and effectively with these challenges was explored by first examining the principal function of the SMT members in addressing these factors, and second by looking at the methods they apply when solving teamwork-related problems. The degree

to which the school principals engage in this function was also informed by what was observed during various meetings or activities.

Generally, all school principals admitted that the responsibility to address various challenges that inhibit teamwork in their school lies within the purview of their office. This acknowledgment was seen, for example, in School Principal G's remarks:

"For sure! I think it is my responsibility as a leader because as a head of an institution if there is poor management of teamwork it means the whole institution is going to be affected. This will then affect everything negatively".

However, all school principals concurred that overcoming factors that inhibit the realisation of teamwork in their schools requires a collective effort. School Principal F highlighted this joint responsibility:

"It is my responsibility, but not alone, together with other SMT members, collectively so. Because if I am to do things alone, I will fail. So, together with the SMT, we are entitled to address the challenges in our schools because you might not be aware of some of the challenges as a principal. So, as much as it is a collective effort to apply teamwork, it is a collective effort to address challenges that hamper it".

Principal C described the need for a collective and collaborative approach in dealing with these factors, and stated that "... *in terms of approach, in terms of competency, in terms of whatever, we are not the same. Some of the challenges need particular skills, and that is where other members come in*". This is a clear indication that principals should look for expertise within their staff where necessary to solve problems of teamwork. Therefore, there is a need to act collectively in order to overcome the challenges inhibiting teamwork in schools. Thus, in order to effectively confront these challenges, school principals and their SMTs need to develop a system that allows the involvement of teachers and other important stakeholders. In line with this thought,

School Principal C stated that *“... while it is my responsibility to address these challenges, I cannot do it alone, I cannot take every responsibility, I must share this responsibility with my colleagues”*.

Furthermore, School Principal E also of the view that the fight to address factors that hamper teamwork demands nothing but a collective effort, *“To me, it is the responsibility of all of us, myself, the SMT and the teachers. If it is my responsibility alone, what happens when I’m not there, things fall apart. If it the responsibility of the SMT alone, if the SMT is not there, teachers may go to class and not do what they are supposed to. So, it should be the responsibility of all of us to make sure that things work smoothly and according to plan”*. However, while acknowledging the need for a collective approach in addressing factors that hinder the implementation of teamwork, school principals also believe that the buck stops with them as accounting officers. School Principal C said, *“Collectively we solve these problems, but as a manager, I am still accountable”*.

In the analysis of data, several methods or strategies applied by school principals in addressing challenges of teamwork emerged. Although only five participants were able to provide clear strategies or methods of addressing these challenges, their contribution can shed light on effective techniques that are not context-bound. Therefore, in the next sections various methods or techniques applied by the five participants are explored. All these techniques are explored under the following headings: Communication and consultation, mentoring, mediation and exposure to lifelong learning, and consequence management through policy implementation.

4.6.1. Communication and consultation

School Principal H stated, *“This depends on the merits of the challenge. Firstly, consultation with the members of the SMT and members of the staff is essential. Secondly, communication is also the best instrument to address some of the challenges of teamwork. If we do not communicate well while we have challenges, the challenges can get worse. But if we communicate properly, the challenges can be reduced or otherwise solved”*. It was apparent in the responses that effective communication involves listening. School Principal C reinforced that, *“Normally, as a head master, you need to learn to listen to everyone whom you are working with so that you are able to overcome such challenges because if you don’t listen to their advice you may end up going astray or taking wrong decisions. In fact, listening is a very important skill in communication, without it you can’t overcome such challenges”*.

With regard to consultation, School Principal B emphasised, *“Firstly, it is to ensure that everybody knows about activities that must occur. When people are consulted, they challenge you less”*. Generally, the school principals interviewed in this research highlighted that consulting stakeholders was key amongst their techniques of dealing with factors that inhibit teamwork. This point was initially highlighted in School Principal B’s remarks:

“I think consultation is important. We try by all means to hold consultative meetings to bring the SMT on board, and to ensure that all our teachers become aware of the activities and programmes of the school. In these meetings, we, then emphasise the importance of teamwork. In so doing, we are in a way trying to uplift the spirit of teamwork.”

The School Principal C reinforced the idea of having to consult broadly. He cited the reason for this consultation as follows, *“As a school principal, you may not know*

everything. The only way you would get assistance from those who know better than you is when you consult with them and listen to their advice". Accordingly, School Principal A stated, "*...through consultation we can deal with problems better*". In short, communication and consultation are twin methods that can ensure effective teamwork in schools.

