FROM A SINKING SCHOOL TO A MOVING SCHOOL: A CASE STUDY OF A SCHOOL-TEACHER UNION PARTNERSHIP TO FACILITATE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

by

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DECLARATION

I, Primrose Nomarashiya Caluza declare that:

The research reported in this dissertation, unless otherwise stated, is my original work.

This dissertation has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any university.

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SUPERVISOR'S STATEMENT

This dissertation is submitted with my approval.

Professor I. Naicker

Date: 4 January 2022

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my late father, Mr Ndabezitha 'Masovanish' Caluza, *intsizwa ezintsizweni*. The first meeting with my supervisor was scheduled for the 20 March 2019, and on this day my father passed on and I could not make it to the Supervisor's meeting. The completion of this dissertation is therefore, both emotional and exciting. I also dedicate this work to my mother,'*MaMtolo*' -she remains my role model, she loves me unconditionally and has taught me to be independent and that one can become something from being nothing. Further, this dissertation is dedicated to my children with the hope that realise the importance of education in the development of a person and society.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABSTRACT

School-teacher union partnership has been found to have a positive impact on school performance, teacher development and learner achievement. The purpose of this research study is to examine the impact of a school-teacher union partnership to facilitate school improvement. The study was underpinned by instructional and transformational leadership theory, which collectively emphasise participatory decision-making, participation of all stakeholders in school improvement interventions. The study was guided by an interpretivist paradigm and case study design. Participants were purposively selected and they included six for semi-structured and eight for focus group discussions. These participants were drawn from SADTU, Department of Education and Kuzolunga Secondary School. Document analysis was used to corroborate the interview data. The study revealed inter alia, that planning of partnership was informed by evidence-based approach which contextualised courses of action to improve learner outcomes. The team-based structure was used to facilitate stakeholder participation and coordination of partnership activities. From a SADTU perspective, this partnership enabled resource mobilisation to improve the quality of education. In the teachers' view, the partnership encouraged peer learning through mentoring and coaching. Although the Department preferred the results-based approach, it appreciated SADTU's evidence-based approach which empowered management, teachers and learners through shared accountability for action and results. The study found that refocusing the commitment of teachers is key to improving school performance. Incapacity of principals and parents hinders success of the partnership. The study concluded that the school-teacher union partnership works well in improving the school. The study also established the centrality of the principal for the formation of the school-teacher union partnership and its success in improving the school. Given this, the study recommended policy adaptation to facilitate school leadership development so that principals are empowered to undertake their diverse roles. In respect of teacher unions, the study proposes that they must use their power and influence to mobilise their members to support school improvement initiatives. School improvement can be strengthened through effective communication between teacher unions, schools, parents and the Department of Education. The study advances an African Perspective within the concept of Ubuntu to ensure success and continuity of school-teacher union partnerships.

Keywords: Coordination, partnership, planning, school leadership and management, teacher union

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement
CMTT	Circuit Management Task Team
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DTT	District Task Team
EEA	Employment of Educators Act
ELRC	Education Labour Relations Council
GERM	Global Education Reform Movement
IQMS	Integrated Quality Management System
KZN DoE	KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
NDP	National Development Plan
NECT	National Education Collaborative Trust
NEEDU	National Education Evaluation and Development Unit
NEPA	National Education Policy Act
NSC	National Senior Certificate
NSLA	National Strategy for Learner Attainment
PAM	Personnel Administration Measures
PILO	Programme for Improving Learner Outcomes
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
PPN	Post Provisioning Norm
PTT	Provincial Task Team
SADTU	South African Democratic Teachers Union
SSII	SADTU School Improvement Initiative

SSIIT	SADTU School Improvement Initiative Team
SASA	South African Schools Act
SEACMEQ	Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality
SGB	School Governing Body
SMT	School Management Team
SONA	State of the Nation Address
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study

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INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

This is the introductory chapter of the study titled, "*From a sinking school to a moving school: A case study of a school-teacher union partnership to facilitate school improvement*". The focus of this chapter is to contextualise the study and orientate the reader to what the study sets out to achieve. This chapter provides a background of the study, problem analysis and motivation of the study. Next, the objectives and critical questions of the study are presented followed by a definition of key terms underpinning the study. The chapter ends by outlining an overview of the study which is located within the context of school improvement partnerships. I remind the reader that I commence each chapter with a mind map. The mind map is an advanced organiser to orientate the reader as to the contents of each chapter.

1.2 Background to the study

We commend the poor no-fee paying schools that fall in the Quintile 1 to 3 categories for rising against all odds to account for 55% of total bachelor passes. These quality results vindicate SADTU whose members teach in these schools and they show that as a Union, we are indeed part of a solution as exemplified by SADTU KZN 'Matric Improvement Programme' that targeted the poorest performing schools for additional support. (SADTU, 2020. p. 17).

The above statement by the South African Democratic Teachers' Union (SADTU), a teachers' union, gives the impression that quintile 1 to 3 schools have experienced challenges in attaining the required learner outcomes. This statement suggests that SADTU partners with schools to improve performance of schools and learners (Cele, 2013). School improvement partnerships are lauded by Rubinstein and McCarthy (2014) for their ability to catalyse productive behaviours that increase learner outcomes. The education system of South Africa has failed to produce satisfactory learner outcomes especially when compared with other countries (Spaull, 2013), therefore any strategy meant to help schools and the country to improve educational outcomes must be explored. The under performance by the South African

education system is prevalent in rural schools which are mostly under resourced (Mlachila & Moeletsi, 2019). There is vast scholarly work that has identified teacher unions, especially SADTU, as the main cause for the poor performance of schools and learners (Jansen, 2019; Motsohi, 2011), resulting in recommendations for the government to review certain labour regulations that allow the activism of teacher unions in South Africa. This notion suggests that schools can do better without teacher unions. However, Mafisa (2017) advances a contrasting view that the Department of Basic Education and schools have to work with teacher unions to implement education policies and influence performance in schools. Mafisa's (2017) assertion is that teacher unions are better placed to improve learner outcomes (Mafisa, 2017). This author further declares that teacher unions are important stakeholders in education as they command a considerable support from teachers in schools.

Education stakeholders are expected to contribute to uplifting the state of education in the country and schools in particular (NDP, 2012). Agreeing with the above assertion, Msila (2014) argues that to improve education, teacher unions must partner with other education stakeholders, including school principals. Equally, observing the need for the government to improve education outcomes, the President of South Africa challenged citizens that they must all take part in initiatives that seek to improve the education system and its outcomes (Zuma, 2009). He further called for the nation to set up partnerships to improve education outcomes. Govender (2017) perceives partnership programmes as giving meaning to education as a societal issue. Looking at programmes aimed at improving learner outcomes through partnerships, Metcalfe (2018) highlights the positive involvement of SADTU during the implementation of *Jika iMfundo.*

This *Jika iMfundo* campaign is run through a collaboration between the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Programme to Improve Learner Outcomes (PILO), which is piloted in 1200 schools in King Cetshwayo and Pinetown Districts (Pillay, 2020). Maphalala et al. (2017) assert that *Jika iMfundo* pilot is meant to evaluate the efficacy of curriculum coverage or lack thereof so that lessons derived from its implementation could be used to rollout the programme across all districts. These authors further clarify that *Jika iMfundo* is implemented as part of many school improvement interventions undertaken by the National Education Collaboration Trust (NECT) through PILO (Maphalala et al., 2017). Regarding the impact of partnerships in improving learner outcomes, many scholars confirm that they are pivotal in improving learner outcomes (Metcalfe, 2018; Msila, 2014; Metcalfe & Witten, 2018; Makole & Witten, 2018). As highlighted above, teacher unions are viewed as critical

stakeholders that must play a role in improving education and learner outcomes. For instance, Maharaj and Bascia (2021) claim that cooperative labour-government relationships have the potential to increase the contribution of teacher unions to policy innovation in the education sector.

The recommendations that teacher unions must form partnerships (Bascia, 2012; Mafisa, 2017) and the fact that there is evidence of the involvement of unions in partnership programmes, are ground-breaking. Acknowledging this view, Modisaotsile (2012) concludes that learners, teachers, parents, school governance structures (SGB), the state as well as business must establish partnerships to improve education outcomes. It is however observed that many scholars who investigated the role of partnerships in improving South African education outcomes omitted the role of teacher unions in forming and implementing partnerships with schools. There is a gap in the identification and the assessment of the successes or lack thereof of whether such school-teacher union partnerships exist and whether they produce the desired outcomes. In an effort to address this knowledge gap, the study focuses on the partnership of one rural school in uMkhanyakude educational District and one teacher union, SADTU. SADTU is a teacher union in South Africa and is registered as a majority union in the Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC) (Kgari-Masondo et al., 2019). The organisational rights of teachers as workers to form or join unions of their choice are protected by the Labour Relations Act 66 of 1996, which promotes freedom of association (Department of Labour and Employment, 1995). According to the Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC) there are five teacher unions in KwaZulu-Natal province that are contesting for power and hegemony in schools. These unions are SADTU, National Teachers Union (NATU), Suid-Afrikaanse Orderwysersunie (SAOU), Professional Education Union (PEU) and the National Association of Professional Teacher Organisation of South Africa (NAPTOSA), and they all have different ideologies and principles guiding their operations.

The operations of SADTU are guided by the declarations enshrined in her Constitution wherein the union declares her commitment to fight all education policies resembling apartheid era educational system (SADTU, 2019). Further, through its Vision 2030, SADTU strives to create a learning nation through ensuring that her members are exposed to professional development programmes which empower them to be effective in their teaching practices, thereby positively impacting on learner outcomes (SADTU, 2010). This becomes evident through the union's intervention programmes to assist schools to improve their performance (SADTU, 2020). As part of SADTU's commitment to fight against policies that undermine the

promised quality public education (World Bank Group, 2018), SADTU claims to play a central role in dismissing education reforms that undermine the principles of South African democracy such as consultation. As such, on the occasion of the 2015 World Teachers' Day celebration in Durban, SADTU gave an update on their campaigns against standardization, common testing, Annual National Assessment (ANA), privatisation and commercialisation in and of education as well as performance aligned remuneration of teachers (Maluleke, 2015). The education system that SADTU committed to fight against is the one that ensured unequal education funding models done along racial lines and resulting in huge gaps in infrastructure, resources and quality of education provided in, for example, white schools and black schools (Cele, 2013; Naicker, 1996; Zulu, 2017). This is evident in the SADTU constitutional declaration as a preamble which says:

> We, teachers, and Education Workers of South Africa, having committed ourselves to the transformation of education and dedicated ourselves to the development of an education system which is fully accessible, equal, and qualitative, free of apartheid legacy and which is the just expression of the will of the people, as enshrined in the Constitution of the country, hereby proclaim the need for a single teachers and Education Workers union in our land. (SADTU, 2019a. p. 5)

It is clear from the above preamble that SADTU took a stance that was confrontational to the apartheid government, not only in education but even in the society. It is believed that this was one of the many reasons why the union had difficulty to get recognition in KwaZulu-Natal which was under the governance of Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) (Kgari-Masondo et al., 2019). According to these authors, the IFP government viewed SADTU as a political opponent and a threat to its stay in government. Apparently, this government did not differentiate between SADTU and the African National Congress, its political rival. SADTU members are largely *de facto* members of the progressive, formerly banned political organisation, the African National Congress (ANC) through its affiliation with Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). COSATU is a conglomeration of worker unions that are aligned with liberation movements particularly the ANC. As a result of their union affiliation, many teachers who belonged to SADTU were attacked in their places of work especially in areas around Zululand and Obonjeni, now called uMkhanyakude (Kgari-Masondo et al., 2019). The Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC), which had come into existence to maintain labour peace in education, took a resolution that sought to protect teachers who were exposed

to violence and intimidation. The protection and movement of the affected teachers, mostly members of SADTU, was achieved through negotiations between the employer (KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education) and teacher unions as equal parties within the KZN Provincial ELRC resulting in the employer issuing HRM 12 of 1997, a directive for the protection of teachers who experienced violence and intimidation (KZN DOE, 1997). HRM 12 of 1997 became known as the displacement circular and it is still in application even today. This circular allowed affected teachers to keep their jobs in schools far away from where they were attacked. It is this background that SADTU members found themselves having to fight with the apartheid government and later the provincial government of the IFP which stayed in power for ten years after 1994's first democratic government of South Africa thus solidifying its radicalism (Kgari-Masondo et al., 2019). These scholars argue that the reason for non-recognition of SADTU as an official union in KZN was because the union was viewed as an extension of the ANC which was at political loggerheads with the IFP.

The radicalism of those times is still visible when SADTU is disapproving some policies introduced by the Department of Basic Education. It is mostly during these times of disagreements on policy formulation and implementation that SADTU runs campaigns which sometimes disrupt schools as members must be part of the campaigns. Campaigns of SADTU are not about salaries of members only. SADTU, together with other unions, have been campaigning to ensure that teachers and learners have access to critical resources required to improve teaching and learning, including learner transport, school nutrition programme, infrastructure and the Quality Learning and Teaching Campaign (QLTC). In response to the attack including killing of teachers and learners in schools, and the stealing of school property, SADTU calls for schools to become safe havens for effective teaching and learning through the '*I Am a School Fan Campaign*' (SADTU, 2019b). The above-mentioned SADTU campaigns suggest that even though it is already more than two decades since the transition into democracy, however, the majority of public schools especially in rural areas are still lagging in relation to the enablers for good performance (resources). This is against the backdrop of former white schools continuing to enjoy the highest levels in terms of quality infrastructure, material, financial and human resources (Taylor, 2019). Unfortunately, many black schools remain under-resourced in terms of infrastructure and resources, with learner outcomes continuously showing "historical patterns of exclusion and under-privilege." (Spaull, 2013, p. 1). According to Taylor (2019), the education inequalities have resulted in learners from disadvantaged schools located far from the metropolis constituting the bottom

most fraction of learners who manage to obtain the National Senior Certificate (NSC). Given the above background and the recommendation that teacher unions must participate in improving education, this study seeks to establish the effectiveness of a school-union partnership in improving the teaching and learning processes and outcomes, thus closing the gap and inequalities between high performing and low performing schools.

1.3 Research problem

South African schools are often placed into categories. This categorisation is done according to their effectiveness, school governance, the extent of state control over schools, funding, and geographical location (Stoll & Fink, 1996; Naicker, 2019). Stoll and Fink (1996) further look at school effectiveness in terms of their ability to produce good learner outcomes and categorise schools into four types. According to these scholars, schools can be seen as moving, cruising, strolling, struggling, or sinking (Stoll & Fink, 1996). As characterised by Stoll and Fink (1996) sinking schools are those schools in which teachers are resistant to change and where the school climate exhibits tensions and non-cooperation between stakeholders which compromises the quality of teaching and learning. In contrast, moving schools are those schools that are characterised by a positive school environment that fosters teacher commitment and participatory goal setting, which enhances learner engagement (Stoll & Fink, 1996). However, I have observed that the Department of Education in South Africa uses the terms 'underperforming' and 'performing' to define the performance of schools. As a result, for the purposes of this study, I will use the term 'sinking' for underperforming schools as well as 'moving' for performing ones. The focus of this study is on exploring the improvement of a sinking school (underperformance) to a moving one (performance) facilitated by the school-teacher- union partnership.

Moving further with the categorisation of schools, Mawdsley et al. (2014) distinguish between functional and dysfunctional schools. While dysfunctional schools are generally associated with poor performance as well as disengagement of teachers and learners, functional schools, on the other hand, are results-driven and more committed to life-long learning and continuous improvement (Mawdsley et al., 2014). They further assert that functional schools are characterised by strong leadership and organisational cultures (Mawdsley et al., 2014). Supporting this view is Omodan & Tsotetsi (2018) who add that the nature of the relationships between stakeholders in the school impacts on performance of the school. For example, antagonistic or adversarial school relations tend to have a negative impact on the overall

performance of schools and in such schools, there can be no expectation that they can achieve their performance goals. My observation is that some schools deteriorate to the level of sinking schools simply because of poor relations with stakeholders. This has motivated me to undergo this study which involves one sinking school and a stakeholder which is a teacher union.

