

**EXPLORING MANAGEMENT OF HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATORS AND LEARNERS
DURING COVID-19: A CASE STUDY**

By

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DECLARATION

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I declare that the mini dissertation (Exploring Management of High School Educators and Learners during COVID-19: A Case Study) is my work and that I have acknowledged sources using completed references.

I further declare that I submitted the mini dissertation to originality checking software.

I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at UNISA and to other higher education institutions for another qualification.



Signature

06/04/2024

Date

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my parents, who made a significant contribution to my life. My father, Aaron Mandla Lukhele, supported and motivated me to pursue my studies at an early age. Special thanks also go to my mother, Emsie Gwabina Lukhele, who understood my commitment whenever I could not participate in family activities. She regularly asked how far I was with my dissertation, which gave me the strength to utilise every moment I got to work hard on my work.

I salute you, and I am proud to say your contribution will be further shared with the next Lukhele generation because I strongly believe that I am;

uLUKHELE,

Mdluli, uMhlanti wendl' enkhulu,

Masikisiki inyoni leyasindvwa sisila sayo,

Mavovo eMvula,

Mdluli wendlovukati,

Nabonkhosi,

Wena lowatseng' emanga ngesitfole lesijoli ngembala

Esikhaleni sabhodwe,

Titfukutfuku tawela phasi takhotfwa ngemalangeneni,

naboNgwane,

Qoma Zitha waNgwane,

Dluli!

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ABSTRACT

During the COVID-19 pandemic, normal school functionality was halted by unprecedented chaos in the management of both educators and learners. The abrupt increase in the number of learners who were directly or indirectly infected by the COVID-19 pandemic in the schools' environments has brought confusion from managers about how to manage without fear. Thus, the study's primary aim was to explore the management of high school educators and learners during COVID-19 at the Ubombo Circuit Management Cluster. Through a qualitative telephone semi-structured interview, the study's main aim was achieved through four research objectives. Firstly, managers of high school educators and learners during COVID-19 were explored. Secondly, the reasons for the management of high school educators were also explored. Thirdly, the exploration of the environment where high school educators and learners were managed was explicitly presented. Lastly, the reasons why high school educators and learners were managed were explored. A case study design was deemed relevant for the study as it is qualitative in nature.

Consequently, the non-probability sampling method was used. That is, four experienced members of the School Management Team were selected for the study. The centrality of management is thus brought forward by the disruptions made by the pandemic on schooling activities since there is little information on existing literature on how high school educators and learners were managed during COVID-19.

The findings of the study reveal that the chaos painted by the COVID-19 pandemic was felt in the Department of Education, and nobody was prepared to face it. As a result, there was no specific format that school managers followed in managing high school educators and learners during COVID-19. Subsequently, most Ubombo Circuit Management Cluster school managers attempted various management strategies that they believed would cater for their schools. However, the strategies saw Grade 12 learners being prioritised in the management process. Therefore, the latter poses a gap that needs further research. Most school managers focused on managing Grade 12 learners instead of all learners during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Key words: educator, learner, school management, school leadership, COVID-19, Facebook, WhatsApp, Zoom

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ATP	Annual Teaching Plan
BEd	Bachelor of Education
CMC	Circuit Management Cluster
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DH	Departmental Head
DP	Deputy Principal
ERT	Emergency Remote Teaching-Learning
LFH	Learning From Home
LPC	Least Preferred Co-Worker
MHRD	Ministry of Human Development
PGCE	Postgraduate Certificate in Education
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
SABC	South African Broadcasting Corporation
SARS-Cov-2	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2
SASA	South African Schools Act
SBA	School-Based Assessment
SMT	School Management Team
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WHO	World Health Organization

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CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATION OF STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This study explored the management of high school educators and learners during COVID-19. Kaul, VanGronigen and Simon (2020:1) assert that the COVID-19 pandemic presented an unprecedented crisis for schools around the world. School principals (managers) were entrusted to execute their core duties even during the COVID-19 pandemic. Consequently, in 2020, school managers were required to shed light on the direction schools should take globally, including in South Africa. During the unprecedented pandemic, school principals were forced to use their personal innovative leadership and management skills and resources to adjust to the crisis simultaneously (Ramos-Pla, Tintore & del Arco, 2021:1).

The COVID-19 pandemic toppled the world by ravaging many countries' economies, abruptly changing societies, and severely altering educational practices (Mutongoza, Olawale & Mzilikazi, 2021:147). Apart from its global catastrophe, COVID-19's disruption of education in Africa, especially in southern Africa, was severe for several reasons (Mukute, Francis, Burt & de Souza, 2020:1). Since South Africa was ranked the fourth highest in Africa in terms of learners and educators affected by the pandemic, Mutongoza et al., (2021:147) claim that this indicated a need for their effective management in schools.

Pedroso, Siason and Tangco-Siason (2021:76) argue that school principals wrestled with creating conducive conditions for learners to learn and educators to teach during the crisis. The management adopted by school managers during the pandemic used different leadership and or management styles to facilitate education progress through the emphasis on educational goals (Rahman & Subiyantoro, 2021:169). The pandemic turmoil from the global, regional, and local perspectives sparked the interest to explore the management of high school educators and learners during COVID-19 at the Ubombo Circuit Management Cluster (CMC), uMkhanyakude District in the KwaZulu-Natal Province. Other factors that motivated the study are discussed hereunder. They

are followed by the problem statement, frame of reference, research question, sub-questions, aim and objectives of the study. Literature was also reviewed, followed by a description of the research method and design. Data were analysed and interpreted. Ethical factors were also considered, including delimitations and limitations of the study, as well as the definition of key terms. Lastly, the study's programme was presented.

1.2 MOTIVATION FOR THE PROPOSED STUDY

It was realised during the COVID-19 period that normal school functionality was crippled by unprecedented chaos in the management of both educators and learners. The abrupt increase in the number of learners who were directly or indirectly infected or affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in the schools' environments has brought confusion from managers about how to manage without fear. Gyang (2020:73) asserts that a sudden change in safety because of the COVID-19 crisis rendered school leaders confused, fearful, and helpless in tackling education (curriculum) matters.

The motivation for the study is drawn from the chaos brought on by COVID-19 and the uncertainties of managing schools effectively during the pandemic. Furthermore, there is insufficient existing literature on the research topic. Consequently, the rationale for the study is to explore how high school educators and learners were managed during COVID-19 at the Ubombo CMC.

1.3 THE PROBLEM STATEMENT

The global chaos created by the outbreak of COVID-19 raised eyebrows on how school managers would respond to the disease once it hit South African schools. In the United States of America, a study conducted by Kaul, Comstock, and Simon (2022:6) reveals that principals became the first responders in tragedy, focusing on the basic health and psychological needs of the school community and, later on, curriculum or instructional matters. Furthermore, those leading schools in high-poverty contexts faced magnified challenges, especially in the regions hit hardest by COVID-19.

The first case of COVID-19 recorded in South Africa in March 2020 suddenly raised fears amongst educators and learners in schools. How the tragic nature of the disease spread across the country prompted panic not only among individuals in the school environment but also fostered a great concern over their loved ones in the background. Sometimes, educational procedures, such as schooling activities in particular, would close, adopt a rotational approach, or perhaps continue teaching and learning amid the pandemic. Kavrayci and Kesim (2021:1006) attest that the new emerging type of disease caused the closure of schools in all countries around the world, and instructional processes were suspended for a while. Jena (2020:12582) further asserts that initially, the educators and the learners were confused and did not understand how to cope with the sudden crisis that compelled the closure of educational activities.

Frightening circumstances such as being exposed to reported cases or succumbing to the disease in schools drew panic among educators and learners. In South Africa, a study by Kwatubana and Molaodi (2021:108) affirms that anxiety among educators grew as schools were perceived as sites of infection. Imagining all sorts of inconsistencies and conflicting advice from educational authorities on how school managers could have run their schools possibly created a timid stance and discomposure in managing educators and learners during the crisis. This, therefore, raises the question of whether school managers effectively managed their schools since Ståhlkrantz and Rapp (2020:387) call them boundary spanners.

In light of the disruptions painted by the pandemic in overseas countries, southern Africa, and South Africa, the researcher aims to explore how high school educators and learners were managed during COVID-19 in selected high schools at the Ubombo CMC. The centrality of management is thus brought forward by the disruptions made by the pandemic on schooling activities since there is little information on existing literature on how high school educators and learners were managed during COVID-19.

1.4 THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SUB QUESTIONS

The main research question and sub-questions are presented below.

1.4.1 Main research question

How were the high school educators and learners managed during COVID-19 at the Ubombo Circuit Management Cluster?

1.4.2 Sub-research questions

- Who managed the high school educators and learners during COVID-19 at the Ubombo Circuit Management Cluster?
- What was done to manage the high school educators and learners during COVID-19 at the Ubombo Circuit Management Cluster?
- Where was the management of high school educators and learners done during COVID-19 at the Ubombo Circuit Management Cluster?
- Why were the high school educators and learners managed during COVID-19 at the Ubombo Circuit Management Cluster?

1.5 THE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The research aim and objectives are presented below.

1.5.1 Research aim

The study aimed to explore how high school educators and learners were managed during COVID-19 at the Ubombo Circuit Management Cluster.

1.5.2 Objectives

The objectives of the study focused on exploring:

- Who managed the high school educators and learners during COVID-19?
- What was done to manage the high school educators and learners during COVID-19?
- Where was the management of high school educators and learners done during COVID-19?
- Why were the high school educators and learners managed during COVID-19?

1.6 FRAME OF REFERENCE

Adom, Hussein and Agyem (2018:438) state that a frame of reference (theoretical framework) is a framework based on an existing theory in a field of inquiry that is related to and or reflects the hypothesis of a study. Collins and Stockton (2018:5) refer to a frame of reference to a structure, scaffolding, or frame for a proposed study. Heale and Noble (2019:36) define a frame of reference as a blueprint for any study that informs the problem identified, the study's purpose and significance, and demonstrates how the proposed study fits with what is already known.

A frame of reference is characterised by a foundation plan that is often borrowed by the researchers to build their own house of research enquiry (Adom, Hussein & Agyem, 2018:438). It describes the existing knowledge and previously formed ideas about complex phenomena, the researcher's epistemological dispositions and lens, and a methodically analytic approach (Collins & Stockton, 2018:2). A frame of reference provides a basis for the research questions, literature review, and the methodology and analysis to be chosen (Heale & Noble, 2019:36).

Collins and Stockton (2018:1) state that a frame of reference in a qualitative study serves several purposes and objectives. Firstly, a frame of reference clarifies epistemological dispositions; secondly, it identifies the logic behind methodological choices; thirdly, it builds theory as a result of research findings; and lastly, it guides the study. Choosing a quality frame of reference requires the researchers to (1) examine their disciplinary orientation, such as education, psychology, and sociology and (2) the literature review that will inform the identification of a theoretical framework (Collins & Stockton, 2018:5). Heale and Noble (2019:36) state that a theoretical framework informs the problem that has been identified, the purpose and significance of the research which demonstrates how the proposed research fits with what is already known.

The proposed qualitative study is therefore orientated in the discipline of education management and leadership. Consequently, borrowing from Fred Fiedler's 1958 contingency theory of management, the study seeks to explore how high school educators and learners were managed during COVID-19. Shala, Prebreza and Ramosaj (2021:2) enlighten that the contingency theory shows the relationship

between leadership effectiveness and situational circumstances. That is, effective leadership depends on the contingencies of the situation, demanding the nature of the task and how secure they are. Reams (2023:113) argues that the contingency model is characterised by three components, namely leadership style, situational favourableness, and matching style to the situation. Based on the leadership style, Fiedler's model displays the Least Preferred Co-Worker Scale (LPC) Scale, which entails an individual's feelings towards one's co-worker that the person least wants to work at their organisation. Secondly, situational favourableness is based on the level of support a work environment is for a manager. The matching style to the situation entails that a manager, in order to be effective, must match the leader's style to the right situation.

Subri, Shukri and Wahab (2020:20) assert that the contingency model is centred on two variables that aim to identify scenarios and influence the efficacy of individual management. Firstly, the 'positional power' tests the effect that a manager has on the efficiency of followers by accepting them. This factor reflects how the management style and ability impact the outcome of the situation. The second factor is that of 'task structure,' which measures how specific guidelines are to be met in order to meet the purpose of the organisation. This factor tests the activities that must be conducted as instructed by managers.

Based on the variables of the contingency theory (Subri, Shukri & Wahab, 2020:20), the management of high school educators and learners during COVID-19 will explore whether school managers were centred on the 'positional power' factor or the 'task structure' factor. Furthermore, grounded on the advantage of being supported by several empirical studies (Shala et al., 2021:7), Fiedler's contingency theory of management is relevant as a frame of reference for the proposed study. The theory has been found valid and reliable in explaining how effective management can be achieved in research (Shala et al., 2021; Reams, 2023:1). Furthermore, the contingency model implies that findings from studies were used to address management problems that an organisation needed to resolve (Reams, 2023:1). Since COVID-19 was a situational factor for the effectiveness of principals to manage schools, it is imperative for school managers to apply Fiedler's contingency theory of

management in order to successfully manage their educators and learners during future contingencies.

1.7 LITERATURE REVIEW

A literature review is a survey of the relevant literature by researchers on a specific topic or field (Brouard, 2020:1). A literature review is a review of the existing scholarship or available body of knowledge to see how other scholars have explored the research problem that is of interest (Mouton, 2022:83). It concentrates on a specific research topic, theme or subject to identify gaps or controversies and propose future research agenda (Chigbu, Atiku & Du Plessis, 2023:1). It helps to explain the background of research, the significance of a topic, gather ideas about a topic, update researchers on current trends and findings, discover relationships between research studies, remove unconscious bias, and question gaps and unexplored parts of the study. It does so in line with the topic of the study at hand and thus addresses the main aim, objective(s), and question(s) of the study. This study's literature review focused on addressing the research aim, objectives, and questions from a global perspective in Africa and South Africa, except for the area where the study is conducted.

1.7.1 The management of high school educators and learners during COVID-19

In a study conducted in Canada, Pollock (2020:39) divulges how 17 Ontario school principals performed their roles during the pandemic. Two prolonged approaches to leading the school during the pandemic in Canada were (1) safe schooling and setting the context for future schooling and (2) simultaneously extending the principals' roles to include being instructional leaders. The approach of safe schooling and setting the context for future schooling required principals to be legally accountable for the health and safety of all educators and learners. Pollock (2020:39) maintains that jurisdictions expect principals to report child welfare concerns to their superiors regarding any outbreaks of infectious or contagious diseases. On the other hand, the approach of digital instructional leadership gave principals an opportunity to pay attention to online learning and leading schools virtually (Pollock, 2020:41). However, from Pollock's (2020:42) findings, about 82% of principals raised concerns about creating equal

learning opportunities for all learners in the technological delivery of curriculum and instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Since the pandemic has disrupted schooling globally (Kwatubana & Molaodi, 2021:106), Rahman and Subiyantoro (2021:171) highlight that managing schools in Indonesia during the COVID-19 pandemic rushed to adjust lesson planning. The latter, similar to that of Canada, has fulfilled the managerial role in two processes: (1) the provision of school learning facilities and infrastructure and (2) the provision of encouragement to work together to face COVID-19. The provision of facilities and infrastructure in Indonesia was made by observing human resources in evaluating materials and increasing creativity that helps learning. Positive activities and focus on learning goals from other stakeholders were aimed at motivating them to work together to face the pandemic. Chatzipanagiotou and Katsarou (2023:1) assert that the unpredictable global pandemic of COVID-19 has been viewed as an unprecedented test for organisations in countries around the world, such as Canada and Indonesia.

Samuel (2020:96) argues that some strategic roles revealed in the management of Nigerian schools included preventing the spread and transmission of the virus among learners and educators and mitigating the impact of school closure due to the pandemic on the learning and well-being of learners, educators, and parents. Moreover, ensuring effective, inclusive, and safe quality learning for learners and educators in the country was also a means to manage during the crisis. In Ghana, the absence of physical contact between educators and learners for content delivery was substituted by digital learning (Tuffour, 2021:25). However, although technology was meant to avoid the fast spread of the virus through physical contact in Ghana schools, there were still challenges of technology and Internet access especially in underprivileged communities. In response to the mentioned challenges, schools in the country were advised by UNESCO to distance learning platforms and other viable platforms that schools and instructors could use to get in touch with learners distantly and minimise the interruption of learning (Tuffour, Cobbinah, Benjamin & Otibua, 2021:25).

In a study undertaken in the Eastern Cape Province, South Africa, the sentiments of Mutongoza, Olawale and Mzilikazi (2021:152) reveal that school principals engaged in the organisation of resources, creating a technological culture among educators,

ensuring effective delivery of content, and management of learners' educational needs. Furthermore, it is revealed that the pandemic forced their schools to adopt online learning despite the challenges faced in rural communities. Similarly, Msiza (2022:61) affirms that principals in the Mpumalanga Province took the mantle of digital literacy by ensuring that digital tools were available to support educators and learners.

1.7.2 Managers of high school educators and learners during COVID-19

Ahlstrom, Leo, Nordqvist and Isling (2020:37) state that many Swedish principals at the forefront of managing educators and learners in compulsory schools expressed anxiety among parents, learners, and staff. Jena (2020:12584) argues that the Ministry of Human Development (MHRD) in Indian schools made several arrangements, including online portals and educational channels for learners to learn and to be managed by educators from home. Chatzipanagiotou and Katsarou (2023:29) enlighten that globally, school managers (school management teams) were called on to bear the onus of managing a particularly stressful situation, serving a diverse range of roles, implementing reforms and ever-changing policies within their schools while also navigating structural constraints and limited resources.

Nigerian school principals attempted to pass the burden of data costs for the Internet to the parents and were hindered by the fact that parents were not earning any income during the lockdown (Adekunle, Adeyanju & Oyegoye, 2020:103). Adekunle et al. (2020:104) maintain that principals were deprived of effective management of the country since learners in areas without electricity would miss their lessons. However, Resk, Piccinetti, Radwan, Salem, Sakr and Khawneh (2020:157) state that private tutors re-took a stance in managing teaching and learning by establishing personal classes for the learners in schools in Egypt.

Mukuna and Aloka (2020:144) reveal that challenges that hindered principals and educators from managing learners during COVID-19 in the Free State Province include the cost of purchasing mobile phones, lack of electricity, low network coverage, and expensive maintenance requirements for data and Wi-Fi. Msiza (2022:4) accentuates that principals in the Mpumalanga Province had to find alternatives to

reach out to teachers, parents, and learners during the pandemic so that teaching and learning could proceed.

1.7.3 The process of managing high school educators and learners during COVID-19

In China, the educational system launched an emergency remote teaching-learning (ERT) as the response to the COVID-19 pandemic with the intention to suspend schools without stopping teaching and learning (Zhang, 2020:3). Having drawn from the sentiments of various authors, technology and distance learning had kicked in significantly to enhance the management of educators and learners during the pandemic, especially in developed countries. Doz, Cuder, Caputi, Pellizzoni and Passolunghi (2022:556) affirm that in Italy, as the first country in Europe to experience the outbreak of the pandemic, school shutdown forced educators and learners to face a rapid transition from traditional in-person instruction to distance learning.