4.6.2. Mentoring, mediation and exposure to lifelong learning

Although these techniques did not feature prominently in the data, it is important to articulate their importance in addressing the challenges of teamwork in schools. School Principal E indicated that although there are few challenges that inhibit teamwork in his school, their major problem is the novice teachers who still need to be assimilated into the setup. He said, "*At the current moment it is only those teachers that are still new, in fact, they are not used to teamwork. They tend to display behaviour that affects teamwork. Sometimes you feel for them because they do not know that their actions are tantamount to insubordination. My task is to make sure that they are mentored so that they can emulate other teachers. That is my problem currently.*" He added, "*After mentoring, then, they adapt to teamwork and we work together*".

Therefore, it is critical for schools to have teacher induction programme in which veteran teachers are partnered with the novice teachers to provide systematic assistance. This is echoed by School Principal C who stated, "*Teamwork in our school is successful and sustainable because every teacher who joins us is thoroughly prepared to adapt to teamwork*". She added, "*We use senior members of our staff to mentor new teachers,*

but as a school principal I take them through various policies myself". In what seems to be a strategy to deal with novice teachers who persistently misbehave, School Principal H indicated, *"Mediation can best assist. Just have a senior member of the staff to mediate. This can help address some of the problems"*. In addition to mentoring and mediation, School Principal G suggested:

"To address the challenges of teamwork, firstly, you need to encourage these teachers to remain lifelong learners so that they can be kept abreast with new developments and new trends in their profession. As they continue learning and improving themselves professionally, they will come across these things. It is one way of addressing these challenges because they will come to understand the team dynamics better. The other thing that can help in this regard is to encourage these teachers to join professional learning communities".

This extended remark brings to bear key strategies that allow individuals to learn team dynamics voluntarily and in an ongoing fashion. School Principal G added, *"Lifelong learners can easily adapt in any environment"*. It is important for teachers to not only adopt lifelong learning in their lives, but also to enroll in professional learning communities where, *"... people learn good practice. By good practice I mean letting go of habits like coming to school late or sabotaging teamwork. They have to eradicate it by all means. That is why we have to emphasise the importance of joining professional learning community to learn good habits and good work ethics* (School Principal G). It is possible for Professional Learning Community (PLC) to assist in addressing challenges of teamwork because one of the key components of PLC is reflective dialogue.

4.6.3. Consequence management through policy implementation

Generally, the school principals highlighted the importance of enforcing policies in order to address effectively issues of teamwork. When remarking on how his school deals with teachers' negative personality that negatively affect teamwork, School Principal G stated, *"You see, there are other things that are policy matters and policy matters need to be complied with. Failure to comply means that consequence management kicks in"*. School Principal A accentuated that, *"If we have some challenges, some challenges are because people don't know the policies. Now, we need to apply the policies to deal with people whose conduct affects the smooth running of the school"*. School Principal B indicated that *"When people do not respect the policies, of course, they will use common sense when dealing with issues at school"*. The remarks highlighted the important role played by different policies to address challenges that inhibit teamwork.

When reviewing several policies such as Employment of Educators' Act 76 of 1998 (Sections 17 and 18) (RSA, 1998) and South African Council for Educators (SACE, 2002), the researcher found their relevance in shedding light on how policies can help curb teachers' conduct that negatively impacts teamwork in schools. There are other school-based policies that exist to assist in this regard. However, to avoid animosity in schools these policies should be applied consistently. Thus, School Principal C indicated, *"Whenever problems arise, if they are of the same kind, they need to be addressed in the same manner. If ever you have to punish, the same kind of punishment should be applied. Policy must be applied consistently."* In line with this view, School Principal E stated, *"Most of the time we apply the policies, we apply them the same way"*

to all teachers. Unless its something new that has not previously happened, then that's where we sit down and develop a new policy". Inherent in these remarks is the argument that school principal and his SMT should assume a role of finding effective ways to consistently implement and reinforce policies to address factors inhibiting teamwork.

4.7. Chapter summary

The chapter presented data obtained through interviews and observations. The presentation of data from the two data collection tools followed the careful reading of the interview transcripts and fields notes. These data were then organised according to the four research sub-questions and categories. In the first research question, the benefits and expressions of teamwork were examined. In the second question, factors that facilitate team effectiveness were examined. Factors that inhibit teamwork were examined in question three, while the methods applied by SMTs in addressing challenges of teamwork were examined. After expressing a strong support for teamwork, participants suggested techniques that can be used in case teamwork is challenged. In the next chapter, conclusions and recommendations based on the research findings are presented.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Introduction

Given the importance of cultivating teamwork in different schools over the past decades, an exploration of how school managers individually and collaboratively deal with issues that prevent the implementation is timely. In chapter four, data obtained through interviews and observations were presented across emerging themes. In order to clearly summarise the findings of this study, chapter five organises themes identified in chapter four under research questions. The summary is presented in a manner that demonstrates the extent to which the objectives of the study have been achieved.