Teacher unions are most of the times viewed as the cause for poor relations in schools. Many studies on teacher unions (Bayeni et al., 2014; Kingdon & Teal, 2010; Sibiya, 2017) have focused on factors that negatively impact on learner achievement, such as protracted strike action and teacher absenteeism as a result of attending union activities. In schools, teacher unions are believed to be antagonistic to the school management. This notion emanates from issues raised by union members who are not happy about certain working conditions which the management of the school is not addressing (Msila, 2014), such as overcrowding, scarcity of resources and ageing infrastructure.

Given the above scenarios, the critical question then is, how can the school relationships with teacher unions be leveraged to improve school performance and learner outcomes? Some scholars, suggest that if teacher unions initiate collaborations and partnerships with schools there will be improvements in schools when it comes to their delivery of quality public education (Mafisa, 2017; Msila, 2014). Convinced that the state alone will not be able to succeed in everything in the field of education in South Africa and being mindful of the differences and disagreements between the Department of Education and teacher unions, Mafisa (2017) maintains that despite all, the Department of Education and unions must find common ground and collaborate to improve the quality of education in schools. In this context, this study sought to explore the effectiveness of a school-teacher union partnership in facilitating school improvement.

1.4 Rationale and motivation for the study

The purpose of this study is to explore the impact of a school-teacher union partnership in facilitating school improvement. I was encouraged to pursue this study by my personal and professional interest on educational matters. I reflect on my experience in the teaching field since 1996, spanning 25 years as a teacher in secondary schools, 11 years as a deputy principal in a secondary school, 21 years as a union leader and I represented teachers in the SGB for 6 years. Furthermore, my reading of various literature on the subject and media sources such as newspapers encouraged my interest on this topic.

1.4.1 As an educator and manager

I must first state that since I started teaching, I have worked in rural schools. During this period, I observed that teacher unions have a strong collective bargaining power to effectively engage the employer on issues that affect their members and issues that affect learners. I have seen school principals, teachers, and parents to a particular extent, relying on teacher unions for challenges in their schools to change. These range from late or non-payment of school financial allocations by the department of education, wrong allocation of teachers, school infrastructure, wrong quintiling of schools, delay in the appointment and payment of teachers, non- delivery of learner-teacher support material and many other issues. I have observed and witnessed double standards displayed by the Department of Education which would fail to respond or address issues raised by schools but able to attend to the same challenges when the same issues are raised by teacher unions, hence this much reliance on teacher unions by schools.

1.4.2 As a union activist

I have experience of leading teacher union engagements with schools and the Department of Education as the employer, to raise the issues of members and schools. These engagements sometimes run smoothly with the employer responding positively on issues raised. In other instances, these engagements grow to the level of sit-ins, pickets, work to rule and strikes. It is common cause that teaching and learning is negatively affected when teacher unions are engaged in these protest actions. Equally, teachers, learners and the schools enjoy everlastingly, when their challenges and issues are positively addressed by the Department of Education. This, to me means teacher unions' cause is correct and issues that they raise are issues that need to be addressed, however, I believe there are better ways with which such issues can be easily and timeously addressed before teaching and learning get affected.

Being a leader of a union has given me an opportunity and experience of sitting in the District and Provincial committees which deal with delivery of quality teaching and learning in school. These committees have opened my eyes in understanding how schools sometimes struggle to get things together to facilitate achievement of the required learner outcomes. I developed an interest of digging deeper into the reasons behind failure of schools to attain the required learner outcomes. In most instances, when interacting with principals and teachers in sinking schools, I come to a conclusion that the Department of Education sometimes contributes to the poor performance of schools. I have asked myself whether poor performance

cannot be regarded as a collective product of the school and officials of the Department of Education entrusted with the responsibility of supporting schools. In the main, these are Circuit Managers, District Managers, Human Resource personnel and subject advisors who must all play a significant role in supporting schools.

1.4.3 My personal school experience

I grew up in the rural area of KwaNzelu (eGoxe) in uMzimkhulu and born in a family that was struggling financially. The only source of income for the area was immigration, local men working in the mines. My dad was not different, though he was not a mine worker, but he worked in Johannesburg and was discharged on medical boarding when I was doing standard three (now Grade 5). I did my primary and junior classes at Mbumbulwana Junior Secondary School (figure 1). When I was doing standard two, we were together in one classroom with standard three. Our classroom was at St Mary's Anglican Church. I am now convinced that what was being done was what is now called multi-grading. Concentration was sometimes difficult as our teacher would be teaching the other class whilst we were expected to do classwork.

Figure 1: Photo of Mbumbulwana Junior Secondary School

Going to high school was not to be different. Financially abled school mates attended boarding schools. I could not. I went to Ladam High School, and I walked not less than forty kilometres per day to and from school. My standard eight (Grade 10) was a Roman Catholic Church building at Cancele location. I have an experience of being in a school that does not have resources for both teaching and learning, a school that does not have enough teachers to the extent of the school only offering the subjects which the few teachers in the school can offer. I mean a school forced by its circumstances not to offer Mathematics, Physical Science, Commerce stream and other subjects, a school where learners shared textbooks. This is the situation I found myself in at Ladam High School. I still remember myself together with other six Grade learners bracing rain and thunderstorms walking for a kilometre to get to a rondavel again in the Anglican Church next to the school to be taught Geography. These days when I go around the province visiting many schools, listening to teachers, learners, and principals, I conclude that some schools in the province are in the very similar situation that my school was in thirty years ago.

1.5 Gaps in the literature

Finally, I have a personal attachment to education, and I believe that all children must be exposed to equal opportunities of learning. With the known challenges as highlighted earlier which may be contributing to schools being found at various levels of performance with regard to learner outcomes, it is clear that improving the quality of teaching and learning in schools requires a collective effort of all key role players in the education system. With the interventions that teacher unions do, the work of teacher unions is not reported hence the scarcity of literature at a local or national level that highlights the good work and contribution of teacher unions in improving learner outcomes and schools' performance. I say this because there is general negativity about teacher unions as disruptors of teaching and learning even though there are few scholars who have clearly articulated that there is a positive role that teacher unions can play to improve learner outcomes (Davidoff & Lazarus, 2002; Grant, 2006; Bayeni et. al, 2014; Sibiya, 2017; Kgari-Masondo et al., 2019; Kingdon & Teal, 2009; Bascia, 2012; Cele, 2013; Mafisa, 2014; Zengele, 2013; Zulu, 2018). I have noted paucity of research on the contribution of teacher unions in improving learner performance, particularly in KwaZulu-Natal, which is the focus of the study. It is this gap that has inspired me to conduct this study which seeks to explore existing school-teacher union partnership aimed at facilitating school improvement.

1.6 Significance of the study

This study is conducted knowing that there exists empirical literature that views teacher unions as disruptive, thus contributing to poor learner outcomes (Zengele, 2013; Jansen 2019; Msila, 2014; Bayeni et al., 2014). While acknowledging these views, however, some scholars argue that teacher unions are making a meaningful contribution in education (Mafisa, 2017). Therefore, it can be inferred that there are two discourses about teacher unions, namely, the negative and positive discourse. At the end of this study, I hope to contribute to knowledge on new theoretical frameworks, policy and practice that can be employed to improve working partnerships between schools and teacher unions. I expect the study to reveal the contributions and shortcomings of an initiative of one teacher union implemented in a sinking school defined by poor learner outcomes. This study is also expected to improve understanding of how teachers' unions are perceived by the public in South Africa. In my view, it is in the public interest to know the role that teacher unions play in school improvement interventions. It is also fair to let the public know that teacher unions may not only be interested in fighting against

the state and defending their members even if their members are lazy and disruptive and deliberately ignoring the learners. Teacher unions claim that they are interested in two things namely, decent jobs for their members and quality public education delivery. Therefore, if this is the case, the public must be taken on board with evidence that teacher unions are equally concerned about the education of their learners. It is interesting that there is an existing partnership between a teacher union and a school, as I view this partnership as a platform that can redefine the public's perceptions about teacher unions. In fact, the school-teacher union partnership must be explored as one of many partnerships that can help schools to improve their performance. I am convinced that should there be a working together of schools and teacher unions, a new culture will develop in schools wherein there will be labour peace with all teachers being motivated to teach and learners to learn. The big beneficiary will be the learners whose outcomes shall be improved. Principals of schools who bear the responsibility of coordinating stakeholders will also benefit on how to form partnerships with teacher unions and work together to realise the school goals of enhanced learner outcomes.

1.7 Aims and objectives of the study

This study aimed at exploring a school-teacher union partnership with regard to school improvement in one school. The objectives of this study therefore are as follows:

- To explore how a school-teacher union partnership is planned, organised and coordinated in the case study school.
- To ascertain the view of key role players in the selected school with regard to implementation and outcomes of the partnership in respect of school improvement.
- To make known what can be done differently to enhance school-teacher union partnership in the selected school to ensure better outcomes in respect of school improvement.

1.8 Critical questions

Collectively, this study seeks to respond to the following three critical questions:

- How the school-teacher union partnership is planned, organised and coordinated in the case study school?

- What are the views of the key role players in the school-teacher partnership in the case study school with regard to the implementation and outcomes of the partnership in respect of school improvement?
- What can be done differently to enhance school-teacher union partnership in the case study school to enhance better outcomes in respect of school improvement?

1.9 Definition of terms

The following constructs are worth clarifying as they shaped both conceptualisation and operationalisation of the study:

1.9.1 Leadership and management

As conceptualised by Adeyemi (2014), the process of leadership entails achieving results through the collective efforts of subordinates. To achieve this, the school leader defines and articulates a clear vision for the school and share this vision with teachers, learners, parents and school governing bodies to secure their commitment and support. Leadership is also seen as a process of intentional influence wherein the leader creates followers who are inspired by what their leader does, all in a mission to achieve the desired outcomes (Mora, 2012). Specifically, Cele (2013) and Zulu (2017) conclude that school leadership is more about influencing and inspiring teachers and all stakeholders to achieve the desired outcomes thus improving school functionality. I consider all the definitions by different scholars above as important and I deduce that all converge on three points, that leadership is about the presence of two people, the leader and follower, presence of influence and common goals that must be achieved through the provision of shared leadership that facilitates participatory and inclusive decision making in school improvement partnerships.

Management on the other hand, is about the harmonious execution of decisions from lower level up (Shoko, 2016). Algahtani (2014) defines management as "a set of processes that keep an organisation functioning through routine maintenance of day-to-day work operations and problem-solving to improve performance and results. According to Bush (2008), managerial functions include working with staff to identify, discuss and prioritise performance goals and targets, develop action plans and allocate resources to ensure that the identified goals and objectives are achieved as planned. Although the two constructs of leadership and management are generally used interchangeably, however, there are conceptual differences between the two terms. For example, while school management deals specifically with the

operational issues at the school, whereas the school leadership deals with the strategic direction of the school, resource mobilisation, stakeholder management and the overall performance of the school. For me, this means developing both managerial and leadership capacity in schools so that principals, school management teams (SMT) and teachers can perform both functions.

1.9.2 Partnership

McQuoid (2000) defines partnership as the potential for synergy of some form and that partnership is formed for development and delivery of strategy by and for parties, although each party may not be equally involved in all stages of a partnership. Coburn et al. (2013) broadly defines partnership as a collaborative association between individuals or group who undertake a particular task or mission in order to achieve a common goal, for example, improved teaching and learning outcomes in a school. Deducing from these two definitions, it can be observed that stakeholders in a partnership are equals that stand to benefit equitably from outcomes of the partnership; although in reality this can be hard to achieve due to deep rooted imbalances in power relations among stakeholders. However, considering that most poor performing schools are from disadvantaged rural settings and often characterised by overcrowded classes, limited study material and dilapidating infrastructure (Amnesty International, 2020), is it still possible to have mutual benefits for stakeholders in partnerships that involve these schools? Sanders and Epstein (2005) argue that formation of education partnerships is on the rise as they prove to be tackling school challenges such as learner dropouts and poor learner performance. Schools get into partnerships with various stakeholders with the hope that these partnerships will facilitate realisation of the school goals, vision and mission which aim to establish a school that is performing and increasing learner outcomes.

1.9.3 Successful schools

Mukeshimana (2016) defines successful schools as schools that have consistent academic performance irrespective of their background differences. These are schools that are also known as high performing schools. The National School Boards Association (NSBA) (2018) conceptualises successful schools as schools that pay special attention to the needs and expectations of learners, learner empowerment and motivation, career counselling, as well as the personal circumstances of each learner through close cooperation with parents and the community. Jarl et al. (2017) defines successful schools as those schools that are consistent and have positive future programmes for their continuous learner outcome improvement. In South Africa, school success is linked to performance of learners. This performance is usually

measured by what learners achieve in their examinations. Schools that get below 65 percent in the performance of learners are regarded as underperforming schools (Department of Basic Education, 2020). Overall, these definitions imply that successful schools are consistent, responsive to learners' needs and set targets and are performance driven. Considering the categorisation of schools by Fink and Stoll (1996), successful schools resemble moving schools.

1.9.4 School Improvement

School improvement has been conceptualised differently in school management literature. For example, Silbert et al. (2015) define school improvement as an intervention aimed at raising learner achievement through improving teaching and learning processes and the learning environment. Earl (2014) conceptualises school improvement as an innovative approach to educational transformation that seeks to improve learner outcomes and strengthen school leadership capabilities to manage change. Silbert et al. (2015) further characterise school improvement as a deliberate programme developed and implemented to facilitate change in school performance. These authors believe that the required change will come through professional development of teachers and the development of the school so that they positively impact on learner outcomes. Considering these definitions of school improvement, the term is used in this study to refer to a process of moving schools that are struggling in performance to better performing schools characterized by clear school improvement programmes that are understood and collectively implemented by teachers, learners, SGB, parents, and stakeholders, and one that is planned, coordinated, and led by the principal and management team of the school.

1.10 Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation consists of five chapters. These include the following:

Chapter one: Introduction and orientation of the study

In this chapter I introduce the study by outlining the context and background, the significance and value of the study, the research objectives as well the critical questions that the study seeks to address in relation to the school-teacher union partnership. The Chapter also defines key concepts and constructs used in this study. Also included is a summary of the five chapters that make up the study.

Chapter two: Review of related literature

This chapter provides a critical review of related literature on school partnership in both local and global contexts to inform development of the conceptual framework and to identify critical knowledge gaps on implementation school partnership. The last section of this chapter explains the theoretical framework within which the study is located, which includes instructional and transformational leadership.

Chapter three: Research design and methodology

This chapter explains in detail the justification for the research design and methodology used for the study. These include the interpretivist paradigm, the qualitative research approach, the case study method, purposive sampling, semi-structured interviews, focus groups and document analysis. Towards the end of this chapter, I explain the qualitative measures used to improve trustworthiness in the study, including the limitations of the study as well as the ethical principles that were observed throughout the study.

Chapter four: Data presentation, analysis and discussion

In this chapter, collected data is presented and analysed in accordance with the interpretivist paradigm which informed the study. This data was gathered through semi-structured interviews, focus groups and document analysis which are discussed at length in chapter three. This chapter responds to the three critical research questions that guided the study. Data is presented and analysed in accordance with the thematic analysis approach which involves transcription of semi-structured interviews and focus groups.

Chapter five: Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter presents a summary of the study and conclusions drawn from research findings from chapter four. The last part of this chapter makes recommendations in respect of policy, practice, and theory.

1.11 Conclusion

This chapter provided the orientation of the study, with particular focus on its purpose, research questions and guiding research objectives. A problem analysis was also provided to highlight the key challenges that warrant an assessment of the implementation of the school-union partnership in sinking schools. The remainder of this chapter outlines the motivation of

the study as well as the key concepts that guided the study. Therefore, this chapter provides a compelling argument for readers and researchers to understand school-teacher union partnership to facilitate school improvement.