Bariham, Ondigi and Kiio (2020:56) articulate that the Ministry of Education in Ghana developed several interventions to manage teaching and learning. These included iBox education portals, solar panels, and online learning multimedia laboratories to enhance quality education amid the pandemic. Although there was a great challenge to access quality education due to the pandemic in Ghana schools, the adoption of remote teaching by the government to facilitate distance and online teaching was delivered through the Internet, television, and radio (Tuffour et al., 2021:20). A comparative study done in Zimbabwe and Botswana by Mamvuto and Mannathoko (2022:111) reveals that the double-shift organisational model was introduced in schools as an option to reduce class sizes to maximise the management of teaching and learning. Consequently, in Zimbabwe, the model entailed that particular grades rotationally attend on certain days of the week. In Botswana, learners had day shifts, some of which were attended in the mornings while others attended during the afternoon.

In the Gauteng Province, there was a provision for digital devices such as tablets to enhance teaching and learning during COVID-19, although experienced educators had inadequate technological skills (Chisango & Marongwe, 2021:149). However, Boloka (2022:351) states that educators in the Limpopo Province agreed that teaching

and learning had to pause until they were granted permission to start teaching on a rotational basis. It is further said that through the rotational approach, learners were also managed for independent studies during the mornings, afternoons, and Saturdays.

Based on the studies conducted in some of the countries overseas, in Africa, and in some provinces of South Africa, it is clear that the process of managing educators and learners was central to the use of technology during the pandemic, although its enactment had some challenges.

1.7.4 The environment where management of high school educators and learners was done during COVID-19

Jena (2020:12582) states that since classes and examinations were suspended in Indian schools, the lockdown compelled the management of educators and learners to engage in online modes. Educators were assigned to work with learners via the Internet and delivered lessons through video conferencing using different applications such as Zoom, Google Meet, Facebook, YouTube, and Skype (Jena, 2020:12582). Moreover, Indian schools used platforms such as WhatsApp groups of guardians, parents, learners, and educators for effective communication, where they shared their difficulties through this e-medium. School closures because of the pandemic suddenly forced a rapid transition to distance learning in countries such as Italy (Doz et al., 2022:555). Learners in Italy moved from traditional in-person instruction to distance learning, where online educational programmes were conducted on platforms such as television, radio, and take-home packages (Doz et al., 2022:556).

In Egypt, Rezk et al., (2020:153) argue that the abrupt closure of schools opened an opportunity for school activities to be managed online. Private schools instantly moved into online learning, while public schools followed since they still used the traditional approach. The move of Egypt's education system from a traditional approach to learning to minimise the spread of the virus indicated that the management of educators and learners relied more on the online approach. Tuffour et al., (2021:21) draw attention to the management of secondary schools in Ghana during COVID-19, where several learners were to stay home for an unspecified period. Although learners who were underprivileged and stayed in hard-to-reach areas had to continue their

education, the pandemic forced them to use technology. Interventions for managing educators and learners in the country included distance learning platforms and home-based learning, where educators supported learners remotely from their homes for continuous learning (Tuffour et al., 2021:25).

Msiza (2022:2) found that due to the lockdown that was imposed by the government, social media and other online platforms were an option in the Mpumalanga Province to manage both educators and learners remotely. Consequently, one of the most prominent platforms that principals and teachers used was WhatsApp. In the Eastern Cape Province, Mutongoza et al., (2023:152) reveal that schools in the province shifted from the traditional method of contact-based learning to a more blended form to control the spread of the virus within schools. This was done through remote learning, which forced principals to mobilise resources to instil the technological culture amongst educators and manage learners' different subject needs.

While drawing from the sentiments of the authors who conducted the studies in Mpumalanga and Eastern Cape, it is clear that although school managers were willing to manage schools through physical contact (traditional approach), both educators and learners had to be managed remotely using technology to minimise the spread of the pandemic while securing instructional time.

1.7.5 Reasons why high school educators and learners were managed during COVID-19

It is interesting to note that the need for the management of school educators and learners was to be effective even during the hike of the pandemic. That is, effective management would require school leaders to simultaneously manage school activities and the spread of COVID-19. Kafa and Pashiardis (2020:46) argue that although the physical presence of a school principal was undeniably important in Cyprus schools, the effort to control and co-ordinate the online learning process was catalyst and important for principals to co-ordinate the abrupt change during the pandemic. Harris and Jones (2020:246) further maintain that school leaders on the disruptive journey of COVID-19 were defined by their determination, their hope, and their unshakable belief that whatever happened, whatever the cost, whatever the scale of the challenge, they

had to continue to do everything in their power to safeguard the learning of all young people in the country. Furthermore, in Canada, Hauseman, Darazsi and Kent (2020:73) edify that principals and other school leaders felt a heightened sense of responsibility in supporting staff and learners' achievement of academic and non-academic outcomes at a distance to support them in ensuring that they work effectively in using technology to communicate with learners and thereby possessing a level of confidence in new and different kinds of work. Through the support of the principals, there was a high level of transparency and anxiety being reduced in the country's schools (Hauseman et al., 2020:73).

Samuel (2020:98) asserts that it was necessary to effectively manage schools during the pandemic by implementing health precautions while school activities continue in Nigeria. This was undoubtedly to help learners have time to prepare for their external examinations so as not to have massive failure. Secondly, the education system was to be kept running to prevent a complete system breakdown in the future. Tuffour et al., (2021:21) argue that in Ghana, it was necessary to evaluate not only the education of the learners during the pandemic but also underprivileged learners in terms of childcare challenges, nutritional challenges, and resultant financial cost implications to households who could not work should not be overlooked. This implies that the management of learners during the pandemic was also crucial even in assessing their situations at their homes during lockdowns so that distance learning could not be disrupted by socioeconomic factors (Tuffour et al., 2021:21).

In the Eastern Cape, Mutongoza (2021:158) edifies that during the pandemic, principals had a duty to promote a sense of belonging and make relationships between the school, learners, parents, and the community towards the provision of clear directions for educators and learners. That is, principals in the province had to lead by focusing on the vision and mission and improving the instructional programme as an academic mandate they have been tasked with. The main focus of effective management from the principals was to simultaneously strive to rebuild broken academic practices in communities and enhance the safety of educators and learners by ensuring effective communication in cases of risk, enforcing government COVID-19 protocols, and preparing disaster management plans (Mutongoza, 2021:154). Msiza (2022:8) proclaims that when no measures were to be put in place to save the

academic year, learners from low-income socioeconomic backgrounds of the Mpumalanga Province would miss out most on education. Moreover, it was the school manager's right to ensure that educators strive to achieve the school's aims and objectives by bringing to life the school's vision and achieving the desired outcomes even during the pandemic (Msiza, 2022:9).

1.8 RESEARCH METHOD AND DESIGN

According to Mouton (2022:61), a research method focuses on the research process and the kind of tools and procedures to be used. In contrast, a research design focuses on the product, such as the kind of study planned and the kind of results that should be achieved (Mouton, 2022:61). Consequently, the two aspects in question are clarified for the intended study.

1.8.1 Research method

There are three basic types of research, namely quantitative, qualitative, and mixed method research (Rutberg, 2018:209; Mehrad & Zangeneh, 2019:3; Bouikidis, 2020:2; Taherdoost, 2022:55). Rutberg (2018:209) states that the key word in quantitative research is numerical measurement whereas the meaning is given to a phenomenon in qualitative research. Kandel and Bouikidis (2020:2) proclaim that quantitative research focuses on quantifying things in terms of numbers and statistics, but qualitative research describes how people feel or what they think about a particular subject, situation, phenomenon, or event.

Mixed method research involves both qualitative and quantitative research methods in a single research. Taherdoost (2022:55) edifies that integrating both quantitative and qualitative research can help researchers address complex research circumstances in different research fields.

Mehrad and Zangeneh (2019:3) distinguish remarkably between qualitative and quantitative research. Quantitative research is said to be characterised by a researcher who largely focuses on deductive testing of theory, which is centred on cause and effect thinking, reduction to specific variables, hypothesis and questions, and use of measurements and observations. Qualitative research, on the other hand,

focuses on the generation of theory centred on an open-ended and flexible approach to assessment, narratives, ethnographies, and case studies. What is featured in quantitative research is that the researcher is not keen on generic questions such as what, who, when, where and other related details that might be the interest of a qualitative researcher (Mehrad & Zangeneh, 2019:4). Consequently, informed by the research questions, the qualitative research method will be relevant for this study.

1.8.1.1 Qualitative research

The intended study will be qualitative in nature. Cropley (2022:38) points out that the goal of qualitative research is to describe and analyse the world as it is experienced, interpreted, and understood by people in the course of their everyday lives and within their context. Much more interestingly, Mouton (2022:175) agrees that the strengths of the qualitative paradigm are that it studies people in their own definitions of the world, the meaning they give to a phenomenon, focuses on subjective experiences of individuals, and is sensitive to the contexts in which people interact with each other. Therefore, the researcher seeks to explore the management of high school educators and learners during COVID-19.

1.8.2 Research design

Grounded on an in-depth case of the COVID-19 pandemic, an empirical study, typically a case study, was considered in the study. Mouton (2022:142) asserts that case studies are usually qualitative in nature and aim to provide an in-depth description of a small number of cases, which can range from one to 20 or more. Mutongoza et al., (2021:150) accentuate that a case study design allows the researcher to get a deeper insight into selected cases for investigation. To explore the management of high school educators and learners during COVID-19, four schools were selected from the 35 in the Ubombo CMC at uMkhanyakude District.

1.8.2.1 Population and sampling

Shukla (2020:1) views the population as a set or group of all the units on which the findings of the research are to be applied. Similarly, Naseri, Hussin, Esa, Aziz and Nordin (2021:654) state that population refers to the entire group of people, events, or things of interest that the researcher wishes to investigate. Sampling is the process of selecting a sample from the population. In contrast, a sample is a part of the population that represents it completely (Shukla, 2020:5). Majid (2018:3) sustains that sampling involves a process of selecting a statistically representative sample of individuals from the population of interest.

There are two basic types of sampling, namely probability sampling and non-probability sampling (Pace, 2021:4). Probability sampling, also known as random selection, refers to the randomisation implying that the targeted population sample has a known, equal, fair and non-zero chance of being selected. In contrast, a non-probability sampling (non-random selection) is applied where the choice of being chosen is unknown to the participants. The non-probability method is utilised within qualitative or exploratory research because the researcher aims to explore an idea in its richness and depth (Pace, 2021:9). Consequently, the non-probability sampling method was used purposively to explore the management of high school educators and learners during COVID-19 at the Ubombo CMC. Since the Ubombo CMC has four circuits, School Management Team (SMT) members from each circuit formed the sample size. In a nutshell, six experienced (over three years in a management position) school managers from high schools were selected for the study.

1.8.2.2 Data collection instrument

Data was collected using a qualitative telephone semi-structured interview, which was 20-30 minutes long. The telephone interview was adopted because it was perceived as a feasible technique enabling interviewees to respond at any convenient time other than physical contact, which would demand interviewing only during the day. Open-ended questions were generated from the sub-research questions. Probing was done to help the researcher explore responses relevant to the research questions. Robinson

(2023:1) reveals that probing achieves access to an extra level of detail and depth via verbal prompts to clarify, elaborate, illustrate, or explain a prior answer to an interview question that the participant has already given. The appropriate and ethical utilisation of probes within interviews is a skill that should be intensively developed by qualitative researchers (Robinson, 2023:14).

Although questions were asked in English, participants were asked twice to ensure credibility, and they were allowed to express themselves conveniently in their preferred language. While the participants' responses were transcribed through an audio recording application, this allowed the validity of the responses during analysis and interpretation. The qualitative telephone interview was relevant for this study because it aimed to explore the management of high school educators and learners during COVID-19 at the Ubombo CMC.

1.8.3 Data analysis and interpretation

Thematic data analysis was identified as most relevant for analysing and interpreting the data of this study (Swain, 2018:4; Peel, 2020:7; Finlay, 2021:103; Morgan, 2022:2080). Peel (2020:7) defines thematic data analysis as a flexible and useful research tool that organises and simplifies the complexity of data into meaningful and manageable codes, categories, and themes. It is a method for identifying and encoding patterns of meaning in primary qualitative research (Swain, 2018:4; Finlay, 2021:103). The method pinpoints and organises the themes which the analyst deems to be important in the description of the phenomenon under study and are often associated with a specific research question (Swain, 2018:4). Morgan (2022:2080) states that thematic data analysis is a method for developing themes, which are patterns in the data that researchers collect.

Finlay (2021:103) outlines six steps of the thematic analysis. The steps are unpacked and contextualised for the study below:

The first step involves the researcher becoming familiar with the data. The researcher does the latter through reading and re-reading the data, as well as writing early notes. Maguire and Delahunt (2017:3355) argue that the researcher should be familiar with

the entire body of data corpus, such as interviews, before going further. Based on the proposed study, familiarising with the amount of transcribed data was the point of departure for data analysis.

The second step is based on the generation of initial codes. In this step, data is organised in a more meaningful and systematic way. Mukuna and Aloba (2020:140) argue that specific themes will be derived from the research title and research questions, thus coding responses in relation to the themes. The proposed study, therefore, included the organising of key data so that codes are generated meaningfully and informed by the research questions.

The third step is about searching for themes. This step involves pulling codes and data together to describe the pattern in the data. It requires the researcher to be deliberative, reflective, and thorough (Peel, 2020:4). Data linked to each theme are organised, and the researcher becomes selective in grouping categories of meaning together. Based on the transcribed data, patterns related to the themes were grouped to address the research questions.

The fourth step involves the researcher reviewing themes. That is done by checking that the themes relate to the data and tells a convincing story that answers the research questions (Finlay (2021:103). It was necessary for the proposed study to review themes by linking those that are related, differentiate some, and or even eliminate those irrelevant to the four sub-research questions.

Finlay (2021:103) asserts that the fifth step is an artful phase where the researcher refines and crafts themes to reveal their essence. The analysis of each theme is detailed for a story to be told. The relevancy of the story told in the proposed study therefore relied on well-crafted themes linked to the research questions.

The final step for data analysis is when the researcher writes the themes into a broader report (Finlay, 2021:103). The weaving of an analytic narrative into a persuasive story that uses informative and data extracts as evidence is involved in this stage. The crux of this stage was interesting for the researcher to write an informative qualitative report for the proposed study.

Consequently, thematic data analysis was deemed relevant for this qualitative study since the researcher aimed to describe the interviewees' responses in answering how high school educators and learners were managed during COVID-19 at the Ubombo CMC.

1.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

According to Arifin (2018:30), ethical considerations in a qualitative study have a particular resonance due to the in-depth nature of the study process, which is central to protecting human subjects through applying ethical principles. Ethical considerations include issues of informed consent and voluntary participation, as well as anonymity and confidentiality, which are discussed hereunder.

1.9.1 Informed consent and voluntary participation

In order to participate in a study, participants need to be adequately informed about the research, comprehend the information, and have the power of freedom of choice to allow them to participate or not participate (Arifin, 2018:30). The participants were physically approached to explain the purpose of the study and the process of data collection. Grounded on matters of consent, the researcher provided an informed consent form to participants so they could sign an agreement that they were part of the study. Furthermore, participants were informed that their participation in the interview would be voluntary and that if they wished to withdraw, they might do so at no cost. During withdrawal, their data would not be further used in the study.

1.9.2 Anonymity and confidentiality

Flemming and Zegwaard (2018:210) point out that human research ethics committees cannot grant approval for research after the data collection has begun; it is important to gain approval before the commencement of data collection. Consequently, participants were informed of their rights to confidentiality, anonymity, and privacy before data was collected. In this regard, they were informed that their responses would be recorded for data analysis purposes and that their identity would not be revealed in the study. The privacy and confidentiality of the interview would be

managed during the telephone interview on matters such as revealing who the caller is and requesting to be in a quiet environment for a noise-free recording.

1.10 LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Theofanidis and Fountouki (2019:156) define a limitation in research as an imposed restriction or weakness which is essentially out of the researcher's control. Ross and Zaidi (2019:261) argue that limitations represent weaknesses within the study that may influence the outcomes and conclusions of the research. Limitations are concerned with the characteristics of the methodology used, which set parameters for the application or interpretation of the results of the study (Rahman & Shiddike, 2020:33).

On the other hand, delimitations are in the researcher's control whereby they are based on the definitions that the researcher decides to set as the boundaries or limits of their work so that the study's aims and objectives do not become impossible to achieve (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2019:157). Delimitations entail the choice of the research questions, the details of research objectives, the theoretical positions researchers choose to adopt and the population relevant to the research (Akanle, Ademuson & Shittu, 2020:109). Delimitations are what a researcher includes and excludes to make a study manageable and focused on the research question (Coker & David, 2022:141).

The proposed study's potential limitations include the inability to get earnest responses from respondents and communication constraints. The participants could not give the true sense of their experiences only if intended to please the interviewer, thus reflecting the unreliability of data findings. The telephone interview could be subjected to communication constraints with the respondents since the study area has the potential for lack of network coverage, which could distort data collection from the key respondents.

The delimitation of the study includes the sample size factor. Since the Ubombo CMC covers a larger geographical area with four circuits forming the population size, the sample of four schools selected is small. Thus, it could not be generalised to the larger population of the study area.

1.11 DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

The section defines the study's key terms:

1.11.1 Educator

According to the South African Schools Act (SASA) No. 84 of 1996, an educator is a natural person, excluding a person who is appointed to exclusively perform extracurricular duties, who teaches, educates, or trains other persons or who provides professional educational services, including professional therapy and education psychological services, at a school. Similarly, the National Education Act No. 27 of 1996 refers an educator as any person who teaches, educates, or trains other persons at an education institution or assists in rendering education services or education auxiliary or support services provided by or in an education department. The Employment of Educators Act No. 76 of 1998 defines an educator as any person who teaches, educates, or trains other persons or who provides professional educational services, including professional therapy and education psychological services, at any public school, further education and training institution, departmental office, or adult basic education centre and who is appointed in a post on any educator establishment.

1.11.2 Learner

The South African Council for Educators Act No 31 of 2000 defines a learner as a pupil or a student at any school, further education and training institution or adult learning centre. A learner is any person receiving education or obliged to receive education (SASA No. 84 of 1996). The Gauteng Learner Attendance Policy (2018:3) states that a learner is any person receiving education or obliged to receive education in terms of relevant legislation.

1.11.3 School management

According to Naidoo (2019:1), school management involves managing and controlling human, physical, and financial resources. Kavrayci and Kesim (2021:1007) define school management as hiring educational organisations by co-ordinating human and material resources in line with their objectives, including processes such as decision-making, planning, communication, organisation, and evaluation. School management

is characterised by the management of how to teach the learners with activities starting from planning, organising, directing, or controlling and assessing (Nadeak et al., 2021:1132). School management incorporates the control in which school managers (principals) undertake to ensure that the school and its people, assets, and all other resources are organised and managed to provide for an effective, efficient, safe, and nurturing environment (Policy on the South African Standard for Principalship, 2015:16). Section 16 (3) of the SASA No. 84 of 1996 upholds that the professional management of a public school must be undertaken by the principal under the authority of the Head of Department.

1.11.4 School leadership

Sellami, Sawalhi, Romanowski and Amatullah (2019:5) articulate that school leadership involves the exercise of influence over others. School leaders drive the vision of the institution and focus on organisational development and school improvement (Naidoo, 2019:1). From another perspective, Msiza (2022:4) views school leadership as the ability to lead, influence, or guide a group or an organisation towards a desired goal. Therefore, it can be argued that school principals should ensure that their rightful leadership skills influence their followers (communities, educators and learners) to take a goal-driven path. The Policy on South African Standards for Principalship (2015:21) affirms that schools exist within particular social and economic communities that influence and may be influenced by the school.