5.2. School management teams and teamwork

This section presents a summary drawn from the responses of the research sub-questions.

5.2.1. Research sub-question one: How do SMTs experience teamwork in schools?

The general picture elicited by this study is that the notion of teamwork is the most preferred approach among school principals and its adoption has led to a significant improvement in school management. This favourable and positive perception towards teamwork is indicative of how the teamwork notion is widely recognised in schools. The

research participants viewed teamwork as the most rewarding approach that plays a critical role to “improve outcomes as it influences the level of motivation and capacity of teachers” (Pitsoe & Isingoma, 2014:138). The participants identified several benefits of teamwork. The obvious one is that teamwork is a catalyst for excellent learner achievement, particularly for the Grade 12 learners.

The research validated the findings of Ramalepe (2015) that learner achievement, central to moral purpose, is achieved through teamwork. The author claims that shared leadership [teamwork] fosters shared moral purpose which focuses on learner achievement. Convincingly, the school managers hold a strong view that teamwork allows for the sharing of not only the moral purpose but of responsibilities as well. Through this sharing of monitoring responsibilities this ensures effective curriculum management, leading to excellent Grade 12 results. The research goes even further to reveal that teamwork is a key facilitator for effective problem-solving. Recent research (Ramalepe, 2015) findings revealed that teamwork has a potential to empower SMTs to solve problems together.

Three expressions of teamwork emerged from this study. These are consultation, delegation and collective decision-making. School managers believe that consultation is a key expression of teamwork, through consulting, teachers own up to their decisions. The study’s participants believe that consultation is closely associated with transparency. They unequivocally view teamwork as being expressed when school principals consult with teachers and are transparent in everything they do such as new projects. In addition, effective delegation is viewed as one of the key expressions of teamwork in schools. School principals highlighted that trust is an enabler for effective delegation. Finally, it emerged that collective decision-making is an expression of teamwork. Phalane (2012:116) supports this and states that teamwork promotes “decision-making power within SMT members”.

5.2.2. Research sub-question two: What are the benefits of teamwork in schools?

It emerged from the study that the notion of teamwork expressed through participative decision-making allows the SMTs and teachers to share the burden of school leadership. The participants concede that the notion of sharing is important because the burden of leading a school is too much for one person. This means that sharing the leadership burden allows school managers to have diverse ideas to solve problems than a single manager (Ramalepe, 2015). However, the participants hold a strong feeling that the sharing is only possible when managers and teachers are willing to share. Participants are of the view that sharing is a key feature in a participative decision-making process. Accordingly, Darren (2010:71) argues that sharing can only succeed when members are willing to share, “even to sacrifice”.

Interestingly, the school principals enumerated key ingredients enabling effective teamwork. They identified communication and shared vision as critical enablers of teamwork in the school environment. They view effective communication as a factor that can ensure participative decision-making. This view corroborates the findings of other studies that effective communication enables the sharing of ideas, which leads to effective teamwork (Medwell, 2009; Phalane, 2012; Ramalepe, 2014). Generally, the participants believe that teamwork cannot thrive in an environment that restrict communication. It became apparent that school principals support the assertion that participative decision-making can only be possible in an environment that afford members the right to be heard and to express their views and feelings (Owens, 2001:288).

Therefore, the key element of effective communication is hearing and considering the views of others. According to Phalane (2012:117), “communication is also stressed as one of the needs expressed for school leaders to open up to their SMTs and for the SMTs to know their intentions. This is seen to lead to collective decision-making”. Evidently, in addition to effective communication, the participants in this study perceive shared vision as a very important ingredient for teamwork. Although the participants seemed to use shared vision and common goals interchangeably, they believe that effective teamwork requires a shared vision. Shared vision appeared to be a key driver of a successful teamwork in successful schools. While school principals acknowledged that it was not easy to share a vision, they claim that it is a shared vision that encourages teamwork. When people know where they are going, they are likely to join efforts to reach their destination.