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2.2.1 Typologies of partnerships in schools

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CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

In chapter one, the context and scope of the research pertaining to the implementation of the school-teacher union partnership in one rural school was presented. Accordingly, the significance and primary focus of the study were discussed, including the underlying theoretical constructs. In this chapter, I critically reviewed existing literature with a special focus on partnerships between schools and various stakeholders. In doing so, the study explored international, continental (African) and South African (local) literature to get an understanding of how other scholars view the implementation of school partnerships. This chapter also presents and discusses two leadership theories that guided the study namely, transformational leadership and instructional leadership. Together these theories constituted the analytical framework for the study. I divided this chapter in two sections. In Section A, I present the review of related literature and in Section B, I present the theoretical framework.

SECTION A: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.2 Partnership as a study phenomenon

The urgency for service delivery by organisations, governments and other institutions has resulted in a growing need for the establishment of partnerships in order to improve the scale, intensity and quality of public goods and services (Harrison, 2018; Martin, 2005; Sarker, 2019; United Nations Development Programme, 2009). Therefore, it can be claimed that partnerships help organisations accelerate the realisation of their identified goals. The OECD (2006), in its *Successful Partnership Guide*, reports that the strength of partnerships is on how they are planned and coordinated. In elucidating the concept of a partnership, McQuoid (2000) indicates that a partnership is a multidimensional concept whose application differs from one context to another. This assertion is supported by Khuzwayo (2019) who argues that partnerships exist in political spaces, business, social and educational settings. Irrespective of the context, a large body of literature on partnerships agrees that organisations, governments, institutions, and people involved in partnerships identify themselves with the principles of a shared vision and goals which they hope to realise through partnerships (Khuzwayo, 2019; Myende, 2018; OECD, 2006). This study explored the efficacy of a school-teacher union partnership in helping to improve performance and learner outcomes in a rural school.

Partnerships in schools occur when schools establish formal working relationships with stakeholders and that done towards the realisation of the shared vision of a school evidenced by higher teacher commitment and learner performance (Khan et al., 2012; Rodriguez-Valls, 2014). Accordingly, Asera, et al. (2017) expatiate by claiming that partnerships in schools avail resources to enhance school-learner outcomes. Critically exploring partnerships in schools, Myende (2018) argues that partners in a partnership improve their competencies by bringing together the diverse skills, talents and capabilities of all role players for the benefit of stakeholders. To support this view, the Deich and Neary (2020) assert that when leaders approach their leadership activities through the use of partnership, the vision of the organisation is realised. This is achieved through strengthening the leadership and harnessing managerial resources from non-profit sectors so that children in these disadvantaged and under performing schools are exposed to equal opportunities as the child in the best schools. This notion underscores the role of school leadership in establishing and consolidating school partnerships. Importantly, the National Development Plan directs relevant stakeholders to align their interests to maintain the shared goal of attaining excellent educational outcomes (NDP, 2012).

Myende (2018) observes that as schools exist within a broader network of parties with vested interest in education, these parties influence the education of the child both in and outside the school. This author further notes that it is this vested interest in education that informs the formation of partnerships in schools. Myende (2018) believes that such partnership continuously determines the direction that schools take to improve performance and outcomes. Effective school partnerships are critical in helping schools to tackle widespread challenges such as violence, drug abuse, social ills, lack of resources, lack of support from parents, community and tension caused by power struggles in schools (Boateng, 2014; Khuzwayo, 2019; Spaull, 2013; Stevens, 2014; Taylor, 2019). Other scholars identify school leadership and management as pivotal in the functionality of schools or lack thereof, to the extent of suggesting that for schools to deal with all their challenges, stakeholders must work together in assisting schools to improve (Atcioglu & Kose, 2018; Koc, 2018; McAleavy et al., 2018). As shown above, these scholars place school principals at the centre of the identification and engagement of stakeholders that can partner with the school. Accordingly, Haines et al. (2015) conclude that schools have a variety of stakeholders with which to form partnerships. In the next paragraphs, I explicate the various partnership typologies common in schools.

2.2.1 School partnership typologies

Scholars identify at least four common partnerships that schools undertake with their stakeholders. These together with their strengths and limitations are reviewed below.

2. 2.1.1 School and Community partnerships

The fact that schools do not operate in a vacuum but are built where there are people by the people, and for the people, schools are part of the community. It follows therefore that schools must do all in their power, including partnerships to address the educational needs of their communities. Therefore, there is an expectation that schools and communities must work together. Acknowledging the importance of community involvement in schools, Erquiaga (2019) notes that school-community collaboration (*#AllInForKids* Campaign) helped to restore order in 2500 American schools. Khosa et al. (2013) compare the implementation of school improvement projects in the pre-1994 and post-1994 periods in South Africa. Before 1994, communities in South Africa were very much involved in schools, however in an "open-ended journey" without clear school improvement models or programmes (Khosa et al., 2013). This involvement, Khosa et al. (2013) claim, went to the extent of communities building schools for their children. There were no incidents of vandalism during that time. These schools built in mud are still in use even today in some provinces like Eastern Cape (Department of Basic Education, 2018). In the post-1994 to date, Khosa et al. (2013) point out that school improvement is now much more structured, taking a predetermined course. Khosa et al. (2013) further outline the steps towards the planning and organising of school improvement projects which include profiling the challenges and prioritising interventions, having a theory of change and an intervention matrix as well as developing a logical framework, specifying a delivery model and presenting a budget and a work plan. What is evident from this review is that school-community partnerships help under-resourced schools to improve their delivery capacity and responsiveness to learners' needs through resource sharing, pooling of skills, competencies, and expertise.

Literature shows that the participation of the community in schools hinges on the leadership capabilities of the school principal to identify and leverage the wealth of experience, skills, expertise, resources and support networks that the key role players and stakeholders bring to the school improvement partnership (Krumm & Curry, 2017). While it is expected that community members approach the school for the formation of a partnership, Mombourquette (2017) argues that the school principal must lead in the planning of the school and community

partnership. This scholar argues that for the success of this partnership the school principal must work with the community in identifying areas that must form part of the partnership programme through developing a set of shared goals, allocate responsibilities and timeframes of the partnership work. Consequently, the NDP (2012) recommends that community members must be encouraged to provide their services to schools. It is believed that involvement of communities in schools will assist them to develop a sense of ownership of schools by communities. Some of the services that communities can render to schools include the delivery of school nutrition programme, monitoring school safety and preventing vandalism and theft in schools (NDP, 2012).

The need for community-school partnerships is reinforced by the South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996 (SASA) (Department of Basic Education, 1996). Specifically, Section 23(2)) provides that school governing bodies must identify community members with expertise to be co-opted to the SGB and offer school facilities for use by community members. Myende (2018) adds that teacher leadership is also vital for the success and continuity of partnerships as they are also involved in the implementation of the partnership programme. In her commentary in the *Education Week* magazine, Loria (2018) makes a point that while community partnerships are beneficial, there is a considerable amount of work that requires the commitment of all members of the partnership. Loria advises that teachers balance their work to realise the goals of the partnership and further asserts that for school partnerships to succeed learners must be involved. In contrast to other scholars who overlook the role of learners in school-community partnership, Loria (2018) highlights the need to incorporate learners' inputs in the design and implementation and evaluation of the school-community partnership.

2.2.1.2 School and parents' partnerships

Parents of learners in schools are the first educators. The Family-School Partnership Framework of Australia (2017) postulates that parents influence the learning and development of their children during school years and beyond. Others position education as a social activity (Piacentini, 2017) therefore, arguing that partnerships with parents and families cannot be avoided. Gueriam & Luciano (2020) argue that educating a child should be seen as a shared responsibility that brings to the fore a holistically developed learner. A holistically developed learner is characterised by good morals, healthy ambitions, good character and excellent performance (Voko et al., 2014) which must be facilitated by the partnership between schools and parents. The SASA supports and encourages the participation of parents and the

community in school affairs aimed at improving the education of their children (Mestry & Ndhlovu, 2014). To this end, Myende and Nhlumayo (2020) advance that parents know that they must actively participate and contribute to the education of their children, but because of the shortcomings they have, parents plead for programmes that can equip them with skills necessary for meaningful contribution in their partnership with schools. In their study on mathematics performance in South Africa, Visser et al. (2015) conclude that both school and home environments are critical in learners' performance. This implies that schools in disadvantaged communities where a majority of parents are unemployed with limited educational backgrounds may struggle to conceptualise and execute school partnerships. Compounding this problem is substance abuse, teenage pregnancy and many forms of violence which significantly reduces the participation of parents and learners in school partnership. Further to this, literature indicates that these schools are only able to perform when the school leadership goes an extra mile to overcome all the obstacles that hinder performance (Bhengu et al., 2019; Naicker et al., 2015; Mkhize, 2017). Guided by literature, I identify at least four aspects of school activity which can shape school and parent partnership as outlined in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2: Four aspects of school activity that can shape school-parent partnership

Aspect of School Activity	Schools	Parents
Curriculum	• Convene parents' sessions to discuss learners' performance	• Always supervise the learners' work
Discipline and order	• Offer parents different parent involvement options such as the provision of transport for field trips	• Participate in all committees in the school and attend all meetings of SGB to influence school policy which includes code of conduct and schools' safety strategies

Communication	• Regular communication with parents to improve learner performance through meetings, newsletters	• Give feedback to school through even participating in writing messages and comments in school newsletters
Extra-curricular activities	• Invite and allow parents to attend extra-curricular activities of the school	• Attend extra-curricular activities where they motivate learners and in the process bond with teachers

Even though there are these points of interest that can be used to guide the school-parent partnership, it is argued that school and parent partnerships create an inclusive environment wherein parents make inputs in decisions that schools take (Martin, 2005).

2. 2.1.3 School and business partnerships

Part of the partnership capital that schools can tap on to deal with many challenges they face is business. Supporting this view, Allen (2017) argues that many educational needs can be addressed if business partners with local schools. According to this author, these partnerships assist schools in addressing many challenges they have. As with other scholars, Allen identifies social ills and education budget cuts as some of the key challenges that impact adversely on the academic performance of schools. As a solution, Allen (2017) proposes that businesses must use their corporate social responsibility budgets to bail out sinking schools. Corporate social responsibility budget represents business's commitment to plough back to communities through donations, sponsorships and infrastructure development. The Council for Corporate and School Partnerships founded by Coca-Cola adds that business has vested interest in schools as they look up to schools to produce learners with high marks to take over business leadership in their business (Council for Corporate school partnerships, 2008). This assertion by Coca-Cola Council gives reasons for the bursaries that business offer to some learners.

While the views expressed by Allen (2017) that business must form partnership with local schools may have merits, he nonetheless assumes that all schools have business with which they can all form partnership, which may not be the case in rural schools. This

assumption negates the reality that the majority of sinking schools which are mostly found in rural areas are characterised by persisting unemployment, poverty, inequalities (Statistics South Africa, 2018) and there is no economic activity that can attract business to invest in the area (Chakaninka et al., 2012). Despite these limitations, school-business partnership are still a viable option in addressing the complex performance challenges facing rural schools. The school-business partnership improves learner outcomes. The Coca-Cola council claimed that schools it had partnership with, experienced improved learner outcomes (Montecel, 2013). One example of an effective school-business partnership involved Ugu and iLembe districts of KwaZulu-Natal and Vodacom assists grade twelve learners with content and revision material for different subjects (KZN Department of Education, 2020). Through this partnership, the two districts recorded the highest improvement percentage in 2019 NSC results.

2.2.1.4 School and University Partnerships

The partnership of schools and universities is generally considered to be effective in improving the quality of education (Burton & Greher, 2007). This is because some universities are responsible for provision of teacher education. It is often argued that student teachers can be seen to have completed their training programmes when they have engaged in supervised classroom activities that enable them to apply their instructional knowledge and skills to practice (Mutemeri & Chetty, 2011). From another perspective, it is argued that universities are no longer regarded as one stop training centres where people get trained and leave for good (Chan, 2016). Their assertion is that with the life-long learning principle, teachers and schools have to form collaborative strategies with universities in order to deliver context-specific teacher development initiatives. Like all other partnership interventions, school-university partnerships yield mutual benefits for role players in the value chain. Examples include research and design inputs by universities and teachers to improve the quality of teacher development.

2.2.2 Synthesis of school partnership typologies

On reviewing the above literature on typologies of school partnerships, I observe that there are gaps in the conceptualisation of these partnerships. For example, none of these researchers pay attention to the possibility of establishment of concrete school-teacher union partnerships, which is the primary focus of the present study. Within the South African contexts, teacher unions play a leading role in facilitating transformation and quality improvement efforts in schools. Empirical literature confirms that the teaching profession is

highly unionised in South Africa and that teacher unions cannot be ignored in school improvement partnerships (Khuzwayo, 2019; Mafisa, 2017). If anything, there are varying perceptions about the role that teacher unions play in schools. For example, the conservative view perceives teacher unions to be generally disruptive and obstructive and therefore unwarranted in schools. To some extent, this suggests gaps in the literature regarding the responsibilities and contributions of educators in school improvement partnerships. Partly, this explains why school-union partnership activities are limited, particularly in rural schools. By contrast, the progressive view (transformative perspective) holds that teacher unions are an important stakeholder in both the transformation of schools and enhancement of learner outcomes (McAlister & Catone, 2013; Cele, 2013).

2.3 Factors that account for the success of partnerships in education

Education partnerships assist schools to achieve their performance goals (Badgett, 2016). Even though there is evidence on the power of education partnership, it is argued that not all partnership in schools have been successful (Krumm & Curry, 2017). It is, therefore, important when deciding to form partnerships to be aware of the factors that contribute to the success of partnerships. Below are some of the factors that account for the success of the school partnerships (Badgett, 2016):

- Have clearly defined vision and goals that are understood by both partners.
- Communication and respect the views of the other.
- Allocation of responsibilities.
- Dealing with all problems arising out of the partnership.
- The clear communication of roles and responsibilities.
- The presence of a well-planned programme of action.
- The amount or kind of follow-through asked of teachers and staff.
- The quality of services and products offered.

2.4 Discourses on Teacher Unions

In this section, I review literature on discourses on teacher unions in order to improve understanding of the complexities and conceptual ambiguities surrounding teacher unions. This will also help clarify the theoretical position that the study is taking regarding the formation and implementation of partnership in rural schools.

2. 4.1 Discourses around negative perceptions about teacher unions on learner outcomes

In one perspective, Kudumo (2011) emphasises the role of the social, economic and political context of a country in shaping the ideological positions and approaches of teacher unions towards collective bargaining issues and education delivery in schools. For example, teacher unions in South Africa, particularly SADTU, were inspired by the struggle against the apartheid system and this is still prevalent currently (Heystek & Lethoko, 2001). South African teacher unions have received a great deal of negative attention based on how the public views them concerning learner performance (Franklin & McLaren, 2015). Franklin and McLaren (2015) mention that issues that contribute to this negativity about teacher unions include challenges regarding educator post-provisioning as well as issues related to assessment and observation of teachers. Teacher unions have consistently opposed policy proposals around these issues. A body of literature concludes that teacher unions with special reference to SADTU are antagonistic towards school leadership and management which may result in disharmony in schools (Sibiya, 2017; Zengele, 2013).

The negativity about teacher unions has resulted in some scholars questioning the legitimacy of unions and whether they should be involved in school activities beyond collective bargaining issues (McCollow, 2017). Teacher unions are very much aware of these negative sentiments expressed against them and they seem to be aware of the reasons why there are these negative perceptions about them. For example, Education International (2016) asserts that things have never been harder for teacher unions. This teacher union argues that the reason behind the attack directed to teacher unions is informed by their campaign against commercialisation and privatisation of education propagated by the Global Education Reform Movement (GERM). It is argued that the work of GERM threatens the teaching profession through its business approach to education (Blower, 2015) which is characterised by competition between schools and teachers, test-based education and attacks on teacher unions (Education International, 2018). This implies that the battle between teacher unions and GERM is ideological. Teacher unions are targeted because they vehemently oppose this profit-making agenda and develop campaigns against GERM efforts to maximise profits through neo-liberal education policies (SADTU, 2019b) introduced in many countries outside United Kingdom (Education International, 2016).