1.11.5 COVID-19

COVID-19 is an infectious disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus (www.who.int). It is a communicable respiratory disease caused by a new strain of coronavirus that causes illness in humans (<https://au.int>). COVID-19 is a large family of viruses that cause illnesses ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases (www.un.org). Shereen, Khan, Kazmi, Bashir and Siddique (2020:91) further state that COVID-19 is a disease which is said to be a highly transmittable and pathogenic viral infection caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-Cov-2), which emerged in Wuhan, China, in 2019 and spread around the world. Similarly, Shi, Wang, Cai, Deng, Zheng, Zhu, Zheng, Yang and Chen (2020:1) view COVID-19 as pneumonia caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-

2) infection. Msiza (2022:5) broadly defines COVID-19 as a virus called Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2, later referred to as COVID-19. The latter is abbreviated as follows; “Co for Corona, VI for Virus and 19 the year in which the virus was identified.”

1.11.6 Facebook

Jumaat, Ahmad, Samah, Ashari, Ali and Abdul (2019:203) define Facebook as a social media platform that allows people to connect, share, learn, and communicate with each other on mobile devices and computers. According to Dogruer, Menevis and Eyyam (2021:2642), Facebook is a computer-mediated Social Networking System that has become a well-known means of communication founded by Mark Zuckerberg, Dustin Moskovitz, and Chris Hughes. It is a social networking platform that is actively used by many individuals worldwide, aimed at high-impact communication mediums to quickly share information and engage within communities (Kimmons, Rosenberg & Allman, 2021:126).

1.11.7 WhatsApp

Khoza (2020:302) asserts that WhatsApp comes from the English colloquial expression “what’s up?” meaning “what’s new or what’s happening?” In a nutshell, WhatsApp is defined as the most popular application software, allowing people to exchange instant messages, videos, photos, and audio clips with one another. Dhahir (2020:48) views WhatsApp as a social media application that functions to communicate, share messages, photos, files, and videos using the data network as a message delivery facility. Kordova and Hirschprung (2023:2) define WhatsApp as a messaging platform that allows users to send text, voice, and video messages and conduct voice and video calls.

1.11.8 Zoom

Shabani, Mohammed, Yucel and El Amri (2022:184) define Zoom as a videotelephone software application created by Zoom Video Communications where electronic meeting invitation is generated for users. Kordova and Hirschprung (2023:2) add that Zoom is a video conferencing platform that enables participants to host and join virtual meetings, webinars, and conferences. Spathis and Dey (2020:2) define Zoom as a

tech company that provides video telephony and online chat services through a cloud-based peer-to-peer software platform launched in January 2013.

1.12 RESEARCH OUTLINE

Chapter 1 provided an orientation of the study. The literature pertaining to the study's topic will be reviewed in Chapter 2. The research methodology will be presented in Chapter 3. Data will be analysed and interpreted in Chapter 4. A summary of the findings, recommendations, and conclusions will be described in Chapter 5.

1.13 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the orientation of the study. The motivation of the study and problem statement were incorporated in the chapter. Moreover, the research questions and objectives of the study were explicitly formulated. The frame of reference, review of literature, research method and design were also discussed. Matters of ethics were considered and discussed. The limitations and delimitations of the study were also discussed. Lastly, the definition of terms and research outline were explained.

Consequently, it can be concluded that the chapter served as a foundation for the whole study. Literature review will be presented in the next chapter (chapter 2).

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 presented an outline of the study. This chapter reviews the literature on the topic of the study. Brouard (2020:1) defines a literature review as a survey of related literature by researchers on a specific topic or field. Literature review pertains to the review of the existing scholarship or available body of knowledge to see how other researchers have explored the research problem that is of interest (Mouton, 2022: 83). It focuses on an explicit academic topic, theme, or subject to identify gaps or controversies and recommend future research plan (Chigbu, Atiku & Du Plessis, 2023:1). It helps to explain the background of research, the significance of a topic, gather ideas (information) about a topic, update scholars on current trends and findings, explore relationships between research studies, removes unconscious bias, and question gaps and unexplored parts of the study. It does that in line with the topic of the study at hand and thus addresses the study's main research aim, objective(s), and research question(s). This study's literature review focused on addressing the research aim, objectives, and questions based on the management of high school educators and learners during COVID-19 from a global viewpoint, in Africa and South Africa, except for KwaZulu-Natal Province, where the study was conducted.

2.2 THE MANAGEMENT OF HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATORS AND LEARNERS DURING COVID-19

This section addresses how high school educators and learners were managed during COVID-19 in different parts of the world. The latter incorporates the review of literature in Canada, Indonesia, Spain, Brazil, and Russia. African countries on which the discussion touches include Nigeria and Ghana. The Eastern Cape and Mpumalanga, excluding Kwa Zulu-Natal Province (where the study is undertaken) are some of the provinces in South Africa where the literature is reviewed.

In the virtual pilot study conducted in Canada, Pollock (2020:39) reveals how 17 Ontario school principals effected their roles during the COVID-19 pandemic. Consequently, the detailed approaches in the management of the high schools in the country included safe schooling coupled with planning the context for future

educational needs, as well as simultaneously extending principals' roles as managers of instruction. The approach of safe schooling and setting the context for future schooling required principals to play a critical managerial and legal role in ensuring that the health conditions of both educators and learners were fairly accounted for during the pandemic. Pollock (2020:39) maintains that educational jurisdictions challenged school principals to report any possible learner welfare concerns to their supervisors of any outbreaks of infectious or contagious diseases in their schools. On the other hand, the approach of broadening the principals' role in digital instructional management gave them an opportunity to primarily focus on online learning and leading schools virtually (Pollock, 2020:41). However, from Pollock's (2020:42) findings, about 82% of principals raised concerns about creating equal learning opportunities for all learners in the technological delivery of curriculum and instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The management of high school educators and learners saw a sudden adoption of new changes to lesson planning in Indonesia (Rahman & Subiyantoro, 2021:171). It is further argued that the pandemic has disrupted teaching and learning globally (Kwatubana & Molaodi, 2021:106). Subsequently, like in Canadian schools, the managerial role in Indonesia was approached in two ways. Firstly, schools were provided with learning facilities and infrastructure. This entailed observing human resources in evaluating materials and increasing creativity that supports learning (Kwatubana & Molaodi, 2021:106). Secondly, there was an attempt to motivate school educators to work as a unit to face COVID-19. Positive activities and focus on learning goals from other stakeholders were aimed at encouraging principals, educators, and learners to work together to face the pandemic (Kwatubana & Molaodi, 2021:106). Chatzipanagiotou and Katsarou (2023:1) affirm that the unpredictable global pandemic of COVID-19 has been viewed as an unprecedented test for organisations in countries around the world, such as Canada and Indonesia.

School managers in Brazil were exposed to a heightened sense of responsibility to manage educators and learners during the COVID-19 pandemic (Reimers, 2022:2). Subsequently, the pandemic hindered routine administrative efforts and the ability to manage and sustain education programmes. In a nutshell, efforts to normalise the management of educators and learners in the country faced other challenges, such as

declining learner enrolment and temporary school closures due to the pandemic hike. Reports from various groups in the education sector about the alternative arrangements put in place to sustain educational opportunity, including whether, when and how schools were to be open for in-person instruction, were all means to save instructional time (Reimers, 2022:3).

The management of learners in Spain relied on the decisions by the national and regional governors to allow only Grades 8 to 11 during the 2020-2021 school year to attend on alternate days (Moliner, Valentin & Alegre, 2021:180). Learners attended classes on alternate days in the country because of the small number and size of classes, which was a high-risk factor for the transmission of the virus. Kosaretsky, Zair-Bek, Kersha and Zvyagintsev (2022:234) state that in Russia, the Education Ministry allowed regions to make their own decisions in the management of educators and learners during the pandemic. Each region had to make decisions by considering different factors that would accommodate quarantine methods during teaching and learning. For instance, some regions allowed for the termination of certain classes for learners in Grades 1 to 8 with the aim of easing loads and Internet traffic for learners in the higher grades (Kosaretsky et al., 2022:234).

Samuel (2020:96) argues that some strategic roles executed in managing Nigerian schools incorporated preventing the spread and transmission of the virus among learners and educators. Moreover, mitigating the impact of school closure due to the pandemic on the learning and well-being of learners, educators, and parents was another effort to manage schooling activities. Educators and learners were also managed by ensuring effective, inclusive, and safe quality learning and safety of educators in the country during the crisis (Samuel, 2020:96). In Ghanaian schools, the physical educator-learner interaction for content delivery was replaced by digital learning (Tuffour, Cobbinah, Benjamin & Otibua, 2021:25). However, even though technology was meant to lessen the fast spread of the virus through physical contact in schools in the country, there were still challenges of technology and Internet access especially in communities that were severely struck by poverty. In response to the lack of technological equipment and access to Internet services, UNESCO advised the schools in the country to opt for distance learning platforms and other viable platforms that schools and curriculum instructors could utilise to administer the management and

delivery of content to learners remotely while minimising the interruption of learning (Tuffour et al., 2021:25).

Jeilani (2021:2) argues that the Ministry of Education in Somalia ordered that high schools in the country should not be reopened for the remainder of the 2020 academic year due to the uncertainty of the COVID-19 transmission. As a result, the closure of schools and the absence of alternative learning severely disrupted school learning and examinations in most parts of the country, like Mogadishu, to mention a few. Educators and learners in Somalia were, therefore, affected by psychosocial stress, anxiety, and stigma to balance learning and the combat of the virus. It was difficult to proceed with learning in most areas of the country as the COVID-19 impact was intensely felt by educators and learners who already had strained livelihoods in underprivileged communities (Jeilani, 2021:2).

The national government established the National Emergency Response to Education Committee to address schooling during lockdown in Namibia (Boer & Asino, 2021:30). Internet access in the country was accessible but fully utilised by urban schools than rural schools. Middle- to high-income socioeconomic households had access to personal computers, while most low-income households did not. Furthermore, some educators had experience with technology integration strategies important to e-Learning, while many lacked the opportunity to be technology-savvy. Boer and Asino (2021:30) avow that the directive from the Namibian government to deliver online teaching was unfortunate because the real situation in high schools in the country was challenged by a lack of electricity. As a result, educator unions intervened by raising concern over the e-Learning directive, and so the government took the initiative to assess where schools were in terms of infrastructure. It was concluded that each school created their own learning design solution for Emergency Response Teaching (Boer & Asino, 2021:30). The management of educators and learners was inconsistent across Namibian schools due to unequal distribution of electricity and technological material.

In a study undertaken in the Eastern Cape Province, South Africa, the sentiments of Mutongoza, Olawale and Mzilikazi (2021:152) reveal that school principals engaged in the organisation of resources, creating a technological culture among educators, ensuring effective delivery of content, and management of learners' educational needs.

Moreover, it is revealed that the pandemic forced their schools to adopt online learning despite the challenges faced in rural communities. Similarly, Msiza (2022:61) supports that principals in the Mpumalanga Province took the mantle of digital literacy by ensuring that digital tools were available to support educators and learners.

High schools were closed in the Western Cape Province due to COVID-19 in 2020 (Van der Berg & Spaul, 2020:4), resulting in up to 155 normal school days of teaching being lost and 90% time lost for learner assessment (Van der Berg & Spaul, 2020:4). Consequently, Van der Berg and Spaul (2020:16) argue that apart from the fact that parents were not trained to manage their children in the province, the lockdown plans for learning had not dealt with the losses in learning for children that did not have access to technology at their homes. Since most learners had far lower exposure to school in 2020 and 2021 due to the school lockdowns and rotational timetables in South Africa, the Western Cape alone had an average of 155 days lost in those school days due to the pandemic (Wills & van der Berg, 2022:10). In contrast to other grades, for the recovery of curriculum losses, the Western Cape Provincial Government only allowed Grade 12s to return to school in a staggered approach (Wills & Van der Berg, 2022:24). Furthermore, in terms of school-based assessment (SBA) and progression, there was a reduced number of assessments and cancelled examinations for other grades except for Grade 12 learners to sit for the national examinations. The management of learners during the pandemic period saw a gap in the specific content to be assessed, hence the option to increase the SBA component of the promotion requirements for Grades 10 and 11 to increase from 25% to 60% despite the reliability of the school marks (Wills & Van der Berg, 2022:22).

In the exploration of Omodan (2020:267), managing learners during the pandemic in the rural schools of the Free State Province was a dilemma. As schools were closed, most of them could not proceed successfully with their learning because of their poor economic backgrounds and could not navigate through online lessons. Underdevelopment, lack of social and financial support, and lack of infrastructural facilities and online devices all characterised the inability of learners to learn from home through online lessons in the province. That is, not all learners had access to electricity or laptops, nor do they have the skills to use them (Omodan, 2020:267).

The lockdown exacerbated these challenges. They affected learners' sociality and made them uncertain about their academic future (Omodan, 2020:267). Other problems that learners faced were anxiety, panic disorder, and depression. Consequently, while learners were managed from home through radios and the Internet, the urgent response became troublesome since high school learners were affected by socioeconomic backgrounds and social and psychological uncertainty. Although educators were encouraged to teach Grade 12 learners via radios (Grade 12 recovery programmes) and online platforms, there was criticism against this alternative because it did not cater for all learners, mainly those in disadvantaged communities of the Free State (Omodan, 2020:267).

2.3 MANAGERS OF HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATORS AND LEARNERS DURING COVID-19

This section explores managers who played a role in managing high school educators and learners during COVID-19. School managers in countries such as Sweden, India, Spain, Brazil, and Russia were explored in the literature review. Furthermore, Nigeria, Egypt, Somalia, and Namibia are African countries where school managers were explored. Literature on managers who partook in managing schools in South Africa was reviewed from the Free State and Mpumalanga Provinces.

Ahlstrom, Leo, Nordqvist and Isling (2020:37) state that many Swedish school principals who were at the forefront of managing educators and learners in compulsory schools were nervous about the health of educators, learners, and parents. Jena (2020:12584) argues that the MHRD in Indian schools made several arrangements, including online portals and educational channels for learners to learn and to be managed by educators from home. Chatzipanagiotou and Katsarou (2023:29) enlighten that globally, school managers, particularly SMTs, were tasked to bear the onus of managing educators and learners in a stressful situation, applying a varied range of roles, implementing reforms and ever-changing policies within their schools, while also navigating structural limitations and inadequate resources.

In Spanish high schools, the regional government gave educators two months to prepare for the facilitation of e-Learning before it was rolled out to learners via

electronic teaching platforms such as YouTube Live and video records (Moliner et al., 2021:180). Costin and Coutinho (2022:48) claim that curriculum specialists and non-profit organisations in Brazil saw disparities between high expectations and knowledge possessed by learners and therefore provided learning maps to support school managers, pedagogical co-ordinators, and educators to reprioritise matters of curriculum on learners. However, educators and learners were managed through hotlines by specialists from education management agencies, education psychologists, and school counsellors in Russia (Kosaretsky et al., 2022:234).

Adekunle, Adeyanju and Oyegoye (2020:103) state that Nigerian school principals attempted to persuade parents to buy Internet data for their children. However, the parents were unemployed and had no income during the lockdown. It was, therefore, difficult to afford high Internet data costs (Adekunle et al., 2020:103). It is further maintained that principals were restricted from effectively managing the country since learners in areas without electricity would miss their lessons (Adekunle et al., 2020:104). However, Resk, Piccinetti, Radwan, Salem, Sakr and Khawneh (2020:157) state that private tutors re-took a stance in managing teaching and learning by establishing personal classes for the learners in Egyptian high schools.

Jeilani (2021:5) proclaims that the government and the principals of Somalia had a minor role in the management of educators and learners since the education system was managed by the private sector during the pandemic. Since 91% of schools in Mogadishu received budgets from learners and 3% from the government, about 58% of school principals were anxious and stressed about the learners' future and how income would be generated to facilitate learning. Although principals were at the centre to collaborate with the private sector and the learners, some were positive about managing educators and learners during the pandemic, but they felt isolated and unsupported (Jeilani, 2021:5). It is also affirmed that since the financial support to schools decreased during the pandemic, that was evidence that the management of both learners and educators was more dependent on the private sector (Jeilani, 2021:5). Boer and Asino (2021:34) state that school principals of Namibian high schools directed educators to create print-based learning materials for learners. Moreover, the principals communicated via radio to collect materials at the school at a particular time. Apart from the management of high schools enforced by principals

in Namibia, Boer and Asino (2021:34) further posit that the Learning From Home (LFH) committee was another component that instructed educators to create WhatsApp class groups per subject and per grade to facilitate teaching and learning.

Mukuna and Aloka (2020:144) reveal that challenges that hindered principals and educators from managing learners during COVID-19 in the Free State Province include the cost of purchasing mobile phones, lack of electricity in some households, low network and Internet coverage, and costly maintenance requirements for data and Wi-Fi services. Msiza (2022:4) accentuates that principals in the Mpumalanga Province had to find alternatives to reach out to teachers, parents, and learners during the pandemic so that teaching and learning could proceed. Similarly, Omodan (2020:267) highlights the role played by the Free State provincial government, the Free State Department of Education, and the local municipalities in managing educators and learners who explored various alternatives, such as teaching via radio and Internet during lockdown.

2.4 THE PROCESS OF MANAGING HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATORS AND LEARNERS DURING COVID-19

This section focuses on the process of managing high school educators and learners during COVID-19. Literature was reviewed based on what was done to manage educators and learners in some overseas countries and African countries such as Ghana, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Namibia, and Somalia. The process of managing educators and learners during the pandemic was also discussed in the South African provinces, namely Gauteng, Limpopo, Western Cape, and the Free State.

Having drawn from the sentiments of various authors (Zhang, 2020:3; Doz, Cuder, Caputi, Pellizzoni & Passolunghi, 2022:556; Costin & Coutinho, 2022:48), technology and distance learning had kicked in significantly to enhance the management of educators and learners during the pandemic, especially in developed countries such as China, Italy, Brazil, China, and Spain. To manage high school educators and learners during COVID-19 in China, the educational system launched an ERT as the response to the pandemic with the intention to suspend schools without stopping teaching and learning (Zhang, 2020:3). Doz, Cuder, Caputi, Pellizzoni and Passolunghi (2022:556) state that in Italy, as the first country in Europe to experience

the outbreak of the pandemic, school closures obligated educators and learners to face a paradigm shift from traditional in-person instruction to distance learning.

Costin and Coutinho (2022:48) claim that the process of managing high school educators and learners in Brazil focused on combining modes of delivery and instruction to mitigate learning losses. This was done through social media communication between educators, parents, and learners. Communication modes such as WhatsApp, YouTube, and Instagram were used to propose learning activities through the 'Boa Vista Learns at Home' initiative. In the Brazilian state of Goias, for example, the initiative focused on distance learning whereby the National Department of Education translated lesson plans and shared them via the mentioned communication modes (Costin & Coutinho, 2022:47). Moreover, USB drivers were delivered with pre-loaded curriculum activities to learners who had special education needs. The department further created an online domain to share information with educators and learners throughout the pandemic (Costin & Coutinho, 2022:47).

Kosaretsky et al., (2022:234) point out that the Ministry of Education gave a range of distance learning platforms from which schools could decide for a continued management process in Russia. Consequently, some regions signed special agreements with Internet providers to deliver Internet services at reasonable cheaper rates for educators and learners to continue with school activities. Moreover, some regions were offered free Internet for distance learning, especially for poor communities. School notebooks were also offered to regions such as Moscow, while computers were given to the Sakha-Yakutia region (Kosaretsky et al., 2022:234). Apart from the afore-mentioned initiatives to facilitate the management of educators and learners in Russia, the Federal government also launched a fundraising campaign for the procurement of computers for families in need and to help educators to organise the study process from home through technical support (Kosaretsky et al., 2022:234).