5.2.3. Research sub-question three: Which factors inhibit SMTs from cultivating teamwork?

While the merits of teamwork are widely documented, the SMTs note that there are also serious threats to teamwork in schools. Generally, the major obstacles of teamwork that emerged from this study fall under the individual characteristics or personality of members and inter-relationships among members. It emerged that teamwork is impeded by obstacles such as negative or prejudicial attitudes of members, lack of co-operation, selfish traits, sabotage, communication gaps, unwillingness to share responsibilities, negative influence, and dishonesty. The manifestations of these problems in schools shows that the DNA of every school is made up of different personality types which can either lead to the success or failure of teamwork. Accordingly, Phalane (2012:116)

states that diversity of personalities can be detrimental to the team if not managed properly.

In this study, it merged that some SMT members exert a negative influence on others to sabotage the principals' efforts of building effective teams within the schools. This is in line with Phalane's (2012:116) observation that some school managers have personal agendas which result in conflict within the SMT, "thereby working against the well-being of the team". There is evidence that negative people can hinder teamwork. Coupled with this factor is the aspect of integrity where members who lack it direct their efforts towards sabotaging the work of the team.

However, serious personality-related factors inherent in the leader also emerged. These include communication gaps and unwillingness to share responsibilities. These factors have effect on team effectiveness. According to Karakus and Töremen (2008:235), to achieve the efficacy of the team, "there should be healthy communication among members, a perception of equality should be generated for work groups to be cohesive". The poor communication skills on the part of the school principal naturally sends a silent message to members to stay away from decision-making processes of the school. Furthermore, the principal's failure to share responsibilities with other members is indicative of his inclination to work individually to maintain power and authority. This attitude is dangerous in that it can spoil teamwork in the SMTs. Therefore, for teamwork to thrive, a culture of collaboration and sharing should be cultivated as opposed to the culture of selfishness, dominance and competition.

5.2.4. Research sub-question four: How do SMTs overcome factors inhibiting teamwork?

The central aim of this study was to examine the capacity of the SMTs to overcome constraints of cultivating teamwork. While the school principals overwhelmingly acknowledged that they should take a leading role in addressing the challenges in 5.2.3, they also feel that there is a need to bring teachers on board. They expressed a need to act collectively when confronting these problems. They offered the following remedies to the issues that bring about inefficiency of school teams:

a. Consult extensively in decision-making processes

It emerged that consultation is amongst the key strategies of dealing with factors that inhibit teamwork. Therefore, regular consultative meetings should be held to engage different stakeholders on issues that affect them. The general feeling of the school principals is that when teachers are consulted, they challenge you less. Furthermore, consultation has a significant effect on the performance of the school principal because it opens doors for those who know better to assist him.

b. Resolve communication problems

It emerged that for the effectiveness of teamwork, there should be healthy communication among members. This communication involves listening to the ideas of others. According to Karakus and Töremen (2008), selfish thoughts, lack of trust and individual differences impede open communication, thus, school principals should cultivate the spirit of trust and eliminate any interpersonal relationship problem in the school environment. This can be possible by organising social and cultural activities that foster teamwork. In addition, the school principal should exert more effort to create a

culture that encourages informal communication in order to strengthen the interactions and remove barriers among staff members.

c. Mentoring and exposure to lifelong learning

It emerged that novice teachers who are not prepared for roles in leadership can exhibit attitudes that are detrimental to teamwork. Therefore, the school principals should develop a novice-teacher orientation class where inexperienced teachers are assimilated into the culture of the school. These orientation classes can expose the novice teachers to the team culture in the school and challenge them to adopt the collegiality norms of the school.

d. Consequence management through policy implementation

It emerged from the study that government policies, procedure and rules can play a pivotal role in dealing with teachers' misconduct leading to ineffective teams in schools. The participants argued that where teamwork is challenged by the behaviours that are tantamount to misconduct, school principals should implement or reinforce relevant policies to correct the behaviours. Policy, procedures and relevant rules are the blueprint for effective school management (University of Pretoria, 2010 in Ramalepe, 2014). The Employment of Educators' Act 76 of 1998 was considered the most important policy to deal with teachers' misconduct. In applying these policies, the participants highlighted the duty of the school principal to be consistent.