The neo-liberal economic and industrial policies seem to be the source of all negativities about teacher unions have severely limited the ability of teacher unions to continue to freely

engage in collective bargaining (McCollow, 2017). This scholar further asserts that the global education reforms fuel hostility towards teacher unions. In particular, Blower (2015) argues that GERM's approach is the antithesis of public education, a public good. For school partnerships, the GERM approach, therefore, poses risks on two fronts: first it discounts the critical role of collaborative effort in elevating not just teacher engagement but also the quality of educational outcomes in sinking schools. Second, the GERM approach over-emphasises competition over solidarity and bottom-up approaches to school improvement. Clearly, this runs contrary to children's right to education (Blower, 2015). It also limits teachers' ability to grow professionally as it standardises teaching and learning interventions (tests) and such teachers and learners have become passive recipients of predetermined educational solutions.

Exploring the public-sector unionism and its implications for education in South Africa, Letseka et al. (2011) focus on the role of SADTU in the declining state of education in the country and argue that the dysfunctionality of education in South Africa is because of SADTU's influence. The authors claim that SADTU is always engaged in strikes, pickets or stay-away which leave learners without teachers. They blame SADTU for opposing Annual National Assessment (ANA). Notably, numerous studies portray teacher unions as self-centred interest groups that can do whatever that takes as long as the interests of their members are looked after which to some extent compromises learners' interest (Bayeni et al., 2014; Jansen, 2019; Motsohi, 2011; Zengele, 2013). This criticism of teacher unions and SADTU in particular, has even extended to the political arena. For instance, the Democratic Alliance has unsuccessfully initiated a process to declare education an essential service with the intention to stop SADTU from industrial actions (SADTU, 2018). The Institute for Race Relations (IRR) (2019) supports this view that SADTU is disruptive and compromises the education of learners. The preceding literature points to a situation where a stakeholder, the teacher union, is perceived to be opposed to quality education delivery through it not agreeing to measures that would ensure accountability by teachers. However, I am of the view that it would have been better if scholars had extended their work to also investigate reasons for rejecting some policies by teacher unions. I believe that doing that would add a critical dimension to the existing body of knowledge about teacher unions. Maybe such studies would present an opportunity to look at more progressive strategies for the benefit of both schools and teacher unions. The current study, therefore, departs from this conservative view of trade unionism in South Africa by stressing the transformative role of teacher unions in school improvement partnerships, hence the need to also explore at the positive discourses about teacher unions.

2. 4.2 Discourses around positive perceptions about teacher unions on learner outcomes

In contrast to the negative narratives about teacher unions, some studies project a positive image of teacher unions as key stakeholders in school improvement partnerships. Bascia and Stevenson (2017) highlight some of the contributions that teacher unions make in improving the quality of education in schools. One such contribution is the teacher professional development programmes organised by teacher unions. Heystek and Lethoko (2001) acknowledge that the purpose of education in South Africa is to scale up both provision and the quality of education in schools to meet the needs of learners and the labour market. Within the same context, Cele (2013) posits that there are innovative programmes that teacher unions are conducting to improve leadership effectiveness and functionality of schools, particularly in rural contexts. Similarly, a study by Cowen and Strunk (2015) reveal that teacher unions play a progressive role in schools by encouraging the formation of partnerships to improve teaching and learning processes and outcomes.

Reflecting on the role of teacher unions in school improvement efforts, the Wits School of Governance and Bridge (2016) argue that first, teacher unions are critical stakeholders in education and secondly acknowledge their contribution in the development of teachers in South Africa. It does appear from the literature that there is an expected decisive role that teacher unions must play in education (Heystek & Lethoko, 2001; Mafisa, 2017; Naicker, 2005). The study by Mafisa (2017) shows that teacher unions are beginning to involve themselves in the implementation of policies that seek to improve the quality of teaching and learning in schools. This study further establishes that teacher unions are training their members on curriculum issues as part of the unions' capacity building initiatives in disadvantaged schools. As evidence that teacher unions are involved in programmes aimed at improving learner outcomes, teacher unions in South Africa jointly established the Teacher Union Collaboration (TUC), which assists with teacher training and development in schools (Department of Basic Education, 2017). These teacher development opportunities are offered to all teachers irrespective of their ideological inclinations or orientations (SADTU, 2020). Despite differences in emphasis the preceding studies, however, converge on two issues and the first issue is the need to improve learner outcomes in all schools. The second issue is the centrality of teachers in learner performance. In the next section I review learner performance to provide a context to illustrate the need for implementing the school improvement interventions in rural schools.

2. 5 Learner performance

Learner academic performance refers to the level to which learners in schools are able to achieve academically (Makgato, 2007). Equally, Lamas (2015) defines learner academic performance as the attainment of stated performance goals and objectives as set out in learning programmes or assessment policy. Put differently, learner performance demonstrates mastery and application of acquired knowledge and skills against predefined assessment criteria or standards. This means learner performance is measured through regular assessments and feedback. The centrality of learner performance in this study stems from the realisation that the majority of learners from rural schools experience difficulties in achieving in acceptable performance standards. Failure to achieve learning outcomes by learners, concerns learners, their parents, teachers and the Department of Education (Makgato, 2007). Lamas (2015) further declares that learner performance is the product of learning which is stimulated by the teaching activity.

Clearly, learner performance is determined by the quality of engagement by the teacher and the learner (Gilbert, 2019). Makgato (2007) adds that the teacher's subject content awareness count in learner performance. In South Africa, learner performance is guided by the National Policy pertaining to the programme and promotion requirements of the National Curriculum Statement (Department of Education, 2013). Scholars and education analysts have raised questions about the quality of South African education, and some have made conclusions that the standards are low and do not compare favourably with other developing countries (Spaull, 2013; Taylor, 2019). To complement this view, Roodt (2018) questions the efficacy and capability of the South African education system to help learners perform according to the set standards. This is despite the regular reports of improved performance by the DBE (Spaull, 2013).

2.5.1 Reasons for learner poor performance

Poor performance in SA schools is a historic feature of apartheid. Mlachila and Moeletsi (2019) declare that schools with poor learner performance are those that were historically deprived of the necessary resources and support required to provide high quality education. Mlachila and Moeletsi (2019) further argue that 75-80% of learners in South Africa rely on dysfunctional schools to get quality education, whereas 20-35% of learners get quality education from the few functional private schools. Some scholars identify teachers' poor subject content knowledge, few systems for teacher accountability, quality of learner and

teacher support material, language of teaching and learning and limited leadership and management capacity as some of the factors that account for learner poor performance (Mlachila & Moeletsi, 2019; Spaull, 2013). Poverty, unemployment and inequalities are believed to define how schools perform (NDP, 2012). Adding to this, Batra (2015) argues that teachers' attitudes and perceptions of learners from these marginalised communities sometimes alienate learners and therefore limits their ability to seek help and guidance from their teachers. South Africa appears to have a bimodal education system where some privileged schools continue to perform well beyond the set standards whilst disadvantaged schools have constantly failed to reach minimum performance requirements (Mlachila & Moeletsi, 2019; Spaull, 2013; Taylor, 2019). Lack of parental commitment to the education of their children and motivation of both teachers and learners contribute to poor performance of learners (Makgato, 2007). Exacerbating the situation is the failure of school management and teacher unions to work together in dealing with issues in the schools thus resulting in tensions and conflicts between the two (Mafisa, 2017). In the absence of labour peace, it becomes difficult for educators to promote and uphold high quality standards in teaching and learning processes as more energy and time are spent on unresolved workplace squabbles. Romero & Barbera (2011) stress that attaining high quality education requires significant improvements in both instructional time and learners' time, as well as the commitment to complete all assessment requirements.

2.5.2 Performance or Underperformance?

Conservatively, it has been argued that the South African education system is unable to produce high-quality learning outcomes compared to other developing countries. Underperformance by South African schools is confirmed by benchmark tests administered by leading institutions such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring and Education Quality (SACMEQ) and National Science Education Standards (NSES). On the whole, these tests suggest that the performance of grade nine learners in subjects such as home language, science and mathematics is relatively low compared to other developing countries, despite major policy improvements in the country's education system (Stevens, 2014; Boateng, 2014; Department of Basic Education, 2014). Performance scores in these subjects averaged fourteen per cent (14%), forty-three per cent (43%) and thirty-seven (37%), respectively. Additionally, the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMMS) and the 2016 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study showed that Grade Four (4) learners trailed behind

learners in similar grades elsewhere (Howie et al., 2017). This study further shows that 80 per cent of learners in South Africa struggle with literacy skills, i.e., reading and writing skills, compared to four per cent (4%) globally.

The literature reviewed above implies that South Africa has an education system that is struggling to produce excellent results. This view is negated by the National Senior Certificate examination results which show that the country has been improving to the level where it reached 81.3% in 2019, for the first time since the ushering in of the democratic government in 1994. However, Equal Education (2019) and Marchesi (2020) warn that celebrating the improved performance by SA Government must equally account for all learners who started schooling but do reach grade twelve and those who exit the education system without obtaining matriculation certificate. These organisations argue that many learners who register for grade one do not get to grade twelve arguing that these learners drop out because of the failure of the system to give quality education to them. Even so, there is improvement in the performance of learners in South Africa. However, there are performance challenges that are noted. The next paragraphs will focus on the performance of KZN schools to provide a context for the implementation of school partnerships.

KwaZulu-Natal schools show no difference from the national picture of performance hence the notable improvement characterised by learners' performance which varies from district to district and from school to school (KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education, 2017). To understand these variations in performance, KZN Department of Education categorises schools as functional and dysfunctional based on what percentage they get in matriculation passes. All secondary schools that get below 65% are regarded as dysfunctional (KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education, 2017). It can be deduced from the report of the department that schools in rural areas, small and non-viable are topping the list of the dysfunctional schools (KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education, 2017). According to this report, there are schools that could not pass even a single learner though there are improvements in the 2019 results compared with the previous years. Looking at the schools that are functional though at different levels but above 65%, it is said that some of the contributions to such performance are the camps and holiday classes (Macuphe, 2019; Nxumalo, 2021). Some of the excellent performances are not as a result of sustainable systems that the department has created to produce functional schools, but the province relies on extra tuition. Related to this is the cheating by learners writing matric and the findings that some teachers assist learners during the matric examinations (News24 Archives, 2014). This needs to be rooted out as it taints the

quality of educational outcomes in the province. The KZN Department of Education (2018) calls for schools to implement turn-around strategies to improve performance. SADTU (2020) identified and adopted schools which had failed to meet minimum performance for schools which is 65%. KZN Department of Education has performed relatively well as compared to other province as it has managed to reach the top five position in 2019 (Department of Basic Education, 2020). However, this is insufficient considering the number of learners who enter the education system at grade one and still not accounted for after twelve years when matriculation results are announced. The Department of Education (2020) acknowledges that all districts improved. The KZN province scored 81.3% which is a 5.84% increase from 2018 where the province got 76.20%. The 2019 grade twelve learners were the sixth cohort to write the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS).

The first cohort to write the CAPS, NSC examination was the class of 2014 which performed very poorly with 69.7 %. A decline from the 2013 performance of 77.4% (KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education, 2017) and a further decline to 60.7% in 2015. The need to develop strategies to improve the KZN results began with the '*Bounce Back*' programme launched by the MEC, Ms. P. Nkonyeni in 2015. As part of the programme the Department introduced winter schools which put learners in boarding facilities with lead teachers who teach and prepare them for examinations (KZN Department of Education, 2015, p. 5). The question that must be asked with this approach is, is the department not entrenching inequalities in learner outcomes as not all learners qualify to attend winter school camps? In addition to the winter camps, another strategy involves teachers being taken away from their schools for a duration of three days in a term to engage them on subject content as part of professional teacher development. This intervention is called '*Just in Time*'. Since then, KZN NSC results have been improving. This improvement which makes a great contribution to the national pass rate, 80% in 2019, is claimed to be product of extra tuition (SADTU, 2020). This is confirmed by the Department of Education when it reports about the interventions employed to improve results (Department of Basic Education, 2020). The Department of Basic Education asserts that KwaZulu-Natal has a larger number of learners than other provinces and its performance matters for the South Africa's performance of 76.2% in 2020 (Department of Basic Education, 2021). As can be seen in table 1, KwaZulu-Natal for example, had 135 225 learners that wrote the 2020 NSC examination and passed 104 938 which is 77.6% whereas Free State which is the leading province in performance had 27 928 learners and 23 779 passed as the province scored 85%. Whilst all districts in KZN performed above 70%, all twelve KZN districts'

performances declined in 2020. This is evidence that other provinces that do well in NSC carry fewer numbers of learners than KZN yet KZN is largely rural and characterised by many infrastructural challenges and shortages of technological teaching and learning support material which aid online teaching and learning thus avoiding lesson losses during lockdown periods. During the occasion of the release of 2020 NSC results, Minister of the Department Basic Education, Angie Motshega confidently claimed that Covid19 did not deter the Department of Education from delivering on its key objective of providing quality education in all schools across the country. However, the Minister confessed that the 5% decline can be attributed to Covid19. Noticeably, KZN also dropped by almost 3% and this decline is believed to be informed by Covid19 which imposed some challenges in schools. Some of these challenges are shown in figure 3.

Figure 3: Covid19 imposed challenges on schools
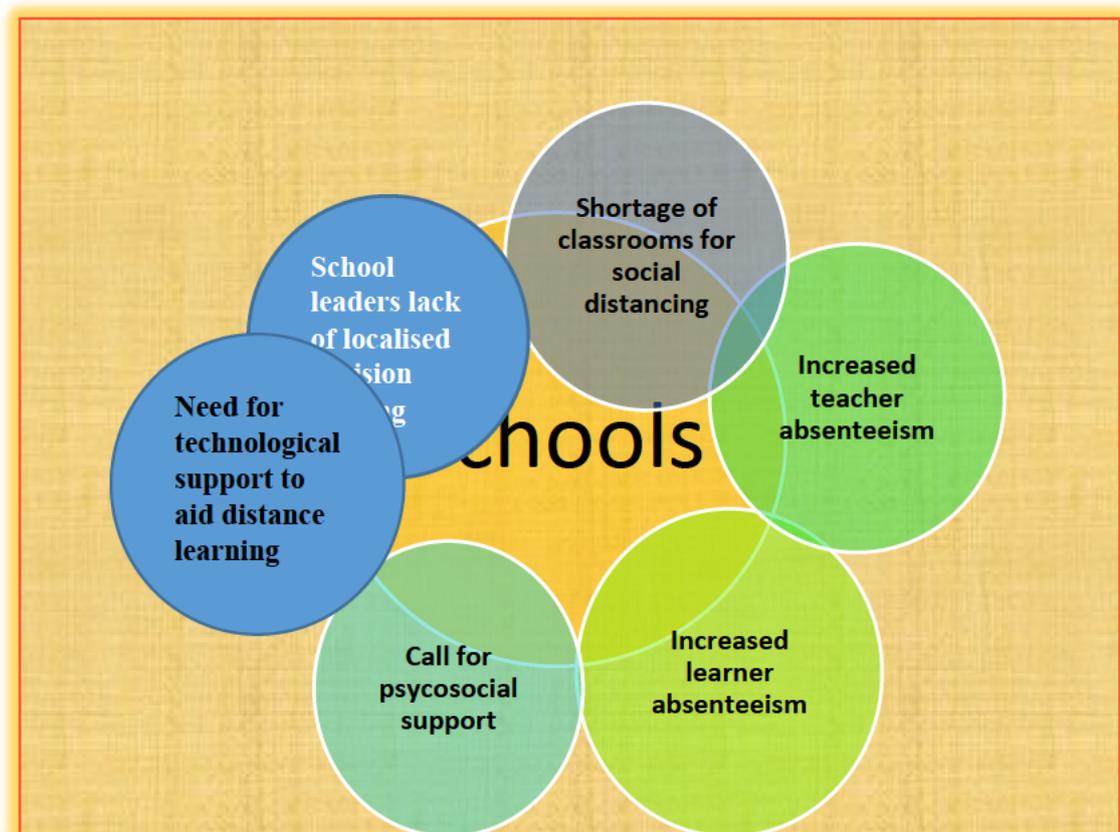
Table 1: *2018-2020 KZN pass percentage per educational district.*

OVERALL PERFORMANCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL			
DISTRICT	2018	2019	2020
UGU	79.60%	86.30%	81.7
AMAJUBA	81.70%	85.20%	80.5
PINETOWN	77.40%	83.00%	75.8
UMGUNGUNDLOVU	77.50%	82.80%	80.3
UMLAZI	76.76%	82.60%	80.9
ILEMBE	71.10%	80.90%	76.9
UMKHANYAKUDE	78.10%	80.60%	80.6
KING CETSHWAYO	73.90%	79.30%	74.8
UTHUKELA	76.13%	79.20%	73.5
ZULULAND	73.80%	79.10%	76.7
UMZINYATHI	73.10%	77.40%	72.6
HARRY GWALA	71.90%	77.30%	75.8
PROVINCE	76.20%	81.30%	77.6

The KZN DOE Head of Department, in the 2018/2019 Annual Report, declared that "The Winter Classes that we had during winter holidays have been very impactful. They have assisted many learners who would not have been able to perform as best as they did without this intervention". However, SADTU asserts that these results are a product of hard work by teachers who teach before and after normal school time, on weekends and during holidays sometimes without compensation (SADTU, 2020). Also, these results have not spared controversy. The introduction of the Multi Examination Policy which was introduced in 2016 has been viewed as a way of reducing numbers of learners who write the examination thus choosing the best learners (SADTU, 2020). This policy allowed learners to write the examination over three sittings (Department of Basic Education, 2018). Many schools

encouraged learners to go this route thus allowing schools to only account for the few learners that write all subjects and this is how many schools and districts have manufactured their excellent results (SADTU, 2020). Whilst these intervention programmes have improved performance, they are costly. Though there is improvement in matric results, there are still schools that score below sixty percent and some get zero percent, particularly in rural areas (Amnesty International, 2020). This organisation suggests that intervention programmes must focus on these schools to exploring strategies of developing sustainable systems of producing excellent results than relying on models of intervention that are too costly to run and temporary.