Moliner et al., (2021:180) state that due to the national lockdown in Spain, it was difficult for the Ministry of Education to provide educators and learners with necessary electronic resources and online tools. Subsequently, the best alternative to continue managing educators and learners from a distance was to pilot the best online teaching platform. Two electronic teaching platforms provided by the regional government were 'Aules' and 'Webex'. The 'Aules' was a virtual classroom where the educator assigned

tasks, provided feedback, and sent messages. This was similar to Google Classrooms, where educators create and organise classes, assignments, quizzes and announcements for learners. The 'Webex' platform, which was preferred for its reliability and consistency, aimed at arranging online meetings among educators. The YouTube studio was also utilised especially for facilitating Mathematics due to its live broadcast and video recording accessibility (Moliner et al., 2021:180).

Bariham, Ondigi and Kiio (2020:56) articulate that the Ministry of Education in Ghana came up with several interventions to manage teaching and learning amid the pandemic. Systems such as i-Box education portals, solar panels, and online learning multimedia laboratories to support quality teaching and learning during COVID-19 were implemented in the country. Although there was great concern about accessing quality education due to the pandemic in Ghanaian schools, remote teaching endorsed by the government to enable distance and online teaching was delivered through platforms such as the Internet, television, and radio (Tuffour et al., 2021:20). A comparative study done in Zimbabwe and Botswana by Mamvuto and Mannathoko (2022:111) reveals that the double-shift organisational model was introduced in schools as an option to reduce class sizes to maximise the management of teaching and learning. Consequently, in Zimbabwean high schools, the model entailed that grades rotationally attend on certain days of the week. In Botswana, learners had day shifts, some of which were attended during the mornings while others attended during the afternoon.

Jeilani (2021:2) argues that since most developed nations continued their education through the Internet and distance learning, Somalia was, among other countries, unprepared for such an educational shift. Technology access and high bandwidth Internet or smartphones amongst households hindered the successful learning process through distance learning in Somalian schools. This was because most communities fell in the low-income group in the country. Furthermore, continued education during the pandemic was restricted by incomplete textbook delivery, anticipated teaching changes, lack of teachers' motivation for a special salary, parental involvement, and limited space for contact time for group studies. Interrupted annual plans, principals worries and anxiety, sense of exclusion and isolation, lack of emergency government support, and lack of income were other factors that paralysed

the effective management of high school educators and learners during the COVID-19 crisis in Somalian schools (Jeilani, 2021:6).

Based on the management process focused on educators and learners, the online learning mechanism was challenged by most learners not having smartphones, laptops or even Internet connectivity, especially in rural areas of Namibia (Boer & Asino, 2021:34). The learners who had smartphones did not have data to access Internet connectivity. The e-Learning process was, therefore, hindered by the lack of adequate infrastructure in schools. Boer and Asino (2021:34) argue that the LFH committee intervened by creating booklets for learners accessed through WhatsApp groups or printed material collected from school by parents. Furthermore, lessons and revision documents were posted on WhatsApp groups per grade. Google classroom quizzes conducted through Zoom and Google document tutorials were also tried by learners but were characterised by low participation due to a lack of technological accessories. In addition, not all educators had Internet connectivity access at their homes, coupled with their negative view towards a government that they described as corrupt for the support of teaching and learning during times of crisis (Boer & Asino, 2021:34).

Digital devices such as tablets were provided to enhance teaching and learning during COVID-19, although experienced educators lacked the technological skills to operate them in the Gauteng Province, South Africa (Chisango & Marongwe, 2021:149). However, Boloka (2022:351) enlightened that educators in the Limpopo Province agreed that teaching and learning had to be halted until they were granted permission to start teaching on a rotational approach. It is further articulated that through the rotational method, learners were also managed for independent studies during the mornings, afternoons, and on Saturdays.

Van der Berg and Spaul (2020:16) highlighted that since most learners were managed from home in South Africa, technology was an optional means for the Department of Basic Education (DBE) to heed the call for provinces such as the Western Cape to form a partnership with the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC). This was aimed to provide a COVID-19 learner support programme via television and radio. The broadcasting initiative was scheduled for 1.5 hours per day across three television channels. Different subjects focused on specific curricular work that subject specialists

and educators presented through the media. However, Van der Berg and Spaul (2020:16) argue that although that was other means to assist learners, it amounted to less than 5% of the instructional time that learners would have received if they were to be physically at school. Furthermore, with the view that about 90% of households had access to mobile phones and 22% had computers, 10% of the households in the province had an Internet connection, which multiple learners in the same household shared such services (Van der Berg & Spaul, 2020:16).

Omodan (2020:267) states that in the Free State, learners were managed through the use of teaching mediums such as radio and the Internet since they were in their homes during the pandemic. Although these were suggested options by the provincial government during the lockdown, there was criticism against online methods since learners were excluded, especially those located in disadvantaged schools. This supports the notion that rural high schools before the advent of COVID-19 were already deprived of access to basic educational facilities and accommodating changes (Omodan, 2020:267).

Based on the studies conducted in some of the countries abroad, in Africa, and some provinces of South Africa, except for KwaZulu-Natal, where the study area is, it is evident that the process of managing educators and learners was more centred on the use of technology and distance learning during the pandemic although its enactment had some challenges.

2.5 THE ENVIRONMENT WHERE MANAGEMENT OF HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATORS AND LEARNERS WERE DONE DURING COVID-19

This section addresses the environment where high school educators and learners were managed during COVID-19. Studies conducted in India, Italy, Brazil, Russia, and Spain constitute part of the literature on the process of managing educators and learners. Furthermore, a discussion is conducted from the literature review in some African countries and parts of South Africa.

The suspension of teaching, learning, and examinations due to the lockdown compelled educators and learners to be managed through online platforms in Indian schools (Jena, 2020:12582). Various platforms such as Zoom, Google Meet,

Facebook, YouTube, and Skype were other platforms that enhanced educators' engagement with learners on matters of lesson delivery during school closures. Moreover, Indian schools used platforms such as WhatsApp groups of guardians, parents, learners, and educators for effective communication where they shared their difficulties through this E-medium. Italy, one of the world's developed countries, suddenly moved to distance learning due to the national lockdown (Doz et al., 2022:555). Learners in Italy moved from the traditional in-person instruction approach to the distance learning approach, where online educational programmes were carried on platforms such as television, radio, and take-home packages, including assignments and home activities (Doz et al., 2022:556).

Reimers (2022:2) asserts that the proper management of schools in Brazil was diminished by shocks and trauma experienced by educators and learners when their relatives succumbed to the virus. Consequently, this resulted in learners LFH and educators teaching from home. The demands of schoolwork had to be negotiated with other home activities, often sharing limited space to continue LFH. Moreover, teaching and learning were done through digital devices, especially for those who were fortunate to have access to connectivity. Costin and Coutinho (2022:49) state that the government in the city of Senador Canedo, Brazil, supported the use of YouTube and radio channels. Furthermore, there was a provision for USB drivers with pre-loaded activities for learners who had computers at home but no access to the Internet to manage teaching and learning remotely. Educators were also encouraged to register on an online domain to share information with learners for the entire period of the pandemic (Costin & Coutinho, 2022:49).

Kosaretsky et al., (2022:234) allude that in Russian schools, the management of educators and learners took place in various regions where different methods, such as creating mirror sites and hosting education resources, were launched to reach communities where learners were mainly found. Moreover, many online platforms, such as Yandex Textbook and Uchi.ru, offered free content to help learners with their academic activities. Educators were also offered express courses and consultations through recorded video guides, training webinars, and tutor centres. Learners were also referred to hotlines where consultation was done for distance learning. However, in the Russian region of Siberia, most rural schools lacked Internet access, and as a

result, educators were obliged to bring homework assignments to collection points from where parents and learners were gathered as well as referring them to televised educational programmes (Kosaretsky et al., 2022:235). Moliner et al., (2021:180) argue that since classrooms were relatively small and had a low environment per learner ratio in Spain, most learners were obliged to attend on alternate days. Moreover, through distance learning, learners were only managed from home during a nationwide COVID-19 lockdown in the country. Consequently, most learners in all grades in Spain were assigned tasks to complete at home, and they did not attend in-person exams due to the lockdown (Moliner et al., 2021:180).

According to Rezk et al. (2020:153), the abrupt closure of schools in Egypt created an opportunity for school activities to be managed online. Private schools instantly moved into online learning as they were reasonably resourced, while public schools followed since they were still in the traditional approach and not adequately resourced. The move of Egypt's education system from a traditional learning approach to minimise the spread of the virus indicated that the management of educators and learners relied more on the online approach. Tuffour et al., (2021:21) draw attention to the management of high schools in Ghana during COVID-19, where several learners were to stay home indefinitely. Even though learners who were underprivileged and stayed in hard-to-reach areas had to continue learning, the pandemic forced them to use technology. Interventions for managing educators and learners in Ghana encompassed distance learning and home-based learning, where learners were academically reinforced by educators remotely from their homes for learning to continue (Tuffour et al., 2021:25).

There is no clear evidence of the environment in which both educators and learners were managed in Somalia since schools were closed during the pandemic. Jeilani (2021:6) affirms that due to the extreme impact of COVID-19 on the normal learning environment, schools were closed because rent was not paid for the high schools. In Namibia, Boer and Asino (2021:36) point out that educators were working from home but were ill-disciplined to manage the learning process amongst learners. Some educators opted to only work through WhatsApp groups rather than attend schools, and material was to be collected by learners from villages. However, it was difficult for educators to reach parents (Boer & Asino, 2021:36).

Msiza (2022:2) informed that due to the lockdown that was imposed by the government, social media and other online platforms were capitalised in the Mpumalanga Province to manage both educators and learners remotely. Consequently, one of the most prominent platforms that principals and educators used was WhatsApp. In the Eastern Cape Province, Mutongoza et al., (2023:152) reveal that schools in the province shifted from the traditional method of contact-based learning to a more blended form to lessen the spread of the virus within schools. This was done through remote learning, which obligated school principals to organise resources to instil the technological culture amongst educators and manage learners' different subject needs. Almost 5-10% of learners continued LFH in the Western Cape despite challenges such as inadequate computers and Internet connection (Van der Berg & Spaul, 2020). Moreover, less than half of learners in each class had computer and Internet access in no-fee schools, compared to private schools, where 90% had access to such services.

While drawing from the sentiments of the authors who conducted the studies in Mpumalanga, Eastern Cape, and Western Cape, it is evident that although school managers were willing to manage schools through physical contact (traditional approach), both educators and learners had to be managed remotely using technology to minimise the spread of the pandemic and at the same time securing instructional time.

2.6 REASONS WHY HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATORS AND LEARNERS WERE MANAGED DURING COVID-19

This section focuses on why high school educators and learners were managed during COVID-19. The discussion is argued from the sentiments of other researchers who conducted research overseas in countries such as Cyprus, Canada, Brazil, Russia, and Spain. In Africa, discussions are put forward from countries such as Nigeria, Ghana, and Namibia. The provinces of South Africa, such as Eastern Cape, Mpumalanga, Western Cape, and Free State, are part of the areas in which the literature is reviewed.

It is exciting to note that there was a need for high school educators and learners to be effectively and efficiently managed even during the hike of the pandemic. Effective management would require school managers to manage school activities and the spread of COVID-19 at once. Kafa and Pashiardis (2020:46) argue that although the physical presence of a school principal was incontrovertibly significant in Cyprus schools, the effort to manage and co-ordinate the online learning process was a catalyst and essential for principals to control the sudden change during the pandemic. Harris and Jones (2020:246) further maintain that school managers on the disruptive journey of COVID-19 were defined by their determination, hope, and steadfast belief that whatever happened, whatever the cost, and whatever the scale of the challenge, they had to continue exhausting their powers to defend the learning of all learners in the country. Similarly, Hauseman, Darazsi and Kent (2020:73) edify that Canadian principals and other school managers felt a heightened sense of responsibility in supporting educators and learners' achievement of academic and non-academic outcomes. In this regard, school managers ensured that educators worked effectively in using technology to communicate with learners, thereby possessing confidence in new and different kinds of academic duties. Through the managerial support of the principals during the challenging period, there was a high level of transparency and significantly lowered anxiety among educators and learners in Canadian schools (Hauseman et al., 2020:73).

Undeniably, Brazilian education was not as prioritised as other countries during the pandemic. Costin and Coutinho (2022:52) affirm that contrary to other global educational systems that prioritised education as a human right, Brazil chose to facilitate the economy by reopening services such as malls and pubs. With that criticised, it has been seen jeopardising the right to education and raising concerns about learners' mental health and their ability to continue with formal education. Nonetheless, schools that offered sustainable plans to reopen classes were praised since they safeguarded the educational opportunities of the learners (Costin & Coutinho, 2022:52).

In Russia, Kosaretsky et al., (2022:239) argued that international organisations proposed measures on continued school management during the pandemic aimed at learners to complete their academic year and educators to plan academic activities for the next year. Moreover, it was necessary to manage the well-being and psychological

health of learners because of the anticipated negative outcomes of the pandemic. That is, learners were to feel the sense of social collaboration, face-to-face communication, or educators networking with their learners in the distance learning format to increase curriculum determination (Kosaretsky et al., 2022:239). Moliner et al., (2021:180) state that the management of Spanish learners had to continue even during the pandemic since the alternative digital platform was a familiar method to most learners, and most parents expected their learners to be proficient enough to enrol in electronic platform to protect any educational losses during the pandemic. The practice of learners attending on alternate days to slow the spread of the virus gave learners the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the experience of distance learning in challenging times like the global pandemic (Moliner, 2021:180).

Samuel (2020:98) asserts that it was necessary to effectively manage schools during the pandemic by implementing health precautions while school activities continue in Nigeria. This was undoubtedly to help learners have time to prepare for their external examinations so as not to have immense failure. Secondly, the education system was to be kept running to avoid complete collapse of the system in the future (Samuel, 2020:98). It was essential to assess not only the education of the learners during the pandemic in Ghana but learners from disadvantaged backgrounds in terms of childcare challenges, nutritional challenges and resultant financial cost implication to households who could not work should not be disregarded (Tuffour et al., 2021:21). This implies that the management of learners during the pandemic was also crucial even in evaluating their situations at their homes during lockdowns so that distance learning could not be disrupted by socioeconomic factors (Tuffour et al., 2021:21).

The management of educators during COVID-19 in Namibia was imperative because it surfaced educator experiences with learning design that could be adopted in challenging times (Boer & Asino, 2021:2). Furthermore, educators were to be better prepared in creating learning materials for their professional development through online platform. The Namibian government also mandated high schools adopt e-Learning during the pandemic to address learning needs, keep learners occupied and engaged in academic work, and influence practice and policy in future emergencies (Boer & Asino, 2021:30).

Mutongoza (2021:158) edifies that during the pandemic, principals in the Eastern Cape had a responsibility to promote a sense of belonging and make the relationship between the school, learners, parents, and the community towards the delivery of clear guidelines for educators and learners. That is, principals in the province had to manage by focusing on the vision and mission and improving the instructional programme as an academic mandate they have been obligated to carry. The main focus of effective management from the principals was to simultaneously strive to rebuild broken academic practices in communities and enhance the safety of educators and learners by ensuring effective communication in cases of risk, imposing government COVID-19 protocols, and establishing disaster management plans (Mutongoza, 2021:154).

Msiza (2022:8) proclaimed that when no measures were to be implemented to protect the academic year, learners from poor socioeconomic backgrounds in the Mpumalanga Province would miss out most on learning. Furthermore, it was the school manager's right to ensure that educators work to achieve the school's aims and objectives by bringing to life the school's vision and achieving the desired outcomes even during the pandemic (Msiza, 2022:9). In a different view, most schools in the Western Cape had been interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, so it was important to manage both educators and learners during the crisis since learners had already lost 155 days of normal schooling. If schools continued to close during that period, learners would have lost between 14% and 33% of the regular academic year (Van der Berg & Spaul, 2020:1). The DBE managed to retain the Matric examinations in 2020 despite the pandemic disruption of the schooling system, considering that the exit grade would have consequences for learners' future academic and work opportunities (Wills & Van der Berg, 2022:24).

Omodan (2020:267) asserts that it was important to improve the psycho-sociality of learners to cope with all the threats posed by the COVID-19 pandemic in the Free State Province. That is, the involvement of educators who are the closest authorities around learners to recognise and be sensitive to managing them and their psycho-social challenges. Omodan (2020:267) further argues that the relationship between educators and learners cannot be ignored as it results in a positive connection between learners' social interaction and academic performance. Educators' managerial insight was also improved to develop envisaged learners and create an

effective and efficient way of managing the effect of social stress and anxiety amongst learners. Moreover, the spirit of Ubuntu (a person is a person because of others) was to be cultivated by educators on their learners during the crisis where space of oneness, unity, interrelatedness, love, compassion, and humanity were to be recognised for a better quality of life (Omodan, 2020:268). The management of schools during COVID-19 allowed schools to propose Ubuntu through integrated ideas and foresight towards nurturing and developing plans to increase the potential of the education system (Omodan, 2020:268).

2.7 CONCLUSION

Literature on the management of high school educators and learners during the COVID-19 pandemic has been reviewed with a focus on the sentiments of various scholars who explored their arguments from a global perspective, African countries, and South African provinces, with the exception of KwaZulu-Natal where the study is conducted. In a nutshell, during COVID-19, the management of educators and learners and the processes thereof was diverse in parts of the world where reliance was, amongst other things, on the availability of a country's physical resources (computers, mobile phones, electricity), Internet, and data costs. The managers of high school educators and learners involved principals of schools, other SMT members, and authorities from the national, regional and or provincial governments. Furthermore, non-profit organisations and private sectors executed the management process in countries such as Spain and Somalia. Private tutors were also among the stakeholders who took the initiative to manage learners through video tutorials.

The environment in which educators and learners were managed was also dependent on the severity of the transmission of the virus. For instance, several high schools, especially those in developed countries, preferred to adopt distance learning and the use of technology to manage educators and learners. However, in Africa and some provinces in South Africa, learners were managed through the integration of a rotational approach and facilitation through media platforms, namely WhatsApp, radio, and television, to mention a few. The last part of the literature review gave insight into the reasons for managing educators and learners during COVID-19.

Drawing from the arguments of different researchers, their findings explored that most high schools in Africa and South Africa were unprepared when the pandemic intensified. Most developed nations continued with their education through the Internet and distance learning, but African countries were not ready for such an educational shift (Jeilani, 2021:2). However, the efforts to save the instructional time in the academic year depended on integrated management strategies of countries and accessibility of technology and physical resources. This posed challenges to countries and some provinces of South Africa whose education systems were crippled by underprivileged school environments.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Literature on the research topic was reviewed in Chapter 2. This chapter focuses on research methodology. The research design, research paradigm, research approach, and research methods constitute the basis for the discussion of the research methodology. Furthermore, the purpose and importance of the qualitative research is discussed. The study's population, sample, invitation of participants, ethical matters, data collection method, data analysis, and ethical considerations are described in this chapter. Issues of reliability, trustworthiness and validity are also explained. Lastly, a conclusion to the methodology is also drawn in this chapter.

3.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology is a systematic way to solve a research problem (Gounder, 2019:10; Patel & Patel, 2019:48). Chivanga and Monyai (2021:12) define research methodology as a procedure which is undertaken by (a) researcher(s) to seek answers to identified research problems. It includes philosophical assumptions to provide directions for the collection and analysis of data from various sources in a study (Dawadi, Shrestha & Giri, 2021:27). Research methodology is characterised by the work plan through which researchers undergo in describing, explaining, and predicting phenomenon (Gounder, 2019:10). It consists of the concepts of research paradigm, theoretical model, phases, and qualitative techniques through which research is carried systematically and scientifically (Patel & Patel, 2019:48).