5.3. Recommendations

5.3.1. Recommendations to school management teams (SMTs)

- a. *School Management Teams need to explore and adopt effective team-building strategies in order to magnify shared leadership.* For SMTs to cultivate teamwork broadly in the school, a new leadership framework that prioritises shared leadership should be developed.
- b. *School Management Teams need to explore effective ways to create a positive internal school environment in which teamwork can thrive.* To successfully cultivate teamwork in their schools, the SMTs need to ensure that their schools' internal climate supports and nurtures healthy interpersonal interactions and relationships where staff members willingly serve in teams.
- c. *School principals need to be committed to instilling the sense of teamwork by letting go of other responsibilities in the school.* The school principal as a crucial member of the SMT needs to explore ways that teamwork can be fostered within the SMT and staff within the school. One of these teamwork-fostering means is effective delegation.

5.3.2. Recommendations to the District

To the district as a key systemic authority, two recommendations are given, as follows:

- a. *District office should provide support, mainly, by fostering a professional learning community (PLC) where school managers can be exposed to principles of shared leadership and teamwork.* The PLC in the district should be strengthened to activate engagement among school principals in order to ensure improvement in teamwork practice.

- b. *The district should critique the existing development programmes and ensure that sufficient emphasis is placed on teamwork.* These professional development programmes should include training of principals on how to create conditions where it is possible to develop a culture within the school where teachers voluntarily take leadership roles in different committees. Furthermore, training should focus on empowering school principals to be able to create conditions which support teachers so that they are kept abreast with the current leadership developments in education.

5.3.3. Recommendations for further research

While some work has been done on the notion of team management in schools, the researcher is of the view that the practice of teamwork needs further investigation. Therefore, it is proposed that future studies be conducted to examine which team management frameworks can reinforce the role of SMTs in supporting and enhancing leadership practices that benefit schools. Furthermore, this research did not focus on well-resourced schools in Limpopo Province. It would be of value if research could be undertaken to examine how SMTs in well-resourced schools promote teamwork within their schools. Although some work has been done on teamwork, the researcher believes that less attention was paid to its impact of school governance.

Furthermore, the effectiveness of the SMTs in cultivating teamwork needs to be scrutinised. This scrutiny should focus not only on the perceptions and attitudes of SMT members but on teachers as well. The most urgent and pressing need for research is the examination of the effects of teamwork on teacher and learner performance. A research of this nature may be taken as action research to make it possible to make necessary intervention while promoting collaboration with teachers and learners.

5.4. Chapter summary

This chapter provided a summary of the findings from data gathered from different sources. In accordance with the research sub-questions, the findings were then organised to allow for the proper flow of the discussion of the findings. Generally, the research findings paint a complex picture. In light of the findings of this study, SMT members in schools appear to struggle to build effective teams that are capable of overcoming various challenges confronting teamwork in their schools. The school principals in these schools seem to be clueless on how to deal decisively with these challenges. However, their contribution in this study provides the basis for the future research. Thus, this chapter also provided recommendations which are necessary to inform the development of programmes and interventions which will develop school managers at different levels to leverage the power of teamwork.

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APPENDIX A: Ethical clearance certificate



UNISA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date: 2018/11/14

Ref: **2018/11/14/45958858/04/MC**

Dear Mrs Sekgota

Name: Mrs LL Sekgota

Student: 45958858

Decision: Ethics Approval from
2018/11/14 to 2021/11/14

Researcher(s): Name: Mrs L. Sekgota
E-mail address: sekgota1973@gmail.com
Telephone: + 27 82 827 7109

Supervisor(s): Name: Dr RE Lumadi
E-mail address: lumadi@unisa.ac.za
Telephone: +27 12 429 2123

Title of research:

The role of school management teams in addressing the challenges that inhibit teamwork in Tzaneen district, Limpopo Province.

Qualification: M. Ed In Educational Leadership and Management

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee for the above mentioned research. Ethics approval is granted for the period 2018/11/14 to 2021/11/14.

*The **low risk** application was reviewed by the Ethics Review Committee on 2018/11/14 in compliance with the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.*

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.



University of South Africa
Pretoria Campus, P.O. Box 1956, City of Johannesburg
2018
Telephone: +27 12 429 2111 Facsimile: +27 12 429 4300
www.unisa.ac.za

APPENDIX B: Request letter for permission



Request for permission to conduct research at schools in Limpopo Department of Education

Title of the title of your research: *The role of school management teams in addressing the challenges that inhibit teamwork in Tzaneen district, Limpopo Province.*

Date: 02 March 2018

**District Director
Tzaneen District
Tzaneen
0850**

Dear Sir

I, Mrs. Sekgota Leah Linah am doing research under supervision of Dr Lumadi R.I, a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Educational Leadership and Management towards a Med at the University of South Africa. I request permission to conduct a study entitled "*The role of school management teams in addressing the challenges that inhibit teamwork in Tzaneen district, Limpopo Province*" in the district. The aim of this study is to explore School Management Teams' capacity to handle threats to teamwork.