2.6 School Improvement

School improvement is necessary as a process and programmes to enhance the performance of schools are needed (Harris, 2002). Harris (2002) sees teachers being the central to school improvement initiatives. The need to improve schools is informed by observed challenges in schools like poor performance. These challenges are associated with the continuous failure of the school to get the desired learner performance. Improving these schools requires the collective effort of educators, stakeholders and education officials to ensure that sufficient resources and capacity are mobilised to accelerate the implementation of school improvement initiatives (Blase et al., 2013). Tracy (2012) concurs with this assertion by stressing the need for principals as school leaders to craft school development strategies that fit in with the vision of the school and have these communicated to all stakeholders in the school community. From another perspective, Frost et al. (2003) caution against the imposition of strategic plans on the school. Instead, what needs to happen is that the school principal and stakeholders should be able to develop strategies that are responsive to the unique performance challenges facing the school. Similarly, James (2008) notes that centralised approaches to school improvement discourage stakeholder involvement, resulting in poor outcomes. Adding to this, Naicker et al. (2016) suggest that school improvement initiatives should be holistic rather than focusing on select performance problems in the school. In sum, school-wide improvement efforts are more likely to improve the school's overall performance than ad hoc interventions.

Governments and departments of education globally have adopted radical campaigns to improve the performance of schools and learners. In America, for example, the *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) Act was passed in 2001. The NCLB is an educational plan of America introduced to close the performance gaps of schools and learners. As an intervention to enhance

school performance, this Act introduced reduced class sizes, teacher professional development and was aimed at ensuring that through the Read First initiative, every child at grade three is able to read. In Ontario, the Education Improvement Commission applied a partnership approach to improving schools (Education Improvement Commission, 2000). In its handbook for school improvement planning, the commission calls for teachers, parents and community to work together in identifying the areas for improvement. Equally, curriculum, school environment, parental involvement are identified as critical areas for the school improvement plan. In a similar approach the Department of Education MEC for KwaZulu-Natal Province, Mr Mshengu launched the Quality Teaching and Learning Campaign (QLTC) wherein community leaders, SGBs, Learner Representative Councils, teacher unions, South African Police Services, the department of education, signed a pledge as a way of committing to improve quality of education in the KZN (KZN Department of Education, 2020). Again, teachers and school management teams are implementing *Jika iMfundo*, which is assisting with curriculum coverage which was identified as a challenge resulting in poor performance (Metcalfe, 2018). South Africa has a National Strategy for Learner Attainment (NSLA) framework which aims to improve learner performance, enhance accountability and focus building functional schools wherein teaching and learning is supported through protecting contact time and provision of resources (Department of Basic Education, 2015).

2.7 Interventions to improve performance in South African Schools

When schools do not produce the required academic outcomes, there is an expectation that programmes to improve performance must be developed by the school (Department of Basic Education, 2020). These programmes are specialised programmes that define how poor-performing schools aim to change their performance. These programmes are called interventions. Sometimes they are referred to as turnaround strategies. In the following sections and subsections, selected interventions are discussed through the review of existing literature.

2.7.1 Teacher development

The transition into democracy in South Africa meant a need to transform the education system. Before 1994, the education system was highly fragmented in line with the racial segregations of the country, under apartheid. According to the DBE, teachers have an essential role in the upliftment and transformation of the society, arguing that teachers endure the weight and responsibility of teaching, and are the central fountain of knowledge and values for children besides their parents (Department of Education, 2015). As a result of transformation, various

education and training systems were merged, creating new challenges for educators in terms of the new attitudes, behaviours and competences required to function in an increasingly complex and diverse school environment. Kimati and Rusznyak (2018) correctly assert that even teacher training before 1994 was fragmented geographically and along racial lines to the extent that some teacher training was at a low level of cognitive demand and was mainly on the management of the classroom and on pedagogies. Besides the amalgamation the 19 education departments in the country, there were changes in the curriculum (Cele, 2013; Msomi, 2015). When there are changes in curriculum teachers are expected to quickly comprehend the new curriculum and implement them in their teaching. Since then, there have been many doubts about the preparedness of teachers to teach to influence learner outcomes. Notably, the SA education system has been criticised for failing to produce high-quality learner outcomes, with many scholars attributing these problems to teachers' content knowledge in the classroom. For example, in 2020 Umalusi, the Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training in South Africa expressed concern with poor learner performance in Mathematics. The performance of Matric learners in Mathematics was reported as static and not showing any signs of improvement for NSC examination in 2019. With this identified problem, Umalusi called on teachers to teach to attract more learners to enrol for the subject and pass it (Pijoos, 2020).

In confirming the above, the 2020/2021 Annual Performance Plan notes that teachers lack subject content and appropriate marking guidelines (KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education, 2020). While there may be merit in the assertion that some teachers have challenges in content knowledge and pedagogy, it has not been proven that standardised tests for learners are a solution (SADTU, 2015). As frontline workers in the improvement of learning outcomes, educators in schools should be empowered with relevant knowledge and competencies to be able to improve the quality of teaching and to learn in their schools (Hartsell et al., 2010). According to the Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC) (2009), teachers are mindful of the challenges they have in the implementation of changes in the curriculum and the growing expectation for them. In her work on the challenges that teachers experienced to implement curriculum changes, Msomi (2015) argues that teachers as the most potent and influential drivers of change in the classroom, must be supported and provided with necessary resources to positively impact outcomes. Authors have tackled the question of whether the continuous professional development of teachers is necessary (Phillips, 2008). This question emanates from the reasoning that teachers are first prepared for almost four years before they qualify to

be teachers. The argument with this question is, whether the universities that prepare teachers fail to thoroughly prepare teachers for their day-to-day work in the classroom. Mizell (2010) argues that colleges and universities have not been able to equip student teachers with varied experiential learning interventions that make them more effective and efficient in real classroom situations. Mizell (2010) further argues that professional development influences the achievement of learners claiming that student learning and achievement is enhanced if their teachers are engaged in effective professional development as a strategy to support teachers (Mekango, 2013). Like all professionals, novice educators and inexperienced school principals take years to develop new competencies required to improve their performance in the school. To clarify this point, Mizell (2010) further argues that even experienced teachers confront significant challenges each year. These challenges are influenced by changes in subject content, new instructional methods, changing laws and procedures, as well as student learning needs and the use of technology. The literature presented above supports the view espoused by Cele (2013) that the leadership development of school principals must be part of in-service empowerment. With this form of professional development, school principals would be able to incrementally improve their instructional knowledge and competencies (Mthiyane et al., 2013). However, some teachers, particularly those serving in disadvantaged schools, have not been able to improve their skills due to limited access to professional development opportunities (Mizell, 2010).

2.7.2 School leadership and management training

Several scholars note the centrality of effective school leadership and management in addressing the quality of education, especially in disadvantaged schools (Buka et al., 2017; Sammons & Bakkum, 2011). Sammons and Bakkum (2011) argue that school leadership importance follows classroom teaching and learning. Consequentially learner outcomes improve. This implies that failing schools are as a result of challenges in leadership. It is observed that education systems are changing and there are new roles and responsibilities imposed on school leaders (Asia Society, 2015) and as such, school leaders are expected to wear many hats for them to be able to balance their responsibilities (NEEDU, 2018). The Asia Society, in its presentation to the 2015 International Summit on the Teaching Profession, pointed out that school leaders are gradually given additional power and increasing level of accountability. In addition, the society argues that the work of the school principal is becoming more complex. In light of this, Myende and Mthiyane (2016) posit that the act of leadership is shaky and is reliant on the capacity and ability of the school principal to be flexible in the

execution of his leadership responsibilities to respond to the complex situations. In the same vein, Naicker (2016) points out that the environment in which school principals operate has changed and demands school principals to do things they were never expected to do in the past. Naicker (2016) mentions a unique situation in Umlazi district where some school principals work very hard in schools where there are social ills and teacher unions that are sometimes disruptive. Another challenge in these schools is that school governing bodies have no interest in growing the school but are mainly concerned with the finances of the school (Bhengu, et al., 2019).

Still emphasising the centrality of the school principal in the performance of a school, Belle (2018) argues that school leaders are expected to be all-rounders and not only concerned about their administrative duties. This scholar maintains that school principals must take an interest in teaching and learning. In view of the assertions above, one may suppose that school principals, in executing their leadership and management tasks, must realise that the functioning of the school is seen through its ability to improve the academic achievement of learners. In light of this, Cele (2013) argues that school principals must be properly trained for them to be able to execute all these complex responsibilities. To make his point clear, Cele (2013) identifies a challenge about the scarcity of principal training programmes and their preparedness for this huge responsibility. There is no compulsory specialised training that South African principals receive before they are appointed as principals (Cele, 2013). Department of Basic Education (1998) states that to be a principal one must have a minimum requirement that is matric plus a three-year professional diploma and seven years of teaching experience. Considering the changing educational landscape and the added responsibilities that school principals have, is it not fair for the school and learners to have a school principal who fully possess the requisite knowledge, values, attitudes and skills meant for high level performance? If the principal can have all these, will he not have added confidence to mobilise the community, parents and teachers to have a buy-in into the programme of the school? Maybe these are questions that aspiring school principals must respond to and check if they possess these qualities.

Equally, it can also be argued that teachers who aspire to be school principals must at least have a school leadership and management background so that schools can improve. This may need a partnership of teacher unions and the Department of Education to investigate the relevance of Resolution 11 of 1997 today. This Resolution outlines the criteria for appointing principals in KZN (ELRC, 1997). The same Resolution remains the main instrument that the

schools use to measure the capability of candidates for principal positions (Khanyi & Naidoo, 2020). This point is raised because this Resolution is a product of engagements between teacher unions and the KZN department of education. Is it worth a revisit so that it can take into consideration the developments of the past twenty-four years in the field? The Wallace Foundation (2013) found that some principals, when faced with challenges, their lack of capacity to address challenges results in low learner outcomes. The Foundation further asserts that many principals decide to take early retirement because they cannot improve their schools. Many studies have found that school principals also need to be supported through professional development like all other teachers (Cele, 2013; Zulu, 2017). Even though there is support for what these scholars say, there are school management team members who must equally be exposed to capacity and support building initiatives to excel in their work. This is necessary as there is an expectation that schools must exercise the democratic management of schools wherein all involved, including teacher unions at the school level, are able to contribute towards school improvement (SADTU, 2012).

Literature suggests that a particular calibre of a principal is able to mobilise support for the vision and mission of the school, rally learners, teachers and teacher unions behind the goals of the school (Wills, 2016). It is therefore, believed that principals must be equipped with specialised skills and must subscribe to leadership styles synonymous with the type of school the principal leads. It was as long as twenty years ago that Fullan (2009) argued that principals must also produce leaders in their teachers. It is this kind of a principal that builds a team that can lead in their classrooms and get involved wholeheartedly in school improvement programmes (Bush, 2008). In support of this view, Mestry (2017) emphasises that one of the core responsibilities of transformational school leaders is to prioritise support and resource allocation to ensure that best teaching and learning practices are consistently maintained at all levels of the curriculum delivery and management process; including identification of appropriate assessment and remedial activities to help improve learner achievement. Equally, Hallinger and Thang (2014) argue that it is imperative for school managers to understand how social, economic, political and legal factors in the broader environment impacts on school performance and learner achievement. This highlights the need for school leaders to have a diverse set of skills and competencies to be able to effectively lead change, particularly in sinking schools.

Although this study was not mainly on school leadership, however the capacity of principals to lead the change required for school improvement is critical, particularly in school

improvement partnership contexts where multiple stakeholders are involved. As leaders, principals and their teams cannot escape scrutiny in schools showing signs of sinking. The issue therefore is, do schools have adequately trained and developed school leaders? This question necessitates the need to evaluate how school principals are prepared for these complex roles mentioned earlier in this study. Consequentially Chiedozie and Victor (2017) and Chaves-Hereenias et al. (2019) concluded that it is necessary for all schools to have school leadership that has the capacity to improve teacher effectiveness and learner outcomes. The approach in principal preparation, training and appointment is not the same everywhere. In the next sections, the review the literature on the approaches of Finland and the United States of America as examples on school leadership and management training are presented.

2.7.2. 1 The case of Finland

The Finland education system emphasises skills that a principal must have before they are appointed as school principals. This country is praised internationally as having the world's best education system (Tucker, 2012). There is a clear criterion that clarifies the needed qualifications and other university accredited educational programmes for the position of a principal. For instance, a principal candidate must have a Master's degree and at least the Certificate of Educational Administration which is more about Finland education law and policies or Programme in Education leadership and proven experience in educational administration (Taipale, 2012). There are also programmes that aspiring principals and deputies must undergo whilst they are classroom teachers. The programme aimed at preparing classroom teachers for the principal position includes five fieldwork sessions to afford the teachers to practice what they are learning under supervision. It is reported that in practice, no principal is appointed without the Certificate in Education Administration or Educational leadership. This includes deputy principals.

2.7.2. 2 The case of the United States of America

Another example of a principal preparation programme is that of the United States initiated by the Wallace Foundation in 2011 (The Wallace Foundation, 2013). The foundation writes in its website that it developed a programme called the Principal Pipeline Initiative (PPI) which was implemented in six districts in the United States of America. The programme targeted novice principals and subjected them to the PPI. Part of the activities involved was the provision of support for up-and-coming principals through setting new standards on principal training, selection and support. Principals participating in this programme were tracked,

monitored and placed on different categories based on their accomplishments in the PPI. It is reported that the PPI approach proved that support and capacity given to school principals enhance learner outcomes.

2.7.2.3 Synthesis on school leadership training

Both the PPI and the approach of Finland improved schools as learner outcomes also showed signs of improvement. As evidence, the National Centre for Education and Economy (NCEE) reports that Finland is regarded as having the best education as learner outcomes are always in the upward movement (Ruzzi, 2005). Equally, learners in schools with the principals that participated in the PPI were found to be outperforming their peers from non-participating schools. In fact, PPI was found to be positively influencing learner outcomes, principal retention and school outcomes (Gates et al., 2017). It is clear from the literature reviewed above that some countries are changing their strategies in improving schools and part of what they have done is to focus on training and preparing teachers to be good school principals. South Africa's approach to principal preparation and training differs from Finland and the USA. South Africa has also introduced specific programmes aimed at preparing and training aspiring principals for the school leadership position which include the Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE) School Leadership Programme and the Principal and Principal Management Development Programme (PMDP), among others (Bush et al., 2011). The ACE was offered through partnership with various stakeholders, including universities, national department of education and the National Management and Leadership Committee (NMLC) (Bush et al., 2011).