3.2.1 The purpose of qualitative research

According to Mohajan (2018:2), qualitative research is a form of social action that focuses on interpreting and making sense of people's experiences to understand the social reality of a phenomenon. Cropley (2022:38) posits that the purpose of qualitative research is to describe and analyse the world as it is experienced, interpreted, and understood by people during their everyday lives and within their context. Interestingly, Mouton (2022:175) argues that the strength of qualitative research is that people study

according to their own definitions of the world. This reveals that the meaning in which people give to phenomena focuses on their subjective experiences and is sensitive to the contexts in which they interact.

Ugwu and Eze (2023:20) state that qualitative research aims to achieve a broad understanding of social phenomena in their natural environments. This means that reliance is on the direct experiences of people as agents of meaning-making in their daily lives. Moreover, qualitative research focuses on 'why' rather than 'what' of social phenomena (Ugwu & Eze, 2023:20). Mohajan (2018:2) affirms that qualitative research is exploratory; thus, it seeks to explain 'how' and 'why' a particular social phenomenon operates as it does in a certain context. It also helps researchers understand the social world we live in and why things are the way they are (Mohajan, 2018:2).

3.2.2 The importance of qualitative research

The qualitative study is central to the telephone interview method for data collection. Mohajan (2018:7) states that methods typically used in qualitative research include interviews and observations, case studies, and surveys. This study's interviews incorporated open-ended questions which included probing whenever there was a need.

It is imperative to note that the qualitative method of research, which took an interview approach, was identified as relevant for this study because of several reasons which align with those cited by Mohajan (2018:21). The reasons thereof include the following: firstly, interviews are unlimited to certain questions; they can be redirected by researchers in real-time. Secondly, this approach is reliable and objective for the researcher; this implies that the actual responses of interviewees seek to achieve the objectives of the study. Thirdly, the qualitative method is characterised by smaller sample sizes, which saves costs (Mohajan, 2018:21). Since the sample size of the study is six participants, this suggests that this sample represents the entire population; thus, time constraints and financial costs are saved. Data is based on human experiences and observations in qualitative research, making it more compelling and powerful (Mohajan, 2018:21). Since the study is based on exploring the management of high school educators and learners during COVID-19,

respondents gave their experiences in this regard. The fourth reason to value the qualitative method is that it increases opportunities to develop empirically supported new ideas and theories for in-depth and longitudinal explorations of leadership phenomena, as well as for more relevance to practitioners (Mohajan, 2018:21). As a result, the outcomes of the research findings in this study will determine if they could form the basis of managerial ideas that may be synthesised and employed by different stakeholders in future crises. Dejaeghere, Morrow, Richardson, Schowengerdt, Hinton and Munoz Boudet (2020:4) further add to the importance of using the qualitative research method in a study like the one at hand. The first usefulness of this type of research is that it better understands individuals' behaviours, emotions, and experiences. Secondly, it allows respondents to highlight and justify their attitudes, opinions, and actions. Lastly, the application of qualitative research methods in a study facilitates a better understanding of perceiving phenomena, social structures, and patterns.

Drawing from the purpose and importance of research methodology discussed above, it can be argued that research methodology is a route researchers take to gather scientific data to find solutions to a research problem. The research design, research paradigm, research approach, and research methods constituent the research methodology in this study and are discussed below.

3.2.3 Research design

The empirical study's design was central to a case study. Gounder (2019:31) articulates that a case study allows data to be obtained from multiple sources of evidence, such as interviews and documents. Mutongoza, Olawale and Mzilikazi (2021:150) accentuate that a case study design allows the researcher to get a deeper insight into selected cases for investigation. Consequently, this study obtained data from semi-structured telephone interviews and government documents. Mouton (2022:142) asserts that case studies are usually qualitative in nature. They aim to provide an in-depth description of a small number of people (respondents), which may range from one to about 30. To explore the management of high school educators and learners during COVID-19, six schools were randomly selected from the 35 at the

Ubombo CMC in uMkhanyakude District. The sample size constitutes approximately 17% of the total number of schools.

3.2.4 Research paradigm

Dawadi et al., (2021:25) define a research paradigm as a philosophical position about the world or nature of reality and how it is approached by researchers to understand it. There are different types of paradigms that researchers could apply in their research studies. These include positivism, post-positivism, constructivism, pragmatism, and interpretivism. Dawadi et al., (2021:26) differentiate these paradigms. Positivism entails the scientific quantification of data. It differs from other paradigms in that in positivism, only that which can be objectively measured by, for example, diameter, length, size, weight, etc., that can be seen or touched is acceptable. Positivism analyses data statistically only. According to positivism, normative statements cannot be confirmed by senses, but by quantifiable scientific statements. Positivism, therefore, allows quantitative researchers to use tools to obtain objective findings of their studies. Dawadi et al., (2021:26) argue that contrary to the positivism paradigm is the post-positivism paradigm, which involves both quantitative (surveys) and qualitative (interviews) methods which allow interaction between the researcher and the participants. Dawadi et al., (2021:26) maintain that what makes constructivism different from the positivism and post-positivism paradigms is that it is based on the evidence that reality is contextual and a product of human interaction with the world. The active construction of knowledge is realised when there is human interaction with the world. The paradigm of pragmatism allows the researcher to have a pluralistic position of gathering all sorts of data to answer research questions (Dawadi et al., 2021:26). Interpretivism respects the subjective meaning of social action and, therefore, understands social phenomena and interprets them further (Dawadi et al., 2021:26).

Guided by the qualitative method, the interpretivism paradigm informed the study. This paradigm is, therefore, contextualised to explore the management of high school educators and learners during COVID-19. Dawadi et al., (2021:26) state that the interpretivists see the understanding and interpretation of social phenomena. In this paradigm, qualitative researchers use data collection tools such as interviews, focus

groups, and participant observation to understand the situation (Dawadi et al., 2021:26). Pervin and Mokhtar (2022:421) edify that in the interpretivist paradigm, researchers craft their questions in a way that focuses on understanding the 'how' and 'why' questions to find answers to qualitative research questions. Therefore, the semi-structured telephone interview was appropriate for the qualitative research in answering the research questions through the participants' responses. The reason for the choice of interpretivism in this narrative study is due to its benefits. Firstly, this paradigm can incorporate various methodologies, such as a case study or ethnography, as they provide in-depth life experiences of the respondents or narrators (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022:422). As a case study was applied in the research design, respondents' in-depth experiences in managing high school educators and learners during COVID-19 were explored. The second advantage is that researchers can probe interviewees to establish their thoughts, values, prejudices, perceptions, and perspectives using interactive interviews (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022:422).

3.2.5 Research approach

Researchers may choose from a wide range of research approaches to conduct a qualitative study (Elmusharaf, 2019:11), including ethnography, phenomenology, grounded theory, and case studies. Elmusharaf (2019:11) defines ethnography as the study of people in naturally occurring fields by means of data collection methods which focus on their social meanings and ordinary activities where the researcher is involved in data collection systematically. Phenomenology, on the other hand, is an approach to philosophy and a method of inquiry that focuses on generating exhaustive descriptions of phenomena and interpreting everyday experiences to achieve an understanding more than description. Grounded theory is an inductive method that generates theory from data. This approach allows the researcher to start with an abstract idea or theory and then test propositions related to the theory (Elmusharaf, 2019:11).

The relevancy of the case study approach is therefore explained for the study. Elmusharaf (2019:11) states that a case study is an approach to exploring a phenomenon within its context using different data sources. Figueiredo (2018:31) adds that a case study incorporates the views of all the respondents in the case being

studied. Case studies can be exploratory, explanatory, and descriptive (Figueiredo, 2018:34). Exploratory case studies involve data collection undertaken prior to the definition of the research question and hypothesis. Descriptive case studies include prepositions and questions about a phenomenon, which are scrutinised and articulated as the case unfolds. However, explanatory case studies aim at investigating a phenomenon which is characterised by a lack of preliminary research (Figueiredo, 2018:34). The explanatory case study is relevant to the study because the interviewees address the 'how,' 'who,' 'what,' 'where,' and 'why' research questions. Figueiredo (2018:31) affirms that in a case study, the research questions are most likely to be 'how' and 'why,' and they are the point of departure for the researcher. Elmusharaf (2019:11) states that a case study traces events involving the same participants, enabling the analysis to reflect changes and adjustments. As a result, a case study approach in this research explores the management of high school educators and learners during COVID-19.

3.2.6 Research methods

There are three basic types of research methods, namely quantitative, qualitative, and mixed method research (Rutberg, 2018: 209; Mehrad & Zangeneh, 2019:3; Bouikidis, 2020:2; Taherdoost, 2022:55). Rutberg (2018:209) posits that the key word in quantitative research is measurement whereas the meaning is given to a phenomenon in qualitative research. Kandel and Bouikidis (2020:2) proclaim that quantitative research focuses on quantifying things statistically, and qualitative research describes how people feel or think about a particular subject, situation, phenomenon, or event and gives meaning to it. Mixed method research encompasses both qualitative and quantitative research methods in single research. Taherdoost (2022:55) believes that integrating both quantitative and qualitative research can help researchers address complex research circumstances in different research fields.

Mehrad and Zangeneh (2019:3) distinguish remarkably between qualitative and quantitative research. Quantitative research is characterised by a researcher who largely focuses on deductive testing of theory. This is centred on cause and effect thinking, reduction to specific variables, hypothesis and questions, and use of measurements and observations. Qualitative research, on the other hand, focuses on

the generation of theory centred on an open-ended and flexible approach to assessment, narratives, ethnographies, and case studies. What is featured in quantitative research is that the researcher is not keen on generic questions such as what, who, when, where, and other related details that might be of interest to a qualitative researcher (Mehrad & Zangeneh, 2019:4). It is in view of the preceding discussion and research questions that the qualitative research method was deemed suitable for use in this study.

Cropley (2022:38) points out that the goal of qualitative research is to describe and analyse the world as it is experienced, interpreted, and understood by people during their everyday lives and within their context. Interestingly, Mouton (2022:175) agrees that the strength of using the qualitative research method is that it enables a researcher to study people in their own settings, define the world in their own way, and give meaning to the phenomenon. It also focuses on the subjective experiences of individuals and is sensitive to the contexts in which people interact with each other. Therefore, the researcher aimed to explore the management of high school educators and learners during COVID-19 by applying the qualitative research method.

3.3 POPULATION

The concepts of population and target population bring a slight confusion in academic research. The need to differentiate between population and target population cannot be overlooked because it provides a backbone of any qualitative study (Willie, 2022:521). In this section, the researcher clarifies these concepts through definitions before contextualising the population to the study. Furthermore, sampling and its application to the study are explained in the next section.

Shukla (2020:1) defines population as a set or group of all the units on which the research findings are to be applied. Similarly, Naseri, Hussin, Esa, Aziz and Nordin (2021:654) state that population refers to the entire group of people, events, or things of interest which a researcher wishes to investigate. Willie (2022:521) broadly refers to a population as a group of individuals restricted to a geographical region or certain institutions, such as schools, hospitals, and health areas, with at least one common characteristic. The population of this study consists of high schools. This study focuses on school managers who share similar management roles of educators and learners.

Thus, the exact population of this study is school managers in the Ubombo CMC, uMkhanyakude District, KwaZulu-Natal. School managers are, in the context of this study, SMT members and include high school principals, deputy principals (DPs), and departmental heads (DHs) (Employment of Educators Act No. 76 of 1998).

Casteel and Bridier (2021:344) define a target population as a specific, conceptually restricted group of potential participants to whom the researcher may have access that represents the nature of the population of interest. Willie (2022:521) affirms that a target population refers to all members who meet the criteria specified for a research study. Since the target population should be exclusive enough to eliminate participants who do not represent the study's needs (Casteel & Bridier, 2021:344), the researcher considered members of the SMTs who had at least three years of experience in a management position. That was done to minimise misrepresentation of the population of interest (Willie, 2022:521).

3.4 SAMPLING

According to Majid (2018:3), sampling involves the process of selecting a statistically representative sample of individuals from the population of interest. Lombardini (2019:1) attests that sampling is the process of selecting a group of subjects from the larger population being studied. Shukla (2020:5) distinguishes sampling from a sample by referring to sampling as a process of selecting a sample from the population, whereas a sample is a part of the population that represents it completely.

There are two basic types of sampling, namely probability sampling and non-probability sampling (Pace, 2021:4). Probability sampling, also known as random selection, refers to the randomisation implying that the targeted population sample has a known, equal, fair and non-zero chance of being selected. In contrast, a non-probability sampling (non-random selection) is applied where the choice of being chosen is unknown to the participants. The non-probability method is utilised within qualitative or exploratory research because the researcher aims to explore an idea in its richness and depth (Pace, 2021:9). The non-probability sampling method is used purposively to explore the management of high school educators and learners during COVID-19 at the Ubombo CMC. Six high schools (17%) were selected from the 35

schools in the Ubombo CMC at uMkhanyakude District. Thus, a total of six experienced members of the SMT (high school principals, DPs, and DHs) form the study sample. That is, one participant was selected from each school to constitute the sample size.

3.5 INVITATION OF THE PARTICIPANTS

This research study aimed to explore the management of high school educators and learners during COVID-19 at the Ubombo CMC. Inviting the rightful participants that would help achieve the qualitative study's aim was undoubtedly important. The UNISA policy on research ethics was considered when inviting participants. The process included an invitation letter outlining the study's purpose, confidentiality issues, participants' rights to withdraw from the interview, and the fact that participation in the interview was voluntary. Appendix B shows the request to conduct research from the Department of Education. After being granted permission by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education (Ubombo CMC) (refer to Appendix C) to conduct research from the selected schools, invitation letters were distributed to six high school principals (refer to Appendix D), their respective DPs (refer to Appendix E), and DHs (refer to Appendix F) who were identified and selected as prospective participants to respond to the questionnaire of the study. They were each given consent forms to complete and sign before the telephonic interview process (refer to Appendices G, H, and I). It was further explained to each participant that their information would remain anonymous and confidential and that the interview content would only be discussed with the supervisor (refer to Appendices G, H, and I).

3.6 DATA COLLECTION METHOD

The qualitative telephone semi-structured interview was deemed suitable for the data collection process. This is because the method was perceived as a feasible technique that would enable interviewees to respond at any convenient time other than physical contact, which demands interviewing only during the day. The interview was scheduled to be 20-30 minutes long (refer to Appendices D, E, and F). Open-ended questions were generated from the sub-research questions. Probing was done (as and when

needed) to help the researcher explore responses relevant to the research questions. Robinson (2023:1) reveals that probing achieves access to extra detail and depth via verbal prompts to clarify, elaborate, illustrate, or explain a prior answer to an interview question that the participant has already given. Appropriate and ethical use of probing during interviews is a skill that should be intensively developed and used by qualitative researchers (Robinson, 2023:14). Data were also gathered from secondary sources. The latter included government policy documents and guidelines such as the SASA No. 84 of 1996, the Employment of Educators Act No. 76 of 1998, and the South African Council of Educators Act No. 31 of 2000. Other sources referred to include, among others, those published by bodies such as the United Nations (UN), the World Health Organization (WHO), and the African Union. Relevant published articles, books, and textbooks were also referred to as data were collected.

Each question was asked at least twice in English to ensure that it was credible and that each participant understood what was required of them. Furthermore, participants were allowed to express themselves conveniently in their preferred language, such as isiZulu. However, their responses were transcribed and translated from the audio recording device into English to ensure they were valid when data were analysed and interpreted. Moreover, it was also done so that whoever is unfamiliar with isiZulu can access the data in the future. An effort was made to avoid influencing the transcribed information by not editing it. Although it was a challenge when respondents responded in IsiZulu, the transcribers typed information as is. The qualitative telephone interview was therefore relevant for this study because it aimed at exploring the management of high school educators and learners during COVID-19 at the Ubombo CMC.

3.7 DATA ANALYSIS

Thematic data analysis was identified as most relevant for analysing and interpreting the data of this study (Swain, 2018:4; Peel, 2020:7; Finlay, 2021:103; Morgan, 2022:2080). Peel (2020:7) defines thematic data analysis as a flexible and useful research tool that organises and simplifies the complexity of data into meaningful and manageable codes, categories, and themes. It is a method for identifying and encoding patterns of meaning in primary qualitative research (Swain, 2018:4; Finlay, 2021:103). The method pinpoints and organises the themes which the analyst deems

to be important in the description of the phenomenon under study and are often associated with a specific research question (Swain, 2018:4). Morgan (2022:2080) states that thematic data analysis is a method for developing themes, which are patterns in the data that researchers collect.

Finlay (2021:103) outlines six steps of the thematic analysis. The steps are unpacked and contextualised for the study below:

Step 1: Becoming familiar with the data

In this step, the researcher becomes involved and familiar with the data or transcripts through reading and re-reading them, as well as writing early notes. Maguire and Delahunt (2017:3355) argue that the researcher should be familiar with the entire body of data corpus, such as interviews, before going further. Based on the proposed study, familiarising with the amount of transcribed data will be the point of departure for data analysis.

Step 2: Generation of initial codes

The data is organised in a more meaningful and systematic way at this stage. Concise labels are put on data to identify key features. All the codes and data extracts are collated in the coding process. Mukuna and Aloka (2020:140) argue that specific themes will be derived from the research title and research questions, thus coding responses in relation to the themes. Msiza (2022:27) affirms that coding allows the analysing and classifying of data carefully according to the themes that answer the research question and the sub-questions. Coding reduces lots of data into small chunks of meaning (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017:3356). The proposed study will, therefore, encompass the organising of key data so that codes are generated meaningfully and informed by the research questions.

Step 3: Searching for themes

This step involves pulling codes and data together so that the pattern in the data is described. The active role of the qualitative researcher is to identify patterns across the dataset. It requires the researcher to be deliberative, reflective, and thorough (Peel, 2020:4). Data linked to each theme are organised, and the researcher becomes

selective in grouping categories of meaning together. Consequently, based on the transcribed data, patterns related to the themes will be grouped to address the research questions.

Step 4: Reviewing themes

The researcher checks that the themes relate to the data and tells a convincing story that answers the research questions. That is, themes are modified and developed by the researcher by collapsing them together, splitting them further or discarding irrelevant ones. It will be necessary for the proposed study to review themes by linking those that are related, differentiate some, and or even eliminate those irrelevant to the four sub-research questions.

Step 5: Defining and naming themes

This is said to be an artful phase where the researcher refines and crafts themes to reveal their essence. The analysis of each theme is detailed for a story to be told. This is where the researcher finds a concise, informative, and interesting title of each theme. The relevancy of the story told in the proposed study will therefore rely on well-crafted themes linked to the research questions.

Step 6: Writing up

This is the final phase, in which the researcher writes the themes into a broader report. The weaving of an analytic narrative into a persuasive story that uses informative and data extracts as evidence is involved in this stage. Peel (2020:4) affirms that through thematic and data interpretation, researchers create rich descriptions that emanate from data extracts, using the participants' own words to support their interpretations. The crux of this stage will be interesting for the researcher to write an informative qualitative report for the proposed study.

Therefore, having drawn from the relevancy of the thematic data analysis for a qualitative study, the researcher aims to use this method to describe the interviewees' responses in answering how high school educators and learners were managed during COVID-19 at the Ubombo CMC.