As a principal in one of the circuits in the district, I have thus selected eight district schools. The study participants are members of School Management Teams.

There is no potential risks involved in this study and there will be no reimbursement or any incentives for participation in the research. The findings of this study will be made available to the department and participating schools.

Yours sincerely.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sekgota Leah Linah".

Signature (Researcher):

Name of Researcher: Sekgota L.L

Position of Researcher: School Principal

APPENDIX C: RESEARCH INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM



INFORMATION SHEET AND CONSENT FORM

1. Name of researcher

Dear participant

I am Mrs. Sekgota Leah Linah I am a Med: Educational Management student at the University of South Africa (UNISA).

2. What I am doing

I am conducting research on “*The role of school management teams (SMT) in addressing challenges that inhibit teamwork in Tzaneen District, Limpopo Province*”. The study is set out to examine what school management teams (SMTs) perceive as inhibiting factors for teamwork in their schools. It further seeks to understand in depth how SMTs address these challenges. Data will be obtained by the use of the following techniques: semi-structured interviews with members of the SMTs and scheduled observations (e.g. observation of the prevailing school culture).

3. Participation

I am asking you whether you will allow me to conduct one interview with you about your knowledge and opinions on teamwork as cultivated by SMT in your school. If you agree, I will ask you to take part in one interview for approximately one hour or be observed while in management or departmental meetings. I will also ask you to participate for the whole duration of the study, which is one month.

Please understand that **your participation is voluntary** and you are not being forced to take part in this study. The choice of whether to participate or not, is yours alone. If

you choose not to take part, you will not be affected in any way whatsoever. If you agree to participate, you may stop participating in the research at any time and tell me that you don't want to continue. If you do this, there will be no penalties and you will not be prejudiced in any way.

4. Confidentiality / anonymity

All identifying information will be kept in a locked file cabinet and will not be available to others and will be kept confidential to the extent possible. The records from your participation may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly, including members of the ethics committee in the college of education. (All of these people are required to keep your identity confidential.) On this note I am asking you to give me permission to tape-record the interview so that I can accurately record what is said. Your answers will be stored electronically in a secure environment and used for research or academic purposes now or at a later date in ways that will not reveal who you are. I will not record your name anywhere and no one will be able to connect you to the answers you give. Your answers will be linked to a fictitious code number or a pseudonym (another name) and I will refer to you in this way in the data and report or other research output. Your school will also be referred to as school A, B et cetera.

5. Selection of participants and number involved

The participants (school principals or deputy principals and heads of departments) will be selected on the basis of their availability. This means that the eight secondary schools and sixteen members of the SMTs are selected based on their willingness to participate in the case study.

6. Summary of findings/debriefing

The summary of results will be communicated to you as participants through emails.

7. Risks or discomfort

At the present time, I do not see any risk of harm from your participation.

8. Benefits

There are no immediate benefits to you from participating in this study. However, this study will be extremely helpful to us in that we hope will promote understanding of the concept of teamwork and how it influences how school management team perform their responsibilities to transform the learning of learners.

9. Who to contact if you have been harmed or have any concerns

This research has been approved by the UNISA College of Education Research Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints about ethical aspects of the research or feel that you have been harmed in any way by participating in this study, please email the chairperson of the REC at mcdtc@netactive.co.za. If you have concerns or questions about the research you may call me at 0834726291/0828277109 or email me at sekgota1973@gmail.com

CONSENT FORM

I hereby agree to participate in research on “***The role of school management teams (SMT) in addressing challenges that inhibit teamwork***”. I understand that I am participating freely and without being forced in any way to do so. I also understand that I can stop participating at any point should I not want to continue and that this decision will not in any way affect me negatively. I understand that this is a research project whose purpose is not necessarily to benefit me personally in the immediate or short term. I understand that my confidentiality and anonymity will be protected.

.....

Signature of participant

Date:.....

CONSENT FOR TAPE RECORDING

I hereby agree to the tape-recording of my participation in the study.

.....

Signature of participant

Date:.....


I understand that the information that I provide will be stored electronically and will be used for research purposes now or at a later stage.

.....

Signature of participant

Date:.....