Deducing from Finland's approach and the PPI it is clear that the school principal is supposed to be at a level higher than the subordinates like teachers and other staff members in the school in terms of skills, information and knowledge. One just wonders if this can be realised in South Africa. It all starts with the qualification requirements that make a person a school principal. It was stated earlier in this study that all teachers must have a Matric certificate and a three-year diploma for promotion purposes (Department of Basic Education, 1998). These two programmes of Finland and PPI in the USA also make an investment in novice and aspiring school principals and top up with ongoing programmes. It is possible that principals are appointed based on skills they have as it is said that in Finland it is a must that to be appointed one must have a Certificate in Education Administration. In the absence of any transformation and amendment to the principal appointment requirements, there is a need at

least for aspiring principals to possess relevant skills that people can acquire before appointment as principals. The South African Standards for School Principals (SASP) gazetted in 2016 are trying to address the challenges of and in school leadership (Department of Basic Education, 2015). In the SASP policy, DBE identifies key responsibilities of school principals like leading teaching and learning, managing quality, manage schools as organisations and be accountable for the quality of teaching and learning in schools. According to the South African Government, one of the common features of functional schools is the school capacity and competence in producing learners that can freely participate in the economy of the country (NDP, 2012). Principal professional development is unavoidable. As Cele (2013) asserts the Department of Education must work with teacher unions to train school principals. Understanding that schools exist in different contexts where some are enabling whilst others are inhibitors of school improvement, I support the view espoused by (Jensen et al., 2017) that school leadership training should be relevant to the actual contexts of schools, be continuous and not one-day events if they are to make an impact in schools.

2.7.3 Teacher allocation to schools

By allocation of teachers to schools, the researcher means the ability of schools to have a teacher physically placed in the school. Allocation of teachers to schools is governed by formal processes which include both teacher unions and the Department of Education. Representation of teacher unions in these structures is informed by the membership each union has (Education Labour Relations Council, 2018). These teacher placement structures are called Circuit Management Task Team (CMTT), District Task Team (DTT) and the Provincial Task Team (PTT) (KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education, 2019). These structures are mandated with the task of placing teachers declared additional in their schools in vacant substantive posts. CMTTs are supposed to convene before the sitting of the DTTs. This is because the DTT must place the residuals from CMTTs. PTTs, as well, must be convened after all DTTs have matched and placed residuals from the DTT. These processes include the consultation processes by the MEC on the creation of posts for the province, the distribution of the created posts by the Head of Department, the issuing of PPN certificates to schools, the issuing of the staffing circular to schools, local processes of placement of teachers (Naicker, 2005; Ntuli, 2012).

In preparation for getting teachers to schools, the MEC is required to convene meetings with teacher unions and SGBs to consult on post creation (Ntuli, 2012). Subsequently the Head of the Department (HOD) allocates the number of teacher posts to each school in the province.

The ELRC (2018) reports that in some instances, the department resume these processes late in the year when by law all schools must receive their teacher allocation certificates before the end of September each year for the staffing of the school for the following year (Naicker, 2005; Ntuli, 2012). The late convening of these meetings impacts on schools' operations. The allocation and placement of teachers in KwaZulu-Natal is sometimes chaotic. This chaos can be attributed to failure of both the Department of Education and teacher unions to ensure that management plans for the staffing of schools are adhered to. Management plans outline timeframes and responsible persons to do specific tasks related to PPN processes (Naicker, 2005). The failure to meet the deadlines affect the functionality of schools. Schools have to wait for processes they are not part of, for them to get teachers. Some of the schools go for months without teachers that are supposed to be brought to school by these processes. In the absence of these placements taking place, some schools have to allocate more duties to other teachers available in schools.

The implications of this is burn-out of teachers as they are overloaded with subjects they are forced to teach by circumstances. The reasons for non-placement of some teachers is that they could not match the vacancies available. One of the reasons for this residual is that some schools are phasing out some subjects in their schools (KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education, 2020). The other reason is that teachers are no longer teaching subjects they majored in universities and colleges. An example is teachers with primary school qualifications who found themselves teaching in secondary schools (South African Council of Educators, 2010). Some teachers end up teaching subjects they never majored in because of the school internal arrangements (du Plessis, 2005). Whilst schools have benefited from the work of these placement structures; there are instances where schools have been victims of failure and power battles that have nothing to do with schools. Both the Department of Education and teacher unions have to collectively take the blame for contributing to the failure and dysfunctionality of schools. In these schools some teachers are subjected to burn-out and work-related depression.

The burn-out of teachers is detrimental as it leads to teachers getting sick and taking more leave of absence (Arvidsson, 2005). Bhengu et al. (2019) found that at times with the pressure to get schools to function, some school principals decide to do wrong things to get things right. Maybe that has become a practice. For instance, during the post creation consultation meeting by the MEC, realising that the MEC was not creating any new posts SADTU called on the MEC to take at least 400 posts from the pool of substitute posts

(Mthembu, 2021). SADTU argues that in KZN there are schools with fewer learner numbers which the department says they are non-viable (PELRC, 2020). Majority of these schools have less than four teachers. These schools are expected to produce quality results like all other schools with all the facilities and all teachers. SADTU wants these schools to be allocated additional teacher posts, at least seven teachers for secondary schools (PELRC, 2020).

SECTION B: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Irrespective of the methodological choices made, researchers are required to identify and select appropriate theoretical frameworks to enhance understanding of the issues being investigated (Adom et al., 2018). In this study, I have chosen two mutually reinforcing theories to inform analysis of the school-teacher union partnership in the case study school. These are instructional leadership and transformational leadership. In the next sections I demonstrate how these theories align with the purpose of the study.

2.8 Transformational leadership theory

Originally conceived by Burns (1978), transformational leadership focuses on the strategic role of the leader in defining and leading change in organisations. Transformational leadership articulates a clear strategic direction that the organisation needs to take to achieve its goals (Odumeru & Ifeanyi, 2013; Khan et al., 2015). In this view, the leader becomes a catalyst for change i.e., defining and communicating the vision to followers; mobilising resources and support, encouraging shared learning and facilitating cultural transformation through the collective efforts of followers and stakeholders (Ouko, 2020). Transformational leaders use their charisma and unique intellectual capabilities to inspire confidence, commitment, teamwork, dialogue and knowledge creation among their followers (Al-Farhan, 2018). With its high emphasis on staff motivation and participatory decision-making, transformational leadership is an effective tool for nurturing and developing positive behaviours necessary to drive change and improve school performance (Ross & Gray, 2006; Arokiasamy, Abdullah & Ismail, 2014; Mufeed, 2018). Shava and Heystek (2021) recommend that school managers need to model positive behaviours by setting challenging but achievable performance goals that raise commitment and self-confidence in their teams; provide opportunities for team members (educators) to be creative and innovative in their instructional methods to improve school performance and by providing personalised support and guidance to address development needs of each individual in the team. Researchers have identified four essential components of transformational leadership that contribute to school improvement.

Shava and Heystek (2021) and Mora (2012) discuss the four components of transformational leadership as follows:

2.8.1 Idealised influence

This is reflected in the leader's charisma, inclusive leadership style and moral integrity, which positively influences the attitudes and behaviours of followers and increase their trust and confidence in his exemplary behaviour, which they emulate to improve their own performance. The leader achieves this through adaptation of the school culture to create a conducive work environment that values the contributions of all educators. Through his idealised influence, the leader is able to build and sustain sound working relationships between the school, the community and stakeholders.

2.8.2 Inspirational motivation

Inspirational motivation refers to the leader's ability to mobilise, energise and unite individuals and teams in ways that elevate their confidence, engagement and performance levels. The leader achieves this through effective communication, joint goal setting; rewards, brainstorming, and giving full attention to individual needs. Revitalising teacher commitment is particularly important in sinking schools where teachers often lack the necessary resources to carry out their instructional duties in the classroom.

2.8.3 Intellectual stimulation

Intellectual stimulation is illustrated by the leader's ability to inspire members of his team to engage in creativity and innovation in order to generate new ideas and practical solutions to problems that hinder school improvement. To achieve this transformation leaders, employ a wide variety of strategies, including education and training; individualised coaching and mentoring, counselling, life-long learning, performance reviews and regular feedback to reinforce good performance in his team.

2.8.4 Individual consideration

This dimension looks at how a transformational leader proactively identifies and addresses the individual needs of employees (teachers) in the school. Through a consultative and supportive leadership style, the leader is able to identify the strengths and weaknesses of each employee in his team and use guidance and mentoring to support growth and professional development of each employee in the organisation. Attending to the social, emotional and

psychological needs of employees has been found to have a positive impact on job satisfaction and retention of staff in schools (Fisher & Crawford, 2020).

Transformational leadership theory fits well with the purpose of this study, given that for a school to improve, there must be a commitment by all teachers as they are central to the success of a teaching programme. With the principal of the school being a transformational leader who is able to motivate teachers, inspire them as their role model, and allow them as individuals and as a group to participate in decision-making, the school is guaranteed to improve (Shava & Heystek, 2021). The above implies that transformational leadership is about creating other transformational leaders in the school as teachers are motivated to display their abilities in the execution of their responsibilities, contributing to enhanced learner outcomes. This fits well with the purpose of the study as these teachers will be looking around, forming and participating in partnerships that are aimed at creating an enabling environment for teaching and learning, thus improving the school.

2.9 Instructional leadership theory

Ruebling et al. (2004) conclude that in most sinking schools the problem is leadership. If the school leaders change their attitudes, behaviours and their practices they can be vehicles for school improvement. Understanding that this study is about a sinking school, it is believed that good instructional leadership practices are relevant for school improvement. In the words of van der Merwe and Schenck (2016), instructional school leadership is concerned with refocusing the leader to the core business of the school. In this study, the researcher is therefore, guided by Weber's model of instructional school leadership. It is argued that Weber's model of instructional leadership is the extension of Hallinger et al. (1985) who had identified three principles of instructional leadership. However, Weber (1996) argued that instructional school leaders must be concerned with improving those conditions that favour learning. He further posited that instructional school leaders know that even when their schools are moving, they have to create conditions that ensure that such schools do not derail in future. This suggests that instructional leadership ensures the development of school systems that bring permanent solutions. This also implies that under instructional school leadership, the school cannot find itself in a *yoyo* style in terms of learner outcomes or performance. A *yoyo* style learner performance, is a fluctuating performance where a school is found to be moving or cruising but the following year the schools goes back to its sinking state.

Weber's model of instructional school leadership identifies five fundamental principles that any instructional school leader must focus on. These are:

- Defining the school's mission: this is more about the development of the vision, mission and goals of the school.

- Managing curriculum and instruction: which is inclined to ensuring that the relevant curriculum is implemented in the school. Teachers as implementers of the curriculum are capacitated and have all the necessary subject content. Ensures that there is curriculum coverage. Instructional school leaders are viewed as individuals who are more informed than teachers and on issues of curriculum, instructional school leaders must understand the nuts and bolts of teaching and learning, always available to provide support to teachers. In supporting teaching and learning, it is expected of the instructional school leaders to mobilise resources to enhance the very same teaching and learning.

- Promoting a positive learning climate: Instructional school leaders are responsible for creating an environment in the school that is enabling for excellent school performance and improved learner outcomes to take place. This is about instructional school leaders establishing the norms for the school, ensuring that time is not wasted. It is about the order in the school, teachers themselves grow to instructional teachers in their classroom. This culture allows teachers to raise their expectations from learners, and learners understand that they have to commit to classroom activity. They are observing and giving feedback to teachers. Instructional school leaders must have the interest of the progress or lack of in classroom activity. The instructional leader engages in classroom visits to observe the work of teachers. Understanding the tension this may have it is vital that there is proper planning of the classroom visit, the duration of the observation and feedback. This role of the instructional school leader demands that the leader understands the subject content and is able to identify gaps if there are any.

- Assessing the instructional program: the role of the instructional school leader is about understanding through being part of arranging an assessment of the classroom activity to understand whether there is effective teaching and learning. This will be confirmed by the performance of learners. This is the feedback even to teachers, and they get to understand whether their strategies need to be changed or enhanced depending on the learner performance.

This study is about school and union partnership that help to facilitate school improvement. Leithwood et al. (2004) argue that for any school improvement to happen the leadership of the school has to fix a direction that is understood by everyone in the school and community, institute great prospects and look for evidence-based monitoring of progress and performance. This implies that the typology of leadership that is needed to execute these responsibilities is the instructional school leadership as there are similarities in the roles of school leadership they identified with those Weber (1996) identifies in his model of leadership. The school leadership must fully support the teaching and learning through exposing teachers to develop programmes and must find ways of appreciating the good work of teachers (Leithwood et al., 2004).

2.10 Assimilating transformational and instructional leadership theories

This study combines transformational and instructional leadership. Considering the principles and constructs of both these leadership theories, schools drawing on these theories will transform from sinking state to a moving one. Mthiyane et al. (2014) assert that instructional school leadership roles are not the sole responsibility of the school principal. Their assertion calls for the instructional school leaders' ability to delegate some of the instructional roles to other members of the school management team and teachers according to capacities, capabilities and strengths. The success of an instructional school leaders depend on their ability to understands the capacities, experiences, strengths and weaknesses of their team members. The hope for this is that the same school leader is also a transformational leader who has managed to develop other teachers to be leaders themselves. In that way, issues of delegation, execution of tasks, evaluation of progress and success will not be a problem. In essence, in the study on the practice of transformational and instructional leadership, Hallinger (2007) identified stark similarities between the two leadership models. These similarities are:

- Developing a shared reason for existence for the school.
- Establishing a school climate of high prospects that lays a foundation for creativity that enhance teaching and learning improvement.
- Appreciating excellent performance through rewards for both learners and staff.
- Identify and implement staff development programs that enhance their productivity.
- Always available as a role model for the realisation of the vision of the school.
- Significance of these similarities overshadows the few differences that were identified.

2.11 Conclusion

Section A of this chapter has reviewed local and international literature on the phenomenon being studied. The typologies of the phenomenon were discussed and how they contribute to school improvement and was able to identify the scarcity of literature on teacher union and school partnership which can be the other typology to be explored. The review of literature was extended to a number of themes and sub-themes regarding education performance in the country and KwaZulu-Natal trying to understand what informs poor and excellent performance. Understanding of school improvement and school effectiveness as well as interventions to improve results were also explored through the review of related literature. Section B focused on theoretical framework of the study, discussing transformational and instructional leadership and how best they can contribute to mobilising for school improvement that involves different kinds of people including teacher unions as stakeholders. Chapter three discusses the research design and the methodology used to generate data in this study.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

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CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I presented the review of related literature as Section A and in Section B; I discussed the two leadership theories which are transformational and instructional theories. Combined, these two leadership theories constituted my theoretical framework for the study. This chapter focuses on the decisions I have made regarding the research design, for example, the research methodology, research paradigm and research approach that are used to generate data within the focus and purpose of the study. To be precise, the chapter discusses research methodology, research paradigm, research design, research methods, research site and recruitment of research participants. I follow with the transcription and analysis of data. Ethical considerations and issues of trustworthiness are articulated as I also present limitations. To conclude the chapter, I present possible limitations of the study and how such limitations are dealt with. To remind the reader, the three research questions, as stated in chapter one, are:

- How is the school-teacher union partnership planned, organised and coordinated in the selected school?
- What are the views of the key role-players in the partnership in the selected school concerning the implementation and outcomes of the partnership with respect to school improvement?
- What can be done differently to enhance school-teacher union partnership in the selected school to ensure better outcomes with respect to school improvement?