3.8 ETHICAL MATTERS

According to Arifin (2018:30), ethical considerations in a qualitative study have a particular resonance due to the in-depth nature of the study process, which is central to protecting human subjects through the application of ethical principles. Flemming and Zegwaard (2018:210) point out that human research ethics committees cannot grant approval for research after the data collection has begun; therefore, it was important to gain approval before the commencement of data collection. As a result, after approval from the CEDU Research Committee, as stipulated in the UNISA Research Ethics policy, participants were informed of their right to confidentiality, anonymity, and privacy before data were collected. The approval letters from the CEDU Research Committee and the Ubombo CMC are attached as Appendices C and J, respectively. Other attachments related to ethical matters appear in the appendices, which includes letters of request to participants and consent forms. Therefore, ethical matters in this study included issues of informed consent, anonymity, and confidentiality, which are discussed below.

3.8.1 Consent

To participate in a study, participants need to be adequately informed about the research, comprehend the information, and have the power of freedom of choice to allow them to participate or not participate (Arifin, 2018:30). In this study, the participants were physically approached to explain the purpose of the study and the process of data collection. Grounded on matters of consent, the researcher provided an informed consent form to participants (Appendix E, G, and I) for them to sign in agreement that they would be part of the study. Furthermore, participants were informed that their participation in the interview was voluntary and that if they wished to withdraw, they could do so at no cost. During withdrawal, their data will not be further used in the study.

3.8.2 Anonymity

The issues of anonymity and confidentiality seem related but differ in some important respects (Bos, 2020:156). Anonymity is clarified and explained in relation to the study;

thus, confidentiality is explained in the next section. Bos (2020:156) defines anonymity as the degree to which the source of information can be identified. Flemming and Zegwaard (2018:211) state that anonymity means that the participant's identity is unknown to the researcher. Although Bos (2020:156) argues that anonymity seems like a safer guaranteed matter for protecting participants' identities, this study relies on audio recording for data collection. Consequently, the researcher valued anonymity by informing the participants that their identities would not be revealed; hence pseudonyms were used. However, the researcher relied heavily on confidentiality rather than anonymity, which is discussed below.

3.8.3 Confidentiality

Bos (2020:156) defines confidentiality as an agreement between the researcher and the participant not to disclose specific personal information. In this regard, the researcher records information but promises not to disclose it to others. Flemming and Zegwaard (2018:211) add that confidentiality means the participant's identity is known to the researcher, but the data was de-identified, and the identity is kept confidential. Grounded on the sentiments of Flemming and Zegwaard (2018:211) that confidentiality is mainly used in interviews, the researcher relied on this. In this regard, participants were informed that their responses would be recorded for data analysis purposes only and that their identity would not be revealed in the study. The privacy and confidentiality of the information were managed during the telephone interview on matters such as revealing who the caller is and requesting to be in a quiet environment to ensure a noise-free recording.

3.9 RELIABILITY, TRUSTWORTHINESS AND VALIDITY

Coleman (2021:1) argues that although validity and reliability have traditionally been associated with quantitative research, they are now also being applied to qualitative research. This section, therefore, provides this qualitative study's reliability, trustworthiness, and validity. Firstly, reliability is explained, followed by trustworthiness and validity.

3.9.1 Reliability

Coleman (2021:1) defines reliability as the application and appropriateness of the methods undertaken and the integrity of the conclusions. It is the degree to which the data and data analysis are acceptable and reliable (Mamba, 2019:12). The study ensured reliability through the use of audio recording and transcribing interviews verbatim.

3.9.2 Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, both validity and reliability are largely concerned with trustworthiness (Coleman, 2021:1). Therefore, in this study, trustworthiness was ensured through the reliability and validity of data. Firstly, transcribing data for the purpose of coding was done. The audio recording was played several times to properly transfer the original data during analysis. The themes in line with the research objectives were thoroughly arranged. The accuracy of the data was confirmed with the participants through validity to ensure that the transcripts were original from the interviews and that no other irrelevant information appeared.

3.9.3 Validity

Validity refers to the correctness or credibility of a description, conclusion, explanation, interpretation, or other sort of account (Coleman, 2021:1). Credibility refers to trustworthiness and how believable a study is (Noble & Heale, 2019:67). In this study, credible information based on the validity of data analysis, interpretation, and conclusions were ensured through triangulation. Noble and Heale (2019:67) define triangulation as a method used to increase the credibility and validity of research findings. It is an effort to help explore and explain complex human behaviour using a variety of methods to offer a more balanced explanation to readers (Noble & Heale, 2019:67). Consequently, to ensure that there was no reliance on a single data collection method, data were not only obtained from interviewees, but from secondary sources such as government documents.

3.10 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the research methodology of the study. The research design, research paradigm, research approach, and research methods were incorporated into the discussion of the research methodology. Moreover, the purpose and importance of qualitative research, study population, sample, invitation of participants, ethical matters, data collection method, data analysis, and ethical matters were elaborated in the chapter. Lastly, issues of reliability, trustworthiness and validity were also explained.

Drawing from the discussed elements of research methodology, it can be concluded that they guided the researcher in gathering scientific data, which aimed to find solutions to the research problem. Consequently, the analysis and discussion of the results of the study are presented in the next chapter (Chapter 4).

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The research methodology is presented in Chapter 3. The method of data collection described in Chapter 3 was deemed to be qualitative in nature. Data were collected using a telephone semi-structured interview and document analysis. Furthermore, the interpretivism paradigm and the case study approach were deemed relevant for collecting and analysing data in the study. Therefore, this chapter entails the analysis and interpretation of the collected data. It begins with the provision of biographical data of respondents who participated in the study. Secondly, thematic data analysis is briefly explained and contextualised as a tool used for data analysis. The themes and sub-themes that emerged from the responses of respondents and were guided by the research questions are arranged. An in-depth discussion of the findings and interpretation of the data will follow. Lastly, a conclusion for the chapter is provided.

4.2 BIOGRAPHICAL DATA OF PARTICIPANTS FOR THE STUDY

The biographical data of participants who participated in the study is presented in this section. The summary of the biographical data is shown in Table 4.1 below. In a nutshell, six experienced participants of the SMT (two DHs, two DPs, and two principals) participated in the study.

Table 4.1 hereunder shows the high schools where the participants came from. Pseudonyms were used to represent the schools of the participants, as revealed in Chapter 3. Therefore, the names of trees found in the rural study area were used rather than the real names of the schools to maintain anonymity. A pseudonym to name participants was also used, and they were given codes according to their management position. The gender, age, and home language of each participant are also shown. Moreover, the highest qualifications of each participant and years of experience in the management position are indicated.

Table 4.1: Biographical data of participants

Respondents	Gender	Age (years)	Home Language	Highest qualification	Years of experience in management position	Position held in management
Indlulamithi High School						
DH1	Male	31	IsiZulu	BEd	3	Departmental Head
Wattle High School						
DH2	Female	41	IsiZulu	PGCE	8	Departmental Head
uMkhiwane High School						
DP1	Male	36	IsiZulu	BEd	6	Deputy Principal
Pine High School						
DP2	Female	49	IsiZulu	BEd	8	Deputy Principal
Aloe High School						
P1	Female	54	IsiZulu	BEd Hons	4	Principal
uMsimbithi High School						
P2	Male	50	IsiZulu	PGCE	8	Principal

Table 4.1 reveals that three (50%) males and three (50%) females were in management positions. Most of the participants were between the ages of 31 and 49. Only two principals were aged between 50-54 years. All the managers were Zulu-speaking participants. Approximately half (50%) of the participants hold a Bachelor of Education (BEd) degree. Two participants hold a Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE). Only one participant has an Honours degree in Education (BEd Hons). None of the participants had below three (3) years of experience. They ranged from three to eight years of experience in the management position.

4.3 DATA ANALYSIS

Thematic data analysis was used in the process of categorising themes and sub-themes, as edified by Peel (2020:7). To answer how the high school educators and learners were managed during COVID-19 at the Ubombo CMC, the steps outlined by Finlay (2021:103) are contextualised for the process of data analysis.

Firstly, I familiarised myself with the transcribed data before generating codes. With the research questions in mind, I further organised the data concisely and meaningfully, as affirmed by Peel (2020:7). At this point, the coding of the participants in relation to their positions held in the management was done. Moreover, key themes and sub-themes were linked with the four research questions. Reviewing the themes considered the elimination of those that did not address the research questions. Therefore, the relevancy of data interpretation relied on the well-crafted themes (refer to Table 4.2). The crafted themes and sub-themes subsequently emerged from the four sub-research questions. The sub-research questions are outlined below:

- Who managed the high school educators and learners during COVID-19 at the Ubombo Circuit Management Cluster?
- What was done to manage the high school educators and learners during COVID-19 at the Ubombo Circuit Management Cluster?
- Where was the management of high school educators and learners done during COVID-19 at the Ubombo Circuit Management Cluster?
- Why were the high school educators and learners managed during COVID-19 at the Ubombo Circuit Management Cluster?

Table 4.2: Arrangement of themes and sub-themes

Theme no.	Themes	Sub-themes
1.	Managers of high school educators and learners during COVID-19 at the Ubombo CMC.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Management Teams • Circuit managers
2.	The process of managing high school educators and learners during COVID-19 at the Ubombo CMC.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Methods and processes followed
3.	The environment where high school educators and learners were managed during COVID-19 at the Ubombo CMC.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School environment • Online platforms • Home environment
4.	Reasons for the management of high school educators during COVID-19 at the Ubombo CMC.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to pursue careers • Saving instructional time • Lessons to be learnt from the pandemic

4.4 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION

This section discusses the findings obtained through the telephone semi-structured interview and document analysis. The discussion emanates from the brief thematic analysis of data presented in Table 4.2 above. The interpretation of data is based on participants' responses. The participants' information from the audio recording device was transcribed as is. Some participants gave their responses in the isiZulu language. Consequently, information was typed as is and without editing to ensure validity. The information was further translated into English so that it is accessible to people who are unfamiliar with isiZulu. The four themes and sub-themes evident from Table 4.2 are discussed in relation to participants' responses.

4.4.1 Theme 1: Managers of high school educators and learners during COVID-19 at the Ubombo CMC

Participants were asked to explore managers of high school educators and learners during COVID-19 at the Ubombo CMC. Most of them gave similar responses based on the research question. The SMT was mentioned to be the most effective role player in the management of high school educators and learners during COVID-19 at the CMC. However, the circuit managers were also mentioned as taking a stance in supporting and managing educators and learners. The managers, as per the responses of participants, are explored below.

4.4.1.1 School Management Team

Most participants mentioned that the SMT managed high school educators and learners during COVID-19 at the Ubombo CMC. Participants expressed themselves as follows:

DH1 stated:

"I and the principal managed educators and learners during COVID-19."

DH2 expressed:

"In our school, the SMT decided to have a meeting to discuss how the whole school would be managed. In the SMT, there is a principal and two departmental heads. As an older person who had comorbidities, she (the

principal) suggested that she would communicate with us while she was at home because she feared being infected. We then came up with a solution: she would manage us as departmental heads through calls and WhatsApp and deliver paperwork to school, such as circulars if needed.”

When further asked who would then be managing other educators and learners, DH2 elaborated:

“Well, we, as DHs, managed educators. We then decided that when schools were closed, subject teachers and class teachers would manage their learners with support from us, and that’s how it went. So, it was a top-down approach that we took in the management of our school. To add on that, our school had low enrollment, so all learners and educators except the principal were allowed to attend school when there was no lockdown.”

DP1 said:

“During the COVID-19 period, the school management team, which consists of the principal, deputy principal and departmental heads, were responsible for the entire management of the school. To be brief, we managed both educators and learners through WhatsApp groups, but there were times when we had to manage all of them at school.”

The participant was further asked to elaborate on the number of SMTs responsible for the management of educators and learners. He responded:

“I am the only one who is the deputy principal, so I am delegated to work as a principal in her absentia. We worked with three HODs (departmental heads) during that time. Fortunately, all SMT members reside close to the school, so it was not that difficult to meet face-to-face to make decisions on how to manage our school.”

DP2 mentioned:

“All the SMT members were managing our educators and learners during that time.”

When asked to elaborate on the position each SMT member held, DP2 responded:

“There is a principal, I am the deputy principal, there are three departmental heads.”

P1 stated:

“It was difficult to manage the whole school as I was classified under elderly people with comorbidities. So, as a result, I was working from home. Although I tried to ensure that teaching and learning continued, I communicated with my departmental head. He tried managing educators and learners, although there were challenges of unruly behaviour from learners since he was alone in the SMT. Minor problems were experienced by managing educators since isikole sami sincane futhi siyalawuleka (my school has low enrollment and is manageable).”

P2 mentioned:

“The school was managed by the SMT, which is the school management team. We have three members: the principal and two departmental heads. However, one co-opted post level 1 educator assisted us in managing the school because we were expecting another post as our school enrollment was growing. So, she was acting as a DH for the Humanities Department. So, to answer your question, the SMT managed learners and educators during COVID-19.”

It is evident from the participants’ responses that the SMT mostly managed educators and learners. Although some schools had a few SMT members, co-opted educators played a role in the management of educators and learners during the pandemic. In some cases, either the DP or the DH were delegated to take the position of the principal in absentia to manage the whole school.

4.4.1.2 Circuit managers

Although the circuit managers indirectly managed educators and learners, they played a role in supporting the management of educators and learners during COVID-19. These are the sentiments of the respondents in this regard.

DH1 stated:

“The circuit manager ensured that we get support in managing educators and learners during unusual times. We were all confused about how to manage, but

through his support, we, as the SMT, tried our best to manage educators and learners.”

P1 added:

“Even though we tried to ensure that teaching and learning were done, we got instructions from the Department of Education through umhloli (circuit manager).”

P2 stated:

“We got support from our circuit manager through his visits, and we felt motivated as principals to further manage our educators and learners without fear during the crisis.”

Participants evidently value the circuit managers who manage school principals for their contribution to managing educators and learners during COVID-19. This suggests that some circuit managers understood that principals and members of the SMT needed guidance on how to manage their schools during those unprecedented times.

4.4.2 Theme 2: The process of managing high school educators and learners during COVID-19 at the Ubombo CMC

Participants were also interviewed to explore what was done to manage educators and learners during COVID-19. Firstly, they were asked to state what was done and then probing kicked in for them to explore how it was done (the management of educators and learners). This theme incorporates the methods and processes undertaken thereof. Firstly, I will expose the methods that the respondents identified. Thereafter, the process in which the methods were used is discussed in relation to participants' responses.

4.4.2.1 Methods and processes followed

Participants provided various methods that were used to manage educators and learners in the CMC. WhatsApp groups, Facebook, Zoom meetings, radio stations, take-home activities, and departmental circulars were among the methods used to

manage educators and learners during COVID-19. Moreover, the rotational approach to learner attendance was used. Other participants uttered that phone calls helped to manage educators remotely. Adhering to COVID-19 protocols and communication through staff meetings were other ways the SMT enforced managing educators and learners. The intervention by the Department of Education saw the trimming of the Annual Teaching Plans (ATPs) for learners. However, some managers stated that very little was done to manage educators and learners since educators were united to work over the crisis.

In this section, I disclose the participants' sentiments affirming the use of phone calls and social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and Zoom meetings in managing high school educators and learners. In some instances, managers referred learners to listen to radios to access Matric intervention programmes. In these methods, respondents shared their sentiments as follows:

DH1 stated:

“So, in our WhatsApp group, all educators responded to our instruction. The problem started when we had to manage our learners. Others would not pick up their cellphones. It was a problem even to make calls to the parents to communicate with them about school matters. So, how effective could this be when we had to send notes through WhatsApp? Totally impossible. Problems linked from the other, for example, if not a network problem, it was a data problem or problem of load shedding to charge cellphones. On the side of learners, therefore, it was difficult to manage during the pandemic.”

DH2 mentioned:

“The principal managed us as DHs remotely using cellphone calls, and we, as DHs, managed educators remotely and in full attendance.”

When asked whether they considered other ways of managing educators and learners remotely besides phone calls, DH2 responded:

“We initially rejected the use of technological accessories because we knew that the school is located in an impoverished rural area where parents are not

working to buy smart cellphones for the learners, and even those who had them did not have airtime to buy data bundles.”

DP1 asserted:

“Fortunately, our principal is used to technology. Old as he is, but he was able to receive circulars and guidelines from the provincial and district levels. He is also in a WhatsApp group with other principals and circuit managers, which aims to communicate important information. So, principals were able to share their strategies to manage educators and learners via WhatsApp videos, Zoom meetings and calls, especially when the country was in hard lockdown.”

I asked DP1 to elaborate further on how the mentioned platforms were used. He responded:

“We, as the SMT, were then used to holding meetings via Zoom and planning how educators and learners could be supported during COVID-19 times. When learners were at home, we only succeeded in delivering lessons to Grade 12 WhatsApp groups, but there were challenges where some learners had no advanced cellphones. Some would complain that the lessons were lengthy and could not be downloaded successfully. Besides the fact that some learners had no cellphones, other educators complained that they would not use their data because the government did not compensate them. As a result, it was difficult to manage through convincing them to opt for Whatsapp lessons. Another reason that prevented the SMT from successfully managing educators during lockdown is that sometimes educators would not show or respond to WhatsApp meetings or pick up calls.”

DP1 added:

“We also advised Grade 12 learners to listen to some lessons from radio stations such as uKhozi FM and Maputaland Community Radio as there were curriculum recovery programmes.”

DP2 stated:

“We were confused about what strategies we could use. Our superiors were even hesitant to give us directions on their own. They had to get instructions

from the provincial government on when to continue teaching and when to stop. So, in our school, we tried WhatsApp groups to communicate instructions to our educators since we had times when schools were closing. However, the strategy of WhatsApp helped and somehow created challenges.”

I asked DP2 to elaborate on how WhatsApp's strategy was used to manage educators and learners. She responded:

“Well, as I mentioned, we had WhatsApp groups. The SMT communicated whatever information to the educators through the group. For example, to inform educators to report to school on a certain date. Although this was often updated through the media, we saw it vital to formally communicate with our educators. Only Grade 12 learners had a WhatsApp group, so educators were instructed to communicate with them on curriculum matters. Many of them had those advanced cellphones, so at least they got something. It was a challenge for other grades, though, because most of the learners had no cellphones, so they were not taught through WhatsApp when schools were closed.”

P1 mentioned:

“I used to receive communication from the WhatsApp group on how to run our school. I agreed with my DH that perhaps educators should prepare activities and send them to learners through WhatsApp and Facebook. Unfortunately, not all learners had smartphones, and data was a problem.”

Similarly, P2 stated:

“We tried making videos through WhatsApp to send to subject groups, but that method failed since it was accessed by only a few learners with cellphones and data. So, we decided to stop because we noticed inequality. Concerns were data costs, load shedding, network problems and even lack of smartphones.”

Besides phone calls and social media platforms, some respondents adopted the rotational learner attendance approach to manage both high school educators and learners. Some allowed all learners to go to school. Moreover, some opted for take-home activities during the national lockdown.

However, some managers mentioned that little was done to manage educators.

Below is DH1 excerpt:

“There was not much effort put into managing educators since they were few, so they complied with our instruction when they were supposed to be at school. Schools closed when the pandemic hit hard and reopened when the infection rate was low. So, the unity that we had with educators made us manage with ease.”

DH1 added:

*“The problem started when we had to manage our learners. There was a high rate of absenteeism when they were supposed to be at school. When trying to manage their attendance, one could not do anything because they would say *thisha angizizwa kahle* (I am not feeling well), so I decided to stay home.”*

DH2 mentioned:

“Learners were managed by their subject educators and class managers while they were at school, but the SMT intervened when they were studying from home. We, therefore, did not choose to let learners attend on certain days just like other schools did, but all of them, from Grade 8 to 12, were expected to be at school. We had very rare cases of COVID-19 infection among learners, and none had serious admissions to hospitals. We did not have staff with comorbidities except the principal, so teaching and learning continued.”