APPENDIX D: Approval certificate

 **LIMPOPO**
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION
MOPANI DISTRICT

REF : 2/2/2
ENQ : MPENYANA M.B
DATE : 12 MARCH 2018

TO : SEKGOTA L.L
: P.O. BOX 824
: MODJADJISKLOOF
: 0835

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH: THE ROLE OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAMS (SMT) IN ADDRESSING CHALLENGES THAT INHIBIT TEAM WORK

1. The above matter refers.
2. The Department wishes to inform you that your request to conduct research on the above mentioned topic has been approved.
3. Your focus should only be limited to schools listed below:

NO.	MOTUPA CIRCUIT	SEKGOSESE EAST	RAKWADU
1.	Mohlatlego Machaba High	Jacob Zuma Primary	Makhabeni Primary
2.	Mabjo - a - kgoro Primary	Mathibadifathe High	Maladuma Primary
3.	Sara Primary	Sekgosesse High	Maolwe High
4.	Boke High		

4. The following conditions should be considered:
 - 4.1. Arrangement should be made with affected schools.
 - 4.2. The research should not be conducted during Examinations especially the 4th term.
 - 4.3. During research applicable research ethics should be adhered to, in particular the principle of voluntary participation (the people involved should be respected).
 - 4.4. Upon completion of the research study, the researcher shall share the final product of the research with the Department.
 - 4.5. The research should not have any financial implications to the Department of Education Limpopo Province.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
SHEKANEKHE (H.E.) Private Bag 2011 GUYANE 0626
Tel: 015 811 7705 Fax No: 015 811 5412 or 015 512 1589

The heartland of Southern Africa – development is about people

5. Furthermore, you are expected to produce this letter to schools and offices where you intend to conduct your research since it will serve as proof that you have been granted permission to conduct the research.
6. The Department appreciates the contribution that you wish to make and wishes you success in your research.


DISTRICT DIRECTOR

12/03/2018
DATE

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

MORAN DISTRICT Private Bag X 578 GIKANI 0526
Tel: 015 811 7700 Fax No: 015 812 3812 or 015 812 1660

The heartland of Southern Africa – development is about people

APPENDIX E: Consent letter

ENQ: ML Ramalepe
CELL No. 0735060507
E-mail: pholoahlabprimary@gmail.com



P. O. BOX 2687, TZANEEN, 0850
EMIS No.: 0918511234

PHOLOHLABA PRIMARY SCHOOL

25 March 2018

Re: Approval to conduct research

This serves to inform you that your request to conduct research in our school has been granted. The approval is granted on the condition that you (the researcher) will observe certain ethical considerations such as allowing for voluntary participation and confidentiality and anonymity of participants.

The school wishes you the best in your study and hope to share with you the experiences of your research journey.

Yours Sincerely

ML Ramalepe

School Principally



APPENDIX F: Interview schedule for SMTs

1. What are the SMT's experiences of team management in schools?

- 1.1. Considering your current position in the SMT in (Name of the school), what would you say was the best moment where you contributed positively towards teamwork?
- 1.2. What would you state as the key expressions of teamwork in (Name of the school)?
- 1.3. To what extent have teamwork influenced the way you approach leadership today?

2. What are the benefits of teamwork in your school?

- 2.1. Do you believe working as a team has any benefits?
- 2.2. To what extent do you think the benefits of teamwork at (Name of school) has kept the teams together against all odds?

3. Which factors inhibit SMTs from cultivating teamwork?

- 3.1. What crucial factors inhibit school management team in (Name of school) to cultivate teamwork?
- 3.2. Can you describe any instance where the teamwork approach was challenged by the behaviour of any of the members of the SMT?

4. How can school management teams overcome factors inhibiting teamwork?

- 4.1. Do you think it is your responsibility to address challenges that hamper teamwork in your school?
- 4.2. In what ways can school management team in (Name of school) act to address these challenges?

APPENDIX G: Observation schedule / checklist

SCHOOL						
A	B	C	D	E	F	G

1st CATEGORY

Observing the presence of procedures and behaviours that facilitate or inhibit teamwork in meetings (e.g. SMT, morning briefings)

Date: _____

Time: _____

Type of meeting observed: _____

Place of Meeting: _____

1. What is the composition of this meeting in terms of number, gender and post description?

.....
.....

2. Were there apologies tendered in the meeting?

.....

3. What were the main discussion points in the agenda?

.....
.....

4. Who is chairing the meeting?

.....

5. If the chairperson is the principal, does he or she dictate the meeting?

.....
.....

6. If previous minutes were read, what are the important matters arising from the previous minutes?

.....
.....

7. How were these matters dealt with?

.....
.....
.....