3.2 Research Paradigm

A research paradigm is defined as the orientation to theory and research (Neuman, 2006). I prefer the definition by Singh (2020) wherein a research paradigm is perceived as a mental framework of thoughts that is used to interpret the obtaining reality. This author further asserts that a paradigm refers to the researcher's philosophical orientation that decides ontology, epistemology, methodology and methods applied in research. All researchers make these paradigm choices consciously and unconsciously (Tuli, 2010). Paradigms differ as some support qualitative research while others are fit only for quantitative, and some are compatible with both qualitative and quantitative research (Singh, 2020). Creswell (2013) and McMillan and Schumacher (2010) differentiate between various research paradigms such as positivist,

interpretive, transformative, and postmodernist that researchers can employ in viewing their world as they study different phenomena. A paradigm is, therefore, a general philosophical orientation within which scholars conduct their research (Msomi, 2015). Given that, the study is based on the qualitative approach, it became necessary to adopt and apply the interpretivist paradigm as the guiding philosophy.

According to Creswell (2013), the interpretivist philosophy holds that significant variances exist with the natural and social worlds such as human experiences and social contexts that shape participants' social reality. This assertion is supported by McMillan and Schumacher (2010) as a conclusion is made that people formulate their subjective understanding from the interaction they have with the world. Unlike positivist researchers, interpretivists view the world as constructed, interpreted and experienced by study participants (Creswell, 2009; Mertens, 2009; Tuli, 2010). Accordingly, as shown in figure 3.1, Nieuwenhuis (2016) defines the purpose of doing interpretive research as to provide the outlook of the status quo and to analyse it to give an understanding into the way participants in the study make meaning of the phenomenon they are involved in. In this study, the intention of applying interpretivist approach is to develop a deep comprehension and understanding of experiences of the participants. Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2018) assert that the interpretivist approach to research seeks to understand the world of human experience.

To take this argument forward, interpretivist paradigm helps individuals to get multiple interpretations and opinions of the same phenomena (Dwangu, 2018). In this way, interpretivist researchers rely on the experiences of study participants to make meaning of a particular phenomenon. The human experience in this study are the lived experiences of study participants regarding the school and teacher union partnership to facilitate school improvement. Equally, Krauss (2005) also supports the view that the interpretivist paradigm is the most appropriate means to analyse a case in its context. In this study, interpretivist approach was used as an interpretive framework to understand the experiences of school principals, teachers, learners, lead teachers and school governing bodies as key role-players in the implementation of the school-teacher union partnership at Kuzolunga Secondary School. The study therefore made use of the known strengths of the interpretivist epistemology, of much reliance on the first-hand experience of participants. Figure 4 describes the four components of the interpretivist paradigm as they apply to the current study.

Figure 4*: Representation of the four components of interpretivist paradigm*

Multifaceted
Socially constructed
Multiple realities

Interpretation
Meanings
Constructed
Holistic
Naturalistic

Interpretivism

Relational
Interpretive
Descriptive

Understanding from within
Not generalizable
Richness and depth
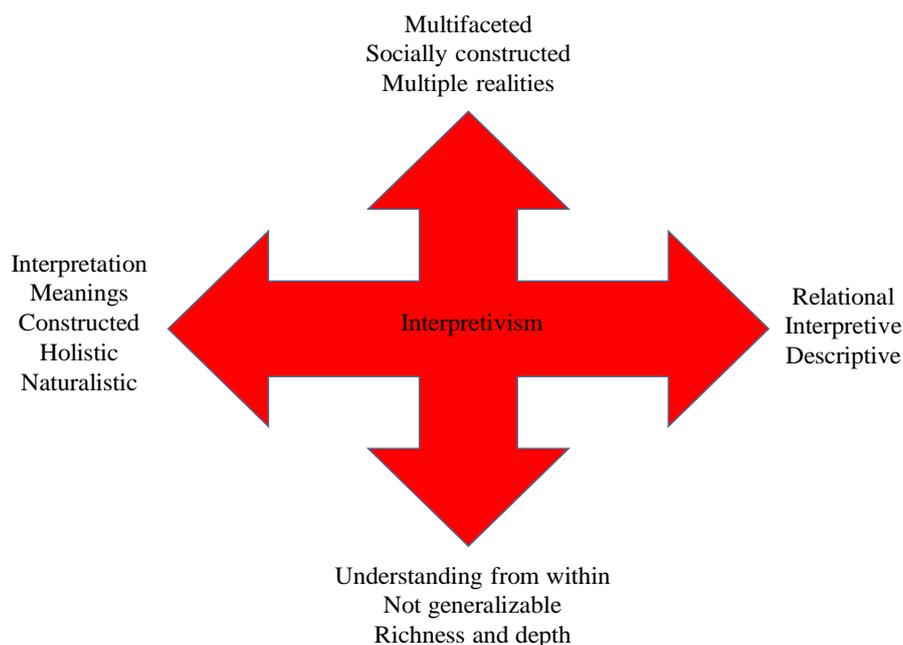
From Nieuwenhuis (2016, p. 58)

Corroborating the views on the strengths of the interpretivist paradigm, Cele (2013) argues that this paradigm presents meaningful actions of people in relation to their lived experiences. As suggested by Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) interpretivist paradigm assumes three crucial positions which are:

- *Subjectivist epistemology*: where the researcher uses their thinking and processing of data influenced by their study participants' views. For this study, this means that I will use my thinking and experience in processing the data obtained, making use of participants' views in processing the data.

- *Relativist ontology:* the researcher understands that the phenomenon under study has multiple realities and the belief that these realities need to be explored and make meaning of them through the engagement of the researcher and participants. For this study, this means that school-teacher union partnerships are subjected to a number of beliefs, some negative and some positive, and the study will explore the partnerships and their role in facilitating school improvements, through my engagement with the interview participants

- *Naturalist methodology:* the researcher has to use raw data deduced from interviews and document analysis. This study will make use of raw data as given by the interview participants and the data obtained from document analysis.

3.3 Research approach

Influenced by Balyer (2012) and McMillan and Schumacher (2010) I decided to employ the qualitative approach to this study. These scholars posit that qualitative research approach is research that is in-depth and usually uses face-to-face interactions to gather data from individuals in their natural scenery (McLeod, 2017)**.** Traditionally, research methodology has been classified into three categories which include quantitative research, qualitative research and mixed methods research (Saunders, 2000; Briggs, Coleman & Morrison, 2012). In their commentary, Hammarberg, Kirkman and Lacey (2015) posit that qualitative and quantitative research methods are seen as representing different world views. Qualitative research makes use of descriptive procedures to generate meaning and understanding of the phenomenon being studied and "is largely inductive, with the inquirer generating meaning from the data collected in the field" (Creswell, 2013, p. 9). Quantitative research refers to research methods that use statistics to explain findings (Kowalczyk, 2016), with the purpose of explaining, predicting or investigating relationships, describing current conditions, or examining possible impacts on specified outcomes. Creswell (2013) points out that with quantitative research the researcher starts with a theory, collects data that either supports or contradicts the theory, makes revisions and conducts additional tests.

On the other side, mixed methods approach makes use of both quantitative and qualitative methods to collect and analyse the collected data and is defined as "the combination of purposeful and probability sampling, open-ended and closed-ended data collection techniques and narrative and multivariable analyses in which anything can be used together". Harrison et al. (2017) argue that quantitative researchers view qualitative research with suspicion because it is usually comprised of small samples that are alleged to be not representative of the broader population. Equally, qualitative research scholars blame quantitative research as failing to appreciate researchers' biases and that it mostly depends on guesswork to give meaning to human experiences (Hammarberg et al., 2015). The above views suggest that in deciding on the choice of a research method, the researcher must ascertain that there is always rigour in the research.

Qualitative research methods are praised for their ability to respond to questions relating to the standpoint of study participants' own experiences, meaning and perspectives (Hammarberg et al., 2015). This view is corroborated by Crossman (2020) with the argument that qualitative research stands in opposition to quantitative studies as it focuses on micro-level of social interaction while quantitative research concerns macro-level trends and the phenomena. This scholar further posits that qualitative researchers investigate meanings, interpretations of the process and how they relate to social life. Because it relies on everyday life experiences of people, qualitative research helps create new theories using inductive methods which can be retested using further research (Crossman, 2020). As espoused by Creswell (2013, p.2), qualitative research produces a meaningful everlasting understanding of the phenomenon. As clearly found by Tuli (2010), qualitative researchers put their trust in interviewing critical people through constructing case studies and analyse documents to get the views of people involved in the phenomenon. It is these realities about qualitative studies that influenced the choice of qualitative approach for this study. This study was aimed at giving lived experiences of teachers, parents, officials of the department of education and SADTU regarding the partnership of one school and a teacher union to facilitate school improvement.

3.4 Research Methodology

Methodology in research is defined as a blueprint used to carry out research in a specific paradigm (Singh, 2020). "The selection of methodology depends on the paradigm that guides the research activity, more specifically, beliefs about nature of reality and humanity (ontology), the theory of knowledge that informs the research (epistemology) and how that knowledge may be gained (methodology)" (Tuli, 2010, p. 99). I applied the case study methodology to understand implementation of a school-union partnership in one sinking school. Case studies have their origin from history, social sciences and psychology (Merriam, 1998; Singh, 2020; Stake, 2005). Over time case studies were seen as best suited for educational research (Merriam, 1998). Noting the evolution of case studies Harrison et al. (2017) argue that the design, preparation and conducting of case studies has advanced to the extent where its sustained application in education and social sciences offers an excellent platform for reliable research undertakings. Case studies are done when a more in-depth understanding is needed for a particular phenomenon (Stake, 2005). According to Rule and John (2015), a case study is a systematic and in-depth analysis of a given phenomenon in its natural setting to get information regarding the phenomenon. Collaboratively Harrison et al. (2017) posit that case

studies are an effective research methodology used to investigate and know complex issues in their real settings.

In this study, the phenomenon is the school-teacher union partnership that is used to facilitate school improvement. By their very nature, case studies are highly influenced by the social context in which the phenomenon occurs, including the theoretical orientation of the research. Case study research plays an important role in theory building and expansion of knowledge on the subject of investigation. In this study, participants already have prior knowledge and experiences of the underlying causes of poor performance in their school, and as such they provide a rich source of data for the study. The present study employs a case study design to understand how the school-teacher union partnership is implemented in single case study school in KwaZulu-Natal. This partnership is intended to improve performance and learner achievement in one secondary school. Therefore, this research is not focused on multiple case study methodology. Within the qualitative approach, case studies enable researchers to address contextual questions, such as what, how and why (Yin, 2015; Harrison, 2017). This is relevant for this case study questions which mainly consist of the why, what and how questions which allow interview participants to describe the school-teach union partnership, drawing from their expertise and experience of this partnership. Generalisation of findings in case study methodology is shaped by both context the bounded structure of the phenomenon, which in this case, is Kuzolunga Secondary School. This temporary boundary of the study spans a period of three years i.e., 2017 to 2020.

3.5 Selection of research site and participants

This study is conducted at Kuzolunga Secondary School (a pseudonym), which is located in uMkhanyakude District hich is situated in uMhlabuyalingana, in the northern part of KwaZulu-Natal, as illustrated in Figure 5 below. UMkhanyakude is surrounded by the Republic of Mozambique to the north, the Indian Ocean to the east, Uthungulu to the south, Zululand to the west and the kingdom of Eswatini to the north-west. This district has been struggling to attract and retain qualified teachers due to its rurality. Its location as bordered by other countries poses challenges for teachers as there is the high rate of crime with the allegations that teachers' cars, for example, are stolen to be sold to Mozambique and other bordering countries (Singh, 2020). This education district has many teachers from outside KwaZulu-Natal. These issues affect the retention of teachers in schools in this district.

Figure 5: KwaZulu-Natal map showing UMkhanyakude Education District
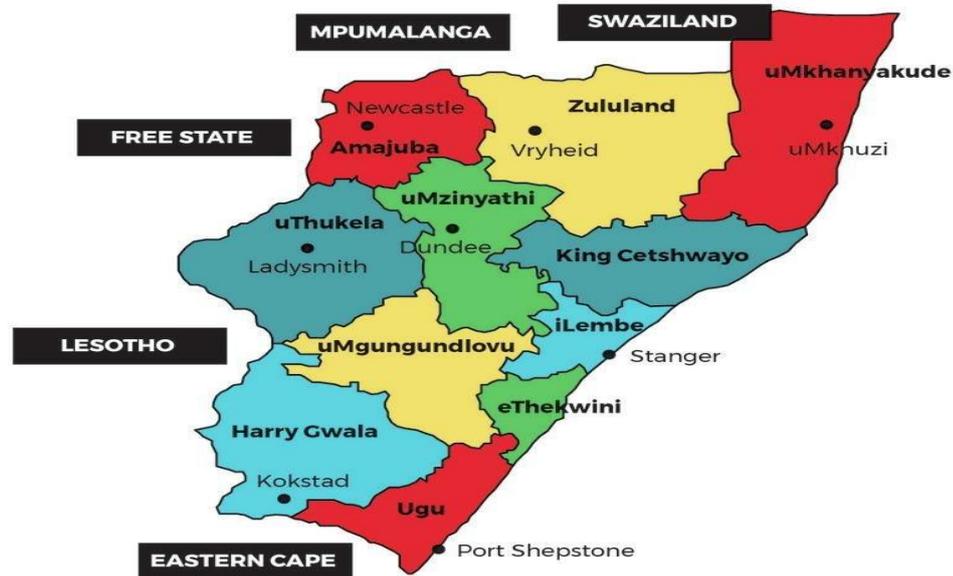
From Christie and Manyokolo (2018, p. 20)

The 2011 National Census recorded Umkhanyakude Municipality as 99 per cent rural, cited in Lehohla and Hlalele (2012). About 54 per cent of the population in this district are without formal education, with only a tiny fraction of the population with secondary school education. Low educational levels and skills shortages highlight the need for local schools to accelerate delivery of high-quality education, hence the need to form partnerships with stakeholders like the school-teacher union partnership to support with the necessary skills and resources for schools in this area to improve their performance. According to UMkhanyakude District Municipality Annual Performance Review Report (2016/2017), 44 percent of households in this area earn no income and depend largely on social grants for a living, while unemployment remains relatively high at 22%. Kuzolunga Secondary School is selected from this education district and municipality. Etikan et al. (2016) distinguish between probability and non-probability sampling techniques. They argue that in probability sampling, every participant in the population stands an equal opportunity to be selected. In contrast, in non-probability sampling, not all subjects stand a chance to be included in the study. In selecting study participants, I opted for the non-probability sampling strategy referred to as purposive sampling.

Purposive sampling, like convenience sampling, is a sampling technique within the non-probability sampling framework that is used for specific reasons (Petty et al., 2012; Rule & John, 2015). These techniques are used in choosing the study subjects from the study population. The decision on whom to participate in the study remains the researcher's responsibility (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Yin, 2012). This is confirmed by Rule and John (2015) who argue that researchers are concerned about accessing sources who can provide rich data on the phenomenon under study. They further assert that the selection of study participants is informed by their close proximity to the case as well as their prior knowledge and experiences of how the phenomenon occurs or affect them (Rule & John, 2011; Petty et al., 2012). Teachers and stakeholders in this study were selected on the basis of their involvement and participation in teaching and learning activities in the case study school.

For this study, I have purposefully selected participants from the population because of the knowledge and information they have regarding the partnership of the school and teacher union in facilitating school improvement. The general criteria for selecting Kuzolunga included unsatisfactory performance particularly in Grade 12; involvement in the SADTU School Improvement Initiative (SSII), as well as the joint site visit by the KZN Legislature school functionality team, Department of Education officials and SADTU representatives in January 2018. The primary objective of the SSII is to enhance school performance. SADTU has formed a partnership with such schools to enhance the performance of these schools. This selected school was the worst-performing school in 2017 as it got 0% in its NSC results for the year. Initially before reaching the case study school for data gathering, I intended to interview the SMT, teachers and the school governing body chair but when it was time for approaching the site, I decided to interview the school principal together with teachers and then one member of the SGB. Participants in this study were drawn from four categories namely Kuzolunga Secondary school teachers, school governing body member, circuit, district and provincial official of the KZN DOE, the national and provincial leaders of SADTU and members of the SADTU School Improvement Initiative Team (SSIIT). These participants were selected on the basis of their knowledge and familiarity with the performance challenges facing the case study school as well as their knowledge and involvement in the implementation of the school-teacher union partnership. Yin (2009, p.35) emphasises that participants in qualitative studies should have the capacity to advance the purpose of the study by providing relevant data required to address the critical research questions.