When asked how the learners were managed while they were at home, DH2 shared:

“Well, during lockdown, the only way that we suggested was that learners come to school to fetch some work to keep themselves busy while schools were closed. I can remember that at some point, we defied the rules of the government when we called learners to school to receive learning packages. We did that because schools would close unexpectedly, so the purpose was to keep them busy while they were at home.”

DP1 had to say:

“During the time when both learners and educators were to be at school, the adjusted rotational approach for the return of learners was implemented in our school. That was because our school had a high enrollment of over 800 learners, so we couldn’t allow all grades to return to school at once. However, we didn’t compromise regarding Grade 12; they all came to school. We were lucky enough because it is mandatory that all Grade 12 learners reside near the school for extra classes. Grades 8 and 9 would all come on a day, and Grades 10 and 11 would come the next day, and they followed that pattern.”

Similarly, DP2 mentioned:

“Besides the use of WhatsApp to manage educators and learners, we adopted the method of allowing learners to go to school on a rotational basis. We could not let all learners attend since we are managing a big enrolment school.”

When asked how the rotational approach worked in their school, DP2 opined:

“It worked quite well. But everything has that loophole, you know. With that being said, I can assure you it really worked. Grades 8 and 9 went to school on Mondays and Fridays. If I remember correctly, Grade 10 students attended classes on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. It was a different case for Grades 11 and 12. Grade 11 attended from Tuesdays to Thursdays, and we made it compulsory for Grade 12 to attend every day and even during the weekends”.

P1 concurred with DH2:

“...for example, we received circulars where we needed to manage learners on a rotational basis. But my school is small, and we agreed with my DH that all learners must come since we had sufficient classrooms for social distancing.”

P2 alluded:

“...so we decided that Grade 12 come every day because they were less than fifty during COVID-19. The other grades (Grades 8-11) came in a rotational approach. For instance, Grades 10 and 11 came thrice a week on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Grades 8 and 9 came twice and that was on Tuesdays and Thursdays. So, all in all, we relied on a rotational approach for the management of educators and learners during COVID-19.”

P2 added:

“But I need to note that there were times when educators needed to go to school to prepare work so that when learners were back, they were given some work. So, educators went to school as per the instruction of the Department of Education.”

Apart from the primary data collected from the respondents, document analysis was used to manage high school educators and learners. Therefore, based on the respondents' sentiments above, guidelines set by the Department of Education on learner attendance are briefly cited.

The Guidelines for Development of the School Timetables Reopening of Schools (2020) suggested three models to be used in schools for the attendance of learners. The models included platooning, alternating days per week and bi-weekly rotational attendance.

Firstly, platooning is applied when schools allow two separate sets of educators and learners to use the same building, one set in the morning and one in the afternoon for teaching and learning. The alternating days per week implied that grades alternate classes or lessons on different days of the week. Lastly, the bi-weekly rotational attendance allowed grades to attend school on alternate weeks.

Regarding the respondents' sentiments on learner attendance, it implied that most schools in the CMC adopted the approach of alternating days per week. School managers grouped grades to attend school on certain days of the week. That is, Grade 8 was paired with Grade 9 and Grade 10 with Grade 11. All school managers instructed Grade 12 to attend daily and some on weekends.

The DBE in South Africa also intervened by supporting school managers in easing the load carried by educators and learners on matters of formal curriculum. The Director General released a circular regarding the trimming of the curriculum. Circular S3 of 2020 was about the distribution of the teacher guidelines for the implementation of ATPs and the minimum core content and skills per subject and grade. Consequently, the circular allowed schools in the country to trim the ATPs with the aim of recovering lost time when schools were closed. This was in the interest of the learners not to be

disadvantaged by the pandemic. In the matter of curriculum trimming, respondents had to explore the process of management as follows:

DH1 reiterated:

“On the side of learners, it was difficult to manage during the pandemic. However, through the departmental circulars, we saw many learners promoted to the next grades, as there was 60% on school-based assessment and only 40% on the final exam. That was applicable for Grades 8 to 11.”

DP1 revealed:

“...with that said, the Department of Education also intervened by trimming the ATPs, so we ensured that educators implemented the guidelines and the ATPs. I must emphasise that the trimming of the ATPs was managed by the SMT when learners were at school. That is all I can say about the process of managing our educators and learners at our school.”

Other respondents mentioned that adhering to COVID-19 protocols and communication through staff meetings were other means the SMT enforced in managing educators and learners.

DH2 said:

“While educators and learners were attending every day, the SMT strictly enforced COVID-19 protocols. Amongst other ways to ensure the safety of educators and learners was ensuring the availability of sanitizers, wearing of masks, sanitizing stations, and social distancing. This was part of managing educators and learners before and after teaching and learning. Even when controlling learners’ exercise books, learners’ files, and dishing for them, the SMT was strict in saying that they should always sanitize after touching anything and always wear a mask. Through compliance with the COVID-19 regulations, we were able to manage educators and learners successfully during that time.”

The Standard Operating Procedure for the Management of COVID-19 for Schools and School Communities (2020:19) attests to the procedures to be followed by the SMT in ensuring the safety and health of educators and learners during the pandemic.

Therefore, the steps to be considered to manage COVID-19 include physical distancing, ventilation, personal protective equipment (PPE), and environmental disinfection.

4.4.3 Theme 3: The environment where high school educators and learners were managed during COVID-19 at the Ubombo CMC

The third objective of the study was to explore the environment where high school educators and learners were managed during the pandemic. Respondents revealed that the management of educators and learners took place in the school, through online platforms and at home. This is discussed in detail below.

4.4.3.1 School environment

It is evident from the findings that teaching and learning continued in the CMC during COVID-19; educators and learners attended schools when they were reopened. Consequently, respondents expressed themselves in this regard.

DH1 stated:

“The management of educators took place both in the school and when they were at their homes. At school, it was a usual management role displayed by the SMT while ensuring COVID-19 protocols. Learners were only managed at school, although it was even problematic due to the high absenteeism rate.”

Similarly, DH2 mentioned:

“On the side of learners, all of them had to attend school, so they were managed at school. Only one case where parents were called to inform their children to come and collect learning aids from school during the lockdown.”

DP1 said:

“At school, the SMT was in full force, and we attended school except on days when we had to temporarily close due to recorded cases. It was hard because there was a time when the principal and two departmental heads tested positive

for COVID-19, so we had to keep our shoulders on to manage educators and learners.”

DP2 enunciated:

“Of course, we managed educators and learners at school most of the time. As I have already mentioned, we adopted the rotational method for attendance.”

P1 articulated:

“Well, the place where management of educators and learners was on two folds. The DH managed both educators and learners at school when COVID-19 infection was low...so it was a face-to-face strategy”.

Similarly, P2 stated:

“The SMT managed educators and learners at school. After the national lockdown, they were allowed to open a week prior to the reopening of learners. So, all preparations by the educators were managed in the school setting. I can remember that we had to go to school with permits since it was lockdown. So that was part of management where I had to ensure that all educators had permits so that they did not have a problem with law enforcement authorities.

4.4.3.2 Online platforms

High school managers tried online platforms such as WhatsApp and Zoom to manage educators and learners during COVID-19. However, it is evident that such platforms were ineffective in some schools.

DH1 stated:

“...even though there were slight challenges to hold meetings via WhatsApp due to clashes on a particular scheduled time, but educators would later respond positively on the deliberations and instructions given.”

DP1 reiterated:

“We managed educators and learners at school and through online platforms such as WhatsApp groups, Zoom, and phone calls.”

DP1 added:

“... In that circumstance, the principal would manage us educators on Zoom. So, the management of educators took place on the Zoom platform, WhatsApp, phone calls, and, in rare situations, Facebook.”

DP2 reiterated:

“So, in our school, we tried WhatsApp groups to communicate instructions to our educators since we had times when schools were closing.”

P1 echoed:

“So, it was a face-to-face strategy, and they were managed through cellphone, WhatsApp, and Facebook while they were at home. Kukancane lapho wawufica abantwana basebenzisa (in very rare situations where learners used) other ways of communication other than WhatsApp and Facebook. But like I mentioned, there were challenges where not all learners had access to smartphones.”

4.4.3.3 Home environment

Some respondents articulated that the management of high school educators and learners took place while they were at home. This was because schools were closed during the national lockdown. However, some respondents highlighted that it was difficult to manage educators and learners while at home.

DH1 stated:

“Educators were managed through social media channels and telephonically when they were at home.”

Similarly, DH2 said:

“It was a bit easy to manage educators because they were managed from home and even at school through different levels of management.”

Contrary to DH1 and DH2, DP1 opined:

“I could say little was done to manage educators and learners while they were at home. That was due to inaccessibility to technology and other reasons that teachers gave.”

P1 mentioned:

“...I worked with him (departmental head) via cellphone in order to agree on management strategies while educators and learners were at home during the lockdown.”

P2 stated:

“The effort to manage learners while they were at home was unsuccessful due to the reasons I mentioned.”

4.4.4 Theme 4: Reasons for the management of high school educators during COVID-19 at the Ubombo CMC

Participants were asked about the reasons for the management of high school educators during COVID-19. They explored their reasons in relation to the research question. I therefore present the findings according to the sub-themes hereunder.

4.4.4.1. The need to pursue careers

Most respondents revealed that learners, especially those in Grade 12, had to pursue their careers regardless of the COVID-19 pandemic. Likewise, educators had to play their part for some reasons. It is learnt that if the management of high school educators had not occurred during the entire COVID-19 period, learners would have perhaps had delayed career goals. Below are the sentiments of the respondents:

DH1 had to say:

“Even though our learners had excuses to attend during the trying times, we had to manage by motivating them about the importance of schooling. They needed to realise that the effort we put in was meant to keep them as educated citizens.”

DH2 mentioned:

“We had very rare cases of serious illnesses from educators and learners, so we thought they were classified under low risk of serious admissions. Although that was a risk we took, it worked for us because many of those learners are in universities and colleges. So that was a fruitful risk for them, and we could not be blamed for managing them in that situation.

DH2 added:

“Educators, on the other hand, had to be managed during the pandemic not only to do their work but to do their work under vigilance. We needed to ensure that they were not infected while doing their work.

DP1 stated:

“...This means that our learners are in tertiary institutions as we speak, so if we couldn't manage them, they would have lost the years of their tertiary studies.”

DP2 articulated:

“We really had to manage educators and learners during the pandemic. Starting with educators, they needed to trust us and feel motivated and comforted by us to do their work willingly. So, the onus was to let them consider the future of our learners at hand. As hard as it was, they had to try to assist our learners through teaching, so we managed them on that. Learners also had to value their future. They had to prioritise their education amid the pandemic so that they could be doctors, teachers, nurses, and the list is endless...”

P1 opined:

“Secondly, when a year passed by without achieving something, it would be stressful for our learners because they needed to attend universities after Grade 12.”

P2 argued:

“There was a time when we as principals thought that the department was gambling with our lives, forcing us to work under COVID-19, but I also felt that it was unfair for learners not to learn. They had a future ahead of them as well. I think we had to manage our schools to manage that gap.”

4.4.4.2. Saving instructional time

One of the reasons explored by respondents for managing high school educators and learners during the pandemic was saving instructional time. The core function of teaching and learning had to be kept running. Respondents affirmed in this regard.

DH1 avowed:

“I think it was reasonable to manage educators and learners during COVID-19 because the main core in the school is teaching and learning. As a result, without that core function, we would have no professionals and educated citizens.”

DP1 stated:

“We wouldn’t be here if we were not managing educators and learners during COVID-19. Well, in those years, our school got above 90% pass rate in Matric. Another thing is that we would not be doing our duties as instructed by the Department of Education. Both the SMT and the educators had to manage learners so that they could be supported with the formal curriculum to pursue their future careers even when South Africa was experiencing an unusual situation.”

Similarly, DP2 went on to say:

“Maybe to add, I would say the provincial government expected us to manage teaching and learning. Curriculum management was a necessity. Our learners had to learn even though we were facing COVID-19. In essence, teaching and learning was the main reason for educators and learners to go to school.”

P1 revealed:

“It was important for several reasons but eyokuqala nje, abantwana kwakungafanele balahlekelwe isikhathi sokufunda (firstly, learners were not supposed to lose the instructional time). They needed to learn regardless of the challenge. Our department tried to save that time, although there were gaps here and there.”

When asked to highlight the gaps in the instructional time, P1 responded:

“Well, I mean their curriculum was trimmed. This means there was content that they were robbed within the subject matter. They needed to be fed with all knowledge in the subjects.”

P2 stated:

“I needed to manage educators and learners during COVID-19 to ensure their safety and that teaching and learning took place without being disrupted. So, the SMT needed to balance the health and future of our educators and learners.”

4.4.4.3. Lessons to be learnt from the pandemic

It is undeniable that there were lessons learnt from the COVID-19 period. Consequently, school managers encountered unprecedented exposure to managing high school educators and learners. Respondents shared their sentiments in this regard.

DH1 opined:

“Educators were to be managed so as to make them realise that their pastoral role was meant to provide a conducive environment for their learners even during challenging times.”

DH2 mentioned:

“As I mentioned earlier, our school is located in an impoverished area so izingane zethu kwakufanele bavuke bazithathe, bafunde noma izimo zingavumi

ukuze baxoshe ikati eziko (our learners had to shoulder on and learn during those hard times to eradicate poverty)."

Similarly, DP1 alluded:

"We had to act as loco parents (in place of a parent) as we had to take care of our learners. Some had lost their loved ones, so we had to take a pastoral role to ensure that even those that feared the virus and those that were orphans were taken good care of."

P1 stated:

"Lastly, I think COVID-19 taught everyone in the school to face the reality of the above challenges. I mean there were lessons learnt from us as managers and educators on how to be leaders above challenges."

4.5 CONCLUSION

Data were analysed and interpreted in this chapter. Based on the preceding discussion, the following conclusion could be drawn. No formula was used to manage educators and learners during COVID-19 at the Ubombo CMC. The latter could be affirmed by reflecting on the respondents' reactions towards the four research questions.

Firstly, all respondents agreed that the SMT managed educators and learners during COVID-19. Secondly, the SMT used various strategies to manage educators and learners. They used online platforms such as WhatsApp, Zoom meetings, and, in rare circumstances, Facebook to manage educators and learners. Contrary to the online platforms, some school managers opted for the approach of alternating days for the attendance of learners at the school, with Grade 12 attending every day. Moreover, some respondents agreed that educators and learners were sometimes managed at home through WhatsApp groups and phone calls and were advised to listen to the radio. The Department of Education, through the circuit managers, also supported school managers in managing educators and learners during the crisis.

Thirdly, respondents asserted that the management of educators and learners took place on online platforms, in school and at home. Lastly, respondents explored reasons for the management of educators and learners during COVID-19. They suggested that learners had to pursue their careers amid the pandemic. School managers also had to save instructional time (teaching and learning). They also revealed that lessons were to be learnt from the pandemic. Therefore, Chapter 5 provides a summary of the findings, recommendations, conclusion, and conclusion of the study.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 4 analysed and interpreted the data. This chapter summarises the findings, presents recommendations, and draws conclusion of the study. It begins by summarising the findings obtained through the telephone semi-structured interviews and document analysis. Secondly, recommendations are made specifically to, among others, policy makers for the national DBE, the provincial DBE, the district, and school managers to consider implementing. Lastly, a conclusion of the study is presented.

5.2. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This section summarises findings after data were analysed and interpreted in Chapter 4. The study aimed to explore the management of high school educators and learners during COVID-19 at the Ubombo in KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa. Four research objectives were subsequently formulated from the main aim. Consequently, four themes, which constitute a summary of findings, emerged from the research questions of the study after data were thematically analysed from the respondents' responses. The summary of the findings is presented below.

5.2.1 Managers of high school educators and learners during COVID-19 at the Ubombo CMC

It can be asserted that the SMT managed most high school educators and learners at the Ubombo CMC. Members of the SMT included the principals, DPs, and DHs. The management of high school educators and learners effectively relied on the instructions set by either one or all members of the SMT. The findings revealed that the principal either delegated the DP or the DH to assume management duties when they (principals) were absent or infected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Apart from the SMT's role in managing high school educators and learners, circuit managers also took a stance to support school managers in the process. It is understood that the circuit managers' role is to manage principals. However, through

the findings, they accepted the onus to guide SMTs in managing educators and learners since the COVID-19 pandemic was unprecedented.

5.2.2 The process of managing high school educators and learners during COVID-19 at the Ubombo CMC

School managers explained explicitly how the high school educators and learners were managed during COVID-19 in the CMC. The methods used in the process were WhatsApp groups, Zoom meetings, Facebook, phone calls, and radio stations. Some schools also initiated an alternative approach to learner attendance. Moreover, the DBE assisted school managers with issuing circulars, guiding them in managing educators and learners. The trimming of the ATPs also assisted managers in the management process. Respondents explained how the methods highlighted above were used, which are summarised below.

During the country's hard lockdowns, schools were closed entirely. However, some school managers at the Ubombo CMC opted to use online platforms to manage high school educators and learners remotely. SMTs communicated instructions to manage educators and learners through WhatsApp groups, Zoom meetings, calls and, in rare circumstances, on Facebook. Although some school managers revealed that some challenges emanated from these methods, they tried to keep the schools running, particularly in Grade 12. Challenges such as inaccessibility to smart cellphones, data costs, network problems, and load shedding seemed to threaten the process.

Besides using online platforms, some school managers advised learners to listen to radio stations such as Ukhozi FM and Maputaland Community Radio. They listened to educational programmes aimed at recovering the curriculum. Furthermore, some public announcements were communicated via these platforms. Grade 12 learners were also invited to collect study material from school during the lockdown to keep them updated with the formal curriculum.

Platooning, alternating days per week and bi-weekly rotational attendance were among the methods outlined by the Guidelines for Development of the School Timetables Reopening of Schools (2020). Most school managers adopted the approach of alternating days per week for the attendance of learners. School

managers allowed grades to attend on certain days a week, with Grade 12 attending daily. The findings reveal that this method was only applied to schools with large enrollments. In essence, this approach aimed to lessen the fast transmission of the virus among educators and learners. However, schools with few learners allowed all to attend when schools reopened.

The DBE, through Circular S3 of 2020, initiated guidelines in relation to the trimming of the ATPs. Consequently, the lost instructional (teaching) time was recovered by assessing the minimum content that educators could have covered during teaching and learning.

5.2.3 The environment where high school educators and learners were managed during COVID-19 at the Ubombo CMC

School managers proclaimed that the management of high school educators and learners took place in various environments. The school environment (alternative approach to attendance), online platforms (WhatsApp, Zoom and Facebook), and home environments (learning from home) were all places where high school educators and learners were managed during COVID-19 at the Ubombo CMC.

As highlighted in section 5.2.2, most schools adopted the approach of alternating days per week, and a few allowed all learners to attend during the reopening. By implication, the management of high school educators and learners took place in the school environment when schools reopened when the country was at adjusted alert level 4 (moderate virus spread – all schools having rotational attendance).

However, when schools were closed, the management of educators and learners saw the integration of online platforms and homeschooling. That is, both educators and learners were managed remotely through WhatsApp groups, Zoom meetings, and Facebook while they were at home. Although there were challenges in adapting to online learning successfully, Grade 12 learners were prioritised for regular communication. While the learners were at home, some school managers invited them to collect study material in order to be updated with the content of the curriculum.

5.2.4 Reasons for the management of high school educators and learners during COVID-19 at the Ubombo CMC

School managers explained why the high school educators and learners were managed during COVID-19. Firstly, they mentioned that learners had to pursue their careers. Secondly, instructional (teaching and learning) time had to be saved. Lastly, there were lessons to be learnt from the pandemic. The reasons for managing high school educators and learners during the pandemic are summarised below.