8. Is there any reflection on teacher and leadership practices? If so, how were the issues addressed?

.....
.....
.....

9. How do members communicate their ideas?

.....
.....

10. Is the members' contribution welcome and appreciated?

.....
.....

11. How are decisions reached?

.....
.....

12. If they do not agree on a particular issue, what do they do?

.....
.....

13. How was the meeting concluded?

.....
.....

2nd CATEGORY

Observing leadership practices adopted by the school principals

Date: _____

Time: _____

1. Were there evidences of collaborated leadership in the school?

.....
.....

2. Which values and/or ethics underpin the leadership practice that enhances teamwork in the school?

.....
.....
.....

APPENDIX H: Transcription of semi-structured interviews

1. **Researcher:** Considering your current position in the SMT in (School G), what would you say was the best moment where you contributed positively towards teamwork?
2. **Principal G:** We were able to overcome many challenges as a team. For instance, there was a reading programme or project which the teachers were reluctant and anxious about as this was new to them. They were unable to contribute to an unknown programme. I provided them with clarity about the programme so that they could contribute to it. The foundation teachers were positive about it and as a team all the teachers worked together on it. As a leader I had to encourage them. This turned out to be one of the best moments we've had – we've since been able to overcome many challenges.
3. **Researcher:** What would you state as the key expressions of teamwork in your school?
4. **Principal G:** Teamwork is something that requires team members to behave in a particular way. One has to learn to be accommodative, to accommodate other people and that everyone has weaknesses. I have to teach them to feel accommodated. Everybody knows their responsibility since I am no longer in control or in charge of every activity at the school but we have a common goal.
5. **Researcher:** To what extent has teamwork influenced the way you approach leadership today?
6. **Principal G:** Teamwork greatly influences leadership, especially the Principal who consults with the teachers since we work as a team.
7. **Researcher:** Do you believe working as a team has any benefits? Why/ why not/how?
8. **Principal G:** Yes!
9. **Researcher:** How?
10. **Principal G:** It has some benefits i.e. 1; Team members feel accepted. 2; Team members are motivated to work together as members of a team.

- 11. Researcher:** To what extent do you believe the benefits of teamwork at (School G) has kept the team together against all odds?
- 12. Principal G:** All I can say is that the institution is transparent to everyone although there are some challenges since they all know that there are no hidden agendas. They are all able to contribute positively to teamwork.
- 13. Researcher:** What crucial factors inhibit the school management team in your school to cultivate teamwork?
- 14. Principal G:** There are always challenges but we generally make good progress. However, certain individuals may delay due to a poor understanding of the teamwork programme or attitudes they have but in the end we all put our hands together to work as team.
- 15. Researcher:** Can you describe any instance where the teamwork approach was challenged by the behaviour of any the members of the SMT?
- 16. Principal G:** Please rephrase the question.
- 17. Researcher:** Can you describe any instance where the teamwork approach was challenged by the behaviour of any member of the SMT?
- 18. Principal G:** I don't recall such an instance. There are instances where some individuals will do minor things like coming late to school – maybe once or twice a week. Their excuse is often that they are not familiar with the policy that addresses this. As a team we should always comply with a school policy.
- 19. Researcher:** Do you think it is your responsibility to address challenges that hamper teamwork in your school?
- 20. Principal G:** Yes, yes!
- 21. Researcher:** Please, tell me why it is your responsibility?
- 22. Principal G:** As the head of an institution, if there is any poor management it means that both the team and school will be negatively impacted.
- 23. Researcher:** In what ways can school management teams act to address these challenges?
- 24. Principal G:** One of the things we use as a team are, meaning... To encourage the team to remain life-long learners so that they keep abreast with new

developments because they will understand these things better. In addition, we encourage team members to join other associations of professionals so that they can improve their knowledge. We also encourage our people to learn good practices.

APPENDIX I: Certificate of language editing

Western Services Road, Johannesburg, Gauteng
Email: info@nimeditorial.co.za
www.nimeditorial.co.za

Reg. No. 2016/480056/07



14 October 2020

Editorial Certificate

To Whom It May Concern,

This document certifies that the dissertation titled: *The role of School Management Teams in addressing challenges that inhibit teamwork in Tzaneen District, Limpopo Province*, by Abbey Leah Linah Sekgota, was proofread for language, grammar, punctuation, spelling, and overall style by NIM Editorial.

Signed on behalf of NIM Editorial by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'N.I. Mabidi', written over a horizontal line.

.....
N.I Mabidi

Founder & Chief Editor