Although the pandemic seemed to paralyse the efforts of school managers to manage educators and learners, the findings suggest that there was a need for Grade 12 learners to continue their studies in tertiary institutions. This implies that the accumulation of gap years anticipated during the crisis was avoided through continuous engagements with educators and learners in matters of curriculum delivery.

The core function of teaching and learning was kept on its wheels amid the pandemic. This means that instructional time was saved. Various methods were attempted to enhance teaching and learning. School managers continued to manage educators and learners so that the notional time for teaching and learning was not lost. Consequently, most learners pursued their studies at various tertiary institutions.

Lastly, the findings suggest that there were lessons learnt from the unprecedented COVID-19. The pastoral role of educators was intensified as they were able to take care of learners. This was central to identifying learners from impoverished backgrounds as well as those who became orphans because of the pandemic. The pandemic has taught school managers to be resilient and exemplary to their subordinates in leading through challenges.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

This section presents the recommendations for the management of high school educators and learners during COVID-19 at the Ubombo CMC in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The recommendations are focused on policy makers in the DBE, School district officials, and SMTs.

5.3.1 Recommendations to policy makers in the Department of Basic Education

The findings of this study indicated that school managers followed no specific format in the management of high school educators and learners during COVID-19. It seems that it was caused by an unprecedented outbreak of COVID-19. Based on the preceding assertion, the following recommendations are made to policy makers for the DBE and the Department of Education in the KwaZulu-Natal Province:

- Draw a proactive, comprehensive, and feasible management plan to be adopted by school managers to manage educators and learners during future crises.
- Initiate the piloting of the comprehensive management plan so that it can be evaluated by school managers timeously.
- Infuse technology when training school managers so they are all tech-savvy to manage educators and learners during future pandemics.

5.3.2 Recommendations to the Department of Education district office

The Department of Education district office is paramount in effectively supporting school managers in managing educators and learners. District officials, including CMC heads and circuit managers, could support school managers with technological methods to manage educators and learners effectively. The researcher provides the following recommendations to the district officials:

- Develop and implement a district management plan (extracted from the provincial comprehensive plan) to be used by school managers to manage educators and learners during future pandemics.
- Conduct workshops to train SMTs on technological tools that could be used when managing educators and learners remotely.
- Provide, strengthen, and monitor school gadgets such as tablets, laptops, and routers to enhance the technological management of educators and learners remotely.

5.3.3 Recommendations to the School Management Teams

The SMTs were at the forefront of managing high school educators and learners during COVID-19. They (SMTs) encountered challenges during the management

process. It is revealed from the research findings that although school managers tried using online platforms, learners experienced vast challenges. The lack of smartphones, expensive data bundles, network problems, and load shedding made it challenging for school managers to manage learners from home.

It could be brought to light that school managers should perhaps welcome the use of technology in schools. This has been observed when learners spent most of their time at home during the pandemic. As a result, the online approach would be feasible for managing educators and learners not only during future crises, but also at present times. Therefore, the researcher recommends the following to the SMTs:

- Have a management plan in place to be used by principals, DPs, and DHs on how to manage educators and learners during future crises.
- Develop budgets for school gadgets and backup plans such as solar panels or generators to eliminate load shedding.
- Develop whole school training sessions for using technological gadgets such as laptops, tablets, and routers.
- A feasible communication system must be in place to support not only Grade 12 learners, but all learners when they learn from home.

5.4 CONCLUSION OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter focused on the summary of findings and recommendations. The summary of the findings was discussed based on the four research questions. Firstly, a summary of who managed high school educators and learners during COVID-19 was provided. Secondly, the process of how high school educators and learners were managed was presented. This was followed by exploring the environment where the management of high school educators and learners took place. Lastly, the summary of respondents' sentiments on why high school educators and learners were managed during the pandemic was presented.

Recommendations to different stakeholders were detailed in this chapter. The policy makers in the education fraternity, the district office, and the SMT were all targeted role players to strengthen the management of current and future high school educators and learners at the Ubombo CMC.

5.5 CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY

This study explored the management of high school educators and learners during COVID-19 at the Ubombo CMC. Chapter 1 provided an orientation of the study. The literature pertaining to the study's topic was reviewed in Chapter 2. The research methodology is presented in Chapter 3. Data were analysed and interpreted in Chapter 4. A summary of the findings, recommendations, and conclusions is described in Chapter 5.

The main aim of the study was to explore the management of high school educators and learners during COVID-19 at the Ubombo CMC. Therefore, a conclusion is drawn in this regard. The chaos painted by the COVID-19 pandemic was felt in the Department of Education, and nobody was prepared to face it; that is, there was no specific format that school managers followed in managing high school educators and learners during COVID-19. Consequently, the findings of the study imply that most school managers at the Ubombo CMC attempted management strategies they believed would cater for their schools. However, the strategies saw Grade 12 learners being prioritised in the management process. Therefore, the latter poses a gap that needs further research. Most school managers focused on managing Grade 12 learners instead of all learners during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE



UNISA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date: 2023/11/08

Ref: **2023/11/08/17269741/20/AM**

Name: Mr SP LUKHELE

Student No.:17269741

Dear Mr SP LUKHELE

Decision: Ethics Approval from
2023/11/08 to 2026/11/08

Researcher(s): Name: Mr SP LUKHELE
E-mail address: 17269741@mylife.unisa.ac.za
Telephone: 071 436 9218

Supervisor(s): Name: Prof. LDM LEBELOANE
E-mail address: Lebelld@unisa.ac.za
Telephone: 012 429 4433

Title of research:

**EXPLORING MANAGEMENT OF HIGH SCHOOLS' EDUCATORS AND LEARNERS
DURING COVID-19: A CASE STUDY**

Qualification: MEd EDUCATION 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 2023/11/08 to 2026/11/08.

*The **medium risk** application was reviewed by the Ethics Review Committee on 2023/11/08 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 will ensure that the research project adheres to the relevant guidelines set out in the Unisa Covid-19 position statement on research ethics attached.
2. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.



Open Rubric

University of South Africa
Pretter Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Tshwane
PO Box 392 UNISA 0003 South Africa
Telephone: +27 12 429 3111 Facsimile: +27 12 429 4150
www.unisa.ac.za

3. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee.
4. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
5. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing.
6. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.
7. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data requires additional ethics clearance.
8. No field work activities may continue after the expiry date **2026/11/08**. Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

Note:

*The reference number **2023/11/08/17269741/20/AM** should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.*

Kind regards,



Prof AT Motlhabane
CHAIRPERSON: CEDU RERC
motlhat@unisa.ac.za



Prof Mpine Makoe
EXECUTIVE DEAN
qakisme@unisa.ac.za

**APPENDIX B: REQUEST PERMISSION FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION (UBOMBO CIRCUIT MANAGEMENT CLUSTER)**



**REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT THE UBOMBO CIRCUIT
MANAGEMENT CLUSTER HIGH SCHOOLS**

Research title: EXPLORING MANAGEMENT OF HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATORS AND LEARNERS DURING COVID-19: A CASE STUDY

Attention : The Head, Mr. S.V Mthembu

Department: KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education

(Ubombo Circuit Management Cluster)

Telephone : 035 573 2000

Email : thangithini.nxumalo@kzn.doe.gov.za

Date: 11 October 2023

Dear Mr. S.V. Mthembu,

I, **Simanga Phillip Lukhele**, am a registered MEd student (student number: 17269741) at the University of South Africa, Department of Educational Leadership and Management. Professor L.D.M. Lebeloane is my supervisor. The title of my studies is “EXPLORING MANAGEMENT OF HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATORS AND LEARNERS DURING COVID-19: A CASE STUDY.”

I hereby request your permission to conduct research by gathering data for my studies from school principals, deputy principals and departmental heads (members of School Management Teams) at the Ubombo Circuit Management Cluster high schools. None of the respondents’ identities will be disclosed. Their participation will be voluntary.

Data will be collected through cell phone interviews. SMT members will be interviewed during their free time to avoid disturbing them during teaching hours. The duration of each interview could be 20 – 30 minutes long. Thank you in advance.

Yours sincerely,



Simanga Phillip Lukhele (071 436 9218/074 385 5697)

**APPENDIX C: PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH FROM THE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (UBOMBO CMC)**



KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE
EDUCATION
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DIRECTORATE:

Private Bag X604, Ubombo, 3970
Umlingo Village, Corner of Dikkop and Kingfisher, Next to Mkuze Primary
Tel: 035 573 2000

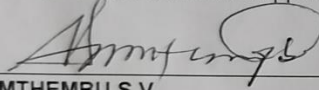
UBOMBO CMC

11 DECEMBER 2023

**TO: UNISA
PRINCIPAL'S OF SELECTED SCHOOLS
SGB**

SUBJECT: PERMISSION GRANTED TO MR SIMANGA PHILLIP LUKHELE TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH

1. This letter serve to confirm that the permission has been granted to Mr Simanga Phillip Lukhele, who is a student at Unisa to perform his research for his Master's degree.
2. The following is a list of schools sampled for the purposes of the research, **Mdolomba H.School, Mmemezi H. School, Madlaka H. School, Hlazazana H. School, Mankenke H. School and Mabandleni H. School.**
3. The Principals and SGB of the above mention schools are by requested to give support to Mr Lukhele.
4. I want to take this opportunity to wish Mr Lukhele a good luck in his research.


MTHEMBU S.V
UBOMBO CMC - CES

11/12/2023
DATE

KWAZULU-NATAL
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
UMKHANYAKUDE DISTRICT

11 DEC 2023

UBOMBO CMC
PRIVATE BAG X604
UBOMBO, 3970

APPENDIX D: REQUEST TO INTERVIEW PRINCIPALS



REQUEST TO INTERVIEW HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS AT THE UBOMBO CIRCUIT MANAGEMENT CLUSTER

Research title: EXPLORING MANAGEMENT OF HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATORS AND LEARNERS DURING COVID-19: A CASE STUDY

Attention: The School Principal

Date: 11 October 2023

Dear School Principal,

I, **Simanga Phillip Lukhele**, am a registered MEd student (student number: 17269741) at the University of South Africa, Department of Educational Leadership and Management. Professor L.D.M. Lebeloane is my supervisor. The title of my studies is "EXPLORING MANAGEMENT OF HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATORS AND LEARNERS DURING COVID-19: A CASE STUDY." I received permission from the Ubombo Cluster manager to interview high school School Management Team members.

I hereby request that you be interviewed as one of the high school principals at the Ubombo Circuit Management Cluster to gather data for the study. The interview will be conducted on the cell phone at a time of your convenience. I will ensure that this does not disturb your official working hours. The duration thereof could be between 20 - 30 minutes. The discussion will be recorded and used for the study purposes only. Your name will not be disclosed to anyone. Kindly note that it is a voluntary exercise. You can withdraw from the interview at any time of your choice. You are welcome to contact me at the cell phone number provided hereunder if you need any clarification.

I look forward to interviewing you. Thank you in advance.

Yours sincerely,



Simanga Phillip Lukhele (071 436 9218/074 385 5697)

APPENDIX E: REQUEST TO INTERVIEW DEPUTY PRINCIPALS



REQUEST TO INTERVIEW HIGH SCHOOL DEPUTY PRINCIPALS AT THE UBOMBO CIRCUIT MANAGEMENT CLUSTER

Research title: EXPLORING MANAGEMENT OF HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATORS AND LEARNERS DURING COVID-19: A CASE STUDY

Attention: The School Deputy Principal

Date: 11 October 2023

Dear School Deputy Principal,

I, **Simanga Phillip Lukhele**, am a registered MEd student (student number: 17269741) at the University of South Africa, Department of Educational Leadership and Management. Professor L.D.M. Lebeloane is my supervisor. The title of my studies is "EXPLORING MANAGEMENT OF HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATORS AND LEARNERS DURING COVID-19: A CASE STUDY." I received permission from the Ubombo Cluster manager to interview high school School Management Team members.

I hereby request that you be interviewed as one of the high school deputy principals at the Ubombo Circuit Management Cluster to gather data for the study. The interview will be conducted on the cell phone at a time of your convenience. I will ensure that this does not disturb your official working hours. The duration thereof could be between 20 - 30 minutes. The discussion will be recorded and used for the study purposes only. Your name will not be disclosed to anyone. Kindly note that it is a voluntary exercise. You can withdraw from the interview at any time of your choice. You are welcome to contact me at the cell phone number provided hereunder if you need any clarification.

I look forward to interviewing you. Thank you in advance.

Yours sincerely,



Simanga Phillip Lukhele (071 436 9218/074 385 5697)

APPENDIX F: REQUEST TO INTERVIEW DEPARTMENTAL HEADS



REQUEST TO INTERVIEW HIGH SCHOOL DEPARTMENTAL HEADS AT THE UBOMBO CIRCUIT MANAGEMENT CLUSTER

Research title: EXPLORING MANAGEMENT OF HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATORS AND LEARNERS DURING COVID-19: A CASE STUDY

Attention: The School Departmental Head

Date: 11 October 2023

Dear School Departmental Head,

I, **Simanga Phillip Lukhele**, am a registered MEd student (student number: 17269741) at the University of South Africa, Department of Educational Leadership and Management. Professor L.D.M. Lebeloane is my supervisor. The title of my studies is "EXPLORING MANAGEMENT OF HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATORS AND LEARNERS DURING COVID-19: A CASE STUDY." I received permission from the Ubombo Cluster manager to interview high school School Management Team members.

I hereby request that you be interviewed as one of the high school departmental heads at the Ubombo Circuit Management Cluster to gather data for the study. The interview will be conducted on the cell phone at a time of your convenience. I will ensure that this does not disturb your official working hours. The duration thereof could be between 20 - 30 minutes. The discussion will be recorded and used for the study purposes only. Your name will not be disclosed to anyone. Kindly note that it is a voluntary exercise. You can withdraw from the interview at any time of your choice. You are welcome to contact me at the cell phone number provided hereunder if you need any clarification.

I look forward to interviewing you. Thank you in advance.

Yours sincerely,



Simanga Phillip Lukhele (071 436 9218/074 385 5697)

APPENDIX G: CONSENT LETTER TO PRINCIPALS



HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPAL'S CONSENT LETTER TO BE INTERVIEWED

REQUEST TO INTERVIEW HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS AT THE UBOMBO CIRCUIT MANAGEMENT CLUSTER

Research title: EXPLORING MANAGEMENT OF HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATORS AND LEARNERS DURING COVID-19: A CASE STUDY

RESEARCHER: Mr SP Lukhele (071 436 9218/074 385 5697)

I,, a high school principal in the Ubombo Circuit Management Cluster, hereby consent to voluntarily participate as a respondent in the research study conducted by Mr S.P. Lukhele (student number:17269741), a registered MEd student at the University of South Africa, Department of Educational Leadership and Management. I, by giving consent, understand that the interview will be conducted on the cell phone. I will remain anonymous. My views will be recorded and used for study purposes only. I can withdraw from the interview at any time.

Yours sincerely,

Signature of respondent

Date:.....

APPENDIX H: CONSENT LETTER TO DEPUTY PRINCIPALS



**HIGH SCHOOL DEPUTY PRINCIPAL'S CONSENT LETTER TO BE INTERVIEWED
REQUEST TO INTERVIEW HIGH SCHOOL DEPUTY PRINCIPALS AT THE
UBOMBO CIRCUIT MANAGEMENT CLUSTER**

Research title: EXPLORING MANAGEMENT OF HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATORS AND LEARNERS DURING COVID-19: A CASE STUDY

RESEARCHER: Mr SP Lukhele (071 436 9218/ 074 385 5697)

I,, a high school deputy principal in the Ubombo Circuit Management Cluster (CMC), hereby consent to voluntarily participate as a respondent in the research study conducted by Mr S.P. Lukhele (student number:17269741), a registered MEd student at the University of South Africa, Department of Educational Leadership and Management. I, by giving consent, understand that the interview will be conducted on the cell phone. I will remain anonymous. My views will be recorded and used for study purposes only. I can withdraw from the interview at any time.

Yours sincerely,

Signature of respondent

Date:.....

APPENDIX I: CONSENT LETTER TO DEPARTMENTAL HEADS



HIGH SCHOOL DEPARTMENTAL HEADS CONSENT LETTER TO BE INTERVIEWED

REQUEST TO INTERVIEW HIGH SCHOOL DEPARTMENTAL HEADS AT THE UBOMBO CIRCUIT MANAGEMENT CLUSTER

Research title: EXPLORING MANAGEMENT OF HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATORS AND LEARNERS DURING COVID-19: A CASE STUDY

RESEARCHER: Mr SP Lukhele (071 436 9218/ 074 385 5697)

I,, a high school departmental head in the Ubombo Circuit Management Cluster (CMC), hereby consent to voluntarily participate as a respondent in the research study conducted by Mr S.P. Lukhele (student number:17269741), a registered MEd student at the University of South Africa, Department of Educational Leadership and Management. I, by giving consent, understand that the interview will be conducted on the cell phone. I will remain anonymous. My views will be recorded and used for study purposes only. I can withdraw from the interview at any time.

Yours sincerely,

Signature of respondent

Date:.....

APPENDIX J: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS



QUESTIONNAIRE TO BE USED WHEN INTERVIEWING PARTICIPANTS

My name is Mr Simanga Phillip Lukhele (Student no. 17269741). I am a registered MEd student at the University of South Africa. My supervisor is Prof L.D.M. Oupa Lebeloane. I am conducting a study titled “**EXPLORING MANAGEMENT OF HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATORS AND LEARNERS DURING COVID-19: A CASE STUDY.**” A telephone interview will be used and recorded for the study. All respondents are requested to be honest when they respond to questions. None of their details will be disclosed to anyone for confidentiality purposes. This is a voluntary exercise. No one will be remunerated for participating in the exercise. A respondent can withdraw from the interview at any time of their choice.

The questionnaire is divided into two sections, namely, section A, which requests respondents to provide their biographical data, and section B, which constitutes open-ended questions. Follow-up (probing) questions may be asked if need be.

SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

A1	Gender	M	F
A2	Age		
A3	Home Language		
A4	Highest qualification		
A5	Years of experience in management position		
A6	Position held in management		

SECTION B: OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

B1: What strategies did the school management use to manage educators during the COVID-19 pandemic?

B2: How were the strategies used to manage educators and learners during the COVID-19 pandemic?

B3: How do educators perceive the strategies that school managers employed to manage them during the outbreak of COVID-19?

B4: How effective were the strategies in ensuring the effective operation of the school during the outbreak of COVID-19?

B5: What were the challenges that school management teams encountered in managing educators and learners during the COVID-19 pandemic?

B6: Is there any additional information you would like to share regarding this discussion?

Thank you for your time. Your valued contribution is highly appreciated.

APPENDIX K: PROOF OF EDITING

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Reg. No. 2016/48859/07



16 March 2024

Editorial Certificate

To Whom It May Concern,

This certificate confirms that the dissertation entitled; **EXPLORING MANAGEMENT OF HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATORS AND LEARNERS DURING COVID-19: A CASE STUDY** by **Simanga Phillip Lukhele (student number: 17269741)** was edited by an expert English editor with a PhD. The following issues were corrected: grammar, spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, phrasing, and formatting.

Signed on behalf of NIM Editorial by:

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

.....
Dr N.I. Mabidi
Founder & Chief Editor

APPENDIX L: TURNITIN REPORT



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EXPLORING MANAGEMENT OF HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATORS AND LEARNERS DURING COVID-19: A CASE STUDY

By
Simanga Phillip Lukhele
17269741

Submitted in accordance with the requirements
for the degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

In
EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

At the