3.6 Data production

There are many ways of generating data in research. Crowe et al. (2011) and De Vos et al. (2005) point out that comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon in the case study is attained when qualitative research methods like interviews, observations, focus groups and document review are used as data gathering tools. In this study, I used semi-structured interviews, focus groups and document analysis in order to elicit qualitative responses on the implementation of the school-teacher union partnership at Kuzolunga Secondary School. In the next paragraphs, I explain how the data gathering process was accomplished.

3.6. 1 Interviews

Interviews are a popular data collection method used in qualitative research and the two main types of interviews are individual and group interviews. According to Nieuwenhuis (2016), individual interviews are the most commonly used data collection method in qualitative research and are usually conducted face to face between the researcher and the interviewee. There are three types of individual interviews that can be conducted to gather data, namely structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews McMillan and Schumacher (2010). Structured interviews make use of an interview schedule with structured questions which do not allow any deviation from the topic being discussed and are based on the premise that interview responses to the questions can be compared (Van De Berg & Struwing, 2017).

3.6.1. 1 Distinction between structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews and justification for the use of semi-structured interviews in the current study.

There is no doubt about some similarity between structured, unstructured and semi-structured interviews in that all three involve the interviewer and the interviewee with the interviewee expected to respond to questions asked by the interviewer. However, all differ on how these questions are asked and what kind of questions are asked as well as the level of participation of the interviewer during the interviews. Unstructured interviews consist mainly of a conversation between an interviewer and the interviewee wherein the interviewer asks broad, open-ended questions, with the interviewer following the direction of the interviewee responses (Moyle, 2002). In structured interviews, the interviewer follows only the pre-planned questions with little room to probe responses from the participant. Semi-structured interviews on the other hand also use an interview schedule but offer flexibility for the interviewer to pursue less structured questions and exploration of issues raised by the interviewees (Ryan, Coughlan & Cronin 2013). Nodada (2019) confirms that semi-structured interviews are

recognised through open-ended questions that allow probing for more information and clarity. Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 269) argue that the difference between these types of research interviews lies on the whether the researcher is aware or unaware about what they do not know and their capacity to develop questions which will produce the needed information. In deciding on the data production technique, I was motivated by the advantages of semi-structured interviews expressed by the literature discussed above. Therefore, semi-structured interviews were used to generate qualitative responses from the study participants. The interviews as a data production method were flexible and interactive, allowing me to have a direct engagement with the participants and to follow up on questions that need further clarity or additional information (Rule & John, 2015). The recording of interviews allowed me to focus more on interviewing and probing rather than listening and writing at the same time (Stake, 2005). I separated my semi-structured interviews. I separated my engagements with participants. Some participants were interviewed individually, while others participated in focus group discussions.

3.6.2 Focus groups

Whilst interviews involve one-on-one discussions, focus groups on the other hand involve moderated discussion with a small group of participants ranging from six to eight participants depending on the scope of the study. Focus groups are primarily aimed at gaining insight into the participants' experiences and perceptions (Nyumba et al., 2017). During the focus group discussions, I first introduced the questions to be discussed and then explained how the moderation process would work including accommodation of diverse views and inputs from participants, the ground rules such as focusing on the questions and probing questions to encourage participants to share their experiences on the implementation of the school-teacher union partnership (Lichtman, 2006). Participants were encouraged to respond freely to questions and to not allow themselves to be dominated by other participants as their participation and responses were equally important regardless of positions they held. Table 2 below shows how participants for semi-structured interviews and focus groups discussions were categorised according to their code names (pseudonyms) in order to protect their identities. These code names also informed data presentation in chapter four.

Table 2: Participants and coding procedure

Category of participants	Code/Name
1. Individual, semi-structured Interviews	
1.1 Kuzolunga SGB Representative	SGB Member
1.2 SADTU representatives	
1.2.1 S SADTU National leader	Mr Sopeni
1.2.2 SADTU provincial leader	Mr Zemfundo
1.3 Department of Education representatives	
1.3.1 Circuit Manager	DEO1
1.3.2 District Director	DEO2
1.3.3 DDG	DEO3
2. Focus Groups Interviews	
2.1 Kuzolunga Secondary school	
2.1.1 Principal	Mr Khoza
2.1.2 Teacher 1	Mrs Qadi
2.1.3 Teacher 2	Mrs Pheza
2.2 SADTU School Improvement Initiative Team	
2.2.1 Principal 1	Mr Progress
2.2.2 Principal 2	Mr Revolution
2.2.3 Principal 3	Mr Tshintsho
2.2.4 Circuit Manager	Mr Zabalaza

Through semi-structured interviews (See Appendix I, J, K, L, M & P, pages 173 – 176 & 179) and focus group discussions (See Appendix N & O, page 177 & 178)., I was able to ask to follow up questions and to verify the veracity of the answers provided by the participants in each of the research questions. Semi-structured interviews targeted SADTU leadership, Officials of the Department of Education, as well as members of the school governing body at

Kuzolunga Secondary School. Focus group discussions on the other hand targeted Kuzolunga Secondary School teachers and members of the SSIIT.

3.6.3 Document analysis

Document analysis is defined as a form of qualitative research where document sources are critically evaluated and interpreted by the researcher to enhance understanding of the phenomenon under study and to provide the basis for verification of the research findings (Bowen, 2009). Before interviewing the participants, I analysed documents. The following documents were analysed; minutes of different meetings of the SSIIT, minutes of meetings that the SSIIT had with the school principal, SMT and teachers; Agenda, as well the Minute Record with the leadership of SADTU. These documents were analysed in order to gain better understanding of Kuzolunga School's performance as reported at legislature and department of education levels. Information was recorded and kept in different forms by organisations (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010) hence only official documents were used for this purpose. Rule and John (2015) suggest that researchers need to be constantly aware of information gaps in the documents being sought for examination. Based on this explanation, I then assembled and kept copies of all the documents used for verification purposes.

3.7 Data Analysis

Petty et al. (2012) argue that the most common way of analysing data was thematic analysis. Cohen et al. (2011) posit that thematic analysis involves a special look at particular themes with the same ideas. For purposes of thematic analysis for this study, I started by transcribing the recorded interviews. I further compared the transcripts with the notes that I had taken during interviews. I then read through the transcripts repeatedly to ensure that I am familiar with the data. Whilst reading I was able to identify common views, ideas and topics emanating from the data, especially those that came up repeatedly. Also, I checked commonalities in data contained in relevant documents like minutes of SSIIT meetings. This is how I arrived at different themes that I used to analyse data. Some of the themes had to be dropped as I realised that there was not enough data to support them. These data commonalities were revisited and repeatedly read to create familiarity with the textual messages. This allowed for the identification of similarities, differences, variations, patterns, and relationship between the data, which was then coded. Coding is well known as a critical way for data analysis wherein labels are assigned to various components of data (Rule & John, 2015). After coding, I worked on the codes to identify themes for similarities and differences. Coding is done

according to the sequence of questions (Elliot, 2018). I further followed the sequence of questions in coding the data collected through interviews. Based on the Seidel Model, Nieuwenhuis (2016) describes data analysis as an iterative process that entails reflection, review and adaptation of the text to arrive at the meaning. Through reflection, I was able to establish the strengths and limitations of the data collected, as well as gaps that required additional information. Following this verification process, I then assigned codes to each data set to identify themes in accordance with the three critical research questions (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). In qualitative research, thematising allows greater clarity in interpretation of the research findings.

3.8 Trustworthiness of the study

Like in any research, qualitative research must have a clear procedural description (Harrison et al., 2017). In qualitative research, trustworthiness connotes quality, credibility and dependability of the study from the perspective of readers and users of research information. Put differently, trustworthiness refers to congruence (compatibility) between the data gathered and what transpired in the social setting (Cohen et al., 2011). While quality measures in quantitative research are conceived as validity and reliability (Babbie, 2020), qualitative research, on the other hand, uses five general criteria to judge the quality of a research project. These include credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability and consistency (Merriam, 1998; Shenton, 2004). According to Yin (2012), it is important for researchers to use different methods to extract rich data from a wide variety of sources rather than relying on one research application. In the next section I explicate how the above-mentioned quality measures were used to enhance trustworthiness of this qualitative study.

3.8.1 Credibility

As a quality indicator, credibility in research is concerned with the evaluation of the truth value of qualitative research conducted (Harrison et al., 2017). Research findings are credible when they can be independently verified and validated by readers and other researchers as accurate, consistent and truthful (Petty et al., 2012). In addressing credibility of the study, I constantly reflected on my influence in both the conduct of the study and my interactions with the participants to avoid subjectivity and misinterpretation of the research findings (Harrison, 2018). Beside self-reflection, I also recorded the interviews and focus group inputs to draw comparisons between the views of the key role players on the implementation of the school-teacher union partnership. Secondary data from document review was used to

test the validity of the answers provided by the participants in each critical research question. In addition, peer review was sought to obtain objective opinion and inputs from colleagues regarding the analysis and interpretation of the research findings. As part of fieldwork, I also debriefed participants to ensure that the answers provided are trustworthy and consistent across semi-structured interviews and focus groups (Babbie & Mouton, 2008).

3.8.2 Transferability

Transferability measures the extent to which a researcher is able to successfully extrapolate the results to various contexts with certainty (Yin, 2014). As a quality measurement criterion, transferability was used to determine external validity of the research i.e., adaptation and application of the research findings in different social contexts (Harrison, 2018). In line with the transferability enhancement guidelines suggested by Anney (2014), I relied on judgemental sampling to identify participants that were reliably informed about the performance problems facing the case study school. The researcher's professional judgement allowed variation of the participants based on their understanding of the case study (Sharma, 2017). An important aspect of transferability is the need for a researcher to declare their status in relation to the research setting and the participants upfront (Morrow, 2005). Apart from reducing bias, prior declaration of the researcher's status enable readers to make informed decisions on how best to apply the results in other social contexts. Following the data analysis process, both interview and focus group transcripts, as well complementary document evidence were subsequently archived to improve transferability of the research findings (Cele, 2013).

3.8.3 Confirmability

Within the qualitative approach, confirmability as a quality indicator implies that the researcher should be able to provide an objective and impartial analysis and interpretation of the research findings (Petty et al., 2012). To be acceptable, the analysis should be a true reflection of the experiences reported by the participants rather than the researcher's biased view of the phenomenon (Shenton, 2004). In this research, an audit of the findings was done to ascertain that the data was what participants presented as responses to questions and not just my interpretation as the researcher. In focus groups, I allowed and encouraged participants to debate the thematic issues arising from the discussions to identify similarities and differences in data patterns. Free and open discussions ensured that participants' views and experiences are reasonably and accurately reflected in the study (Cohen et al., 2011).

3.8.4 Dependability

Qualitative researchers use dependability to determine similarity or convergence in results when the same study is replicated in related contexts with the same category of participants (Barbie & Mouton, 2009). Using this logic as a guide, I committed not to allow my professional standing and prior knowledge of the research setting to influence participants' thinking and responses to the research questions. From the start, I was honest and open with the participants, encouraging them to express their views freely with minimal interference from my side as a researcher. Providing clarity on the intentions of the study helped build rapport and mutual trust with the participants. Rule and John (2015) stress the need for qualitative researchers to create a conducive environment where participants are treated as equals rather than subordinates in the research process. According to these authors, excessive use of the researcher's power and influence should be avoided as it may compromise the quality of the research findings. Gray et al. (2016) emphasise that insider researchers should critically reflect on their assumptions and preferences to avoid prejudging the outcome of the research.

3.9 Ethical considerations

Myende (2018) emphasises the need for following proper ethics when conducting research. Bryman and Bell (2015) outline the most important ethical principles to be adhered to in research, including respecting and prioritising the dignity of the research participants, protecting the privacy of the participants, their confidentiality and anonymity; obtaining full consent of participants prior to the study; and ensuring voluntary participation of participants with their full consent. In undertaking this study, I adhered to the following ethical principles:

3.9.1 Ethical clearance

As stated by Hanekom (2018), research clearance is obtained once the research committee is satisfied that the research objectives and methodological choices made conform to acceptable ethical standards to avoid harm to the participants and to ensure that the intended outcomes of the study are achieved as planned. In this way, ethical clearance legitimises the study and its application. I was granted ethical clearance by the University of KwaZulu-Natal to conduct the study as required (See Appendix C, page 160) and the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Department of Education (See Appendix D, page 161) respectively. I also obtained institutional approval from SADTU (See Appendix E, page 162). The principal of Kuzolunga Secondary school was also consulted to secure their involvement in the study (See Appendix F, page 163).

3.9.2 Full and informed consent

According to Bull and Lindegger (2011, p.1), the principle of informed consent specifically calls on researchers to respect participants fundamental right to independently decide whether or not they want to be involved in the proposed study. Before the interviews, I approached the interview participants, explained the study objectives and requested them to be part of the study as participants (See Appendix G, page 164). Upon accepting to be interviewed, I then formally sent each participants consent forms for them to sign, to confirm their full consent to be interviewed for the study (See Appendix H, page 166). During introductions in both interviews and focus groups, I also alerted participants to the permission letters authorising the study. This was done to alleviate any doubts or uncertainties that participants may have had about the legitimacy and intentions of the study prior to the meeting.

3.9.3 Voluntary participation of participants

Free and voluntary participation is generally accepted as a norm for all scientific inquiries that involve human subjects. Securing informed consent from all the relevant stakeholders is paramount as the study may have serious ramifications for the participants, their families and their work organisations (Nijhawan et al., 2013). In line with this ethical principle, I accordingly informed participants that they were free to participate or withhold their participation from research activities i.e., interviews and focus groups if they felt that their rights were being violated. During the preliminary briefings, I emphasised to all participants that no one would be penalised for withdrawing their participation from the study. In addition, most importantly, I also indicated that there were no financial incentives in the study and that no costs would accrue to the participants as the study would be conducted on school premises.

3.9.4 Beneficence

Aluwihare-Samaranayake (2012) explains that the ethical principle of beneficence has two aims: First, it seeks to optimise greater research benefits with due care for the participants. Second, it strives to balance research needs against the safety and security needs of those who might be affected by the conduct of the study, usually the designated participants. In this study, I avoided deception of the participants by producing documentary evidence to prove that the study has been duly authorised by the University and stakeholders. I also explained to the participants that the cost of conducting the study would be borne by the researcher and not their school. In both interviews and focus groups, I constantly reminded participants that we are all equal and that all views and inputs provided are recognised and respected.

3.9.5 Privacy, confidentiality and unanimity of participants

Ethically, confidentiality implies explicit recognition and respect for participants' autonomy and the fact their views and inputs may not be disseminated without approval (Wiles, Heath & Charles, 2008). Accordingly, I informed the interview participants that the interviews will be confidential and that steps will be taken to ensure their unanimity and privacy. Amongst other things, the study made use of hypothetical names to prevent unintentional disclosure of sensitive information relating to participants' private lives; including the name of the school, which was hypothesised as Kuzolunga Secondary School. Confidentiality of all collected data was maintained at all times during and after the interviews and development of the study.

3.10 Limitations of the study

Some of key limitations identified in this study were as follows:

3.10.1 Use of a case study

The study only explores the school-teacher union partnership to facilitate school improvement in one school which was used as a case study. As a result, the research findings are very specific to the case study school and although they may be replicable in other schools with similar issues and challenges, the results may not necessarily have the same impact in a different contextual landscape and school leadership. Other schools in the province and in the area were not part of the study.

3.10.2 Limited literature on school-teacher union partnerships

I undertook the study against the backdrop of limited available literature on the role of school- teacher union partnerships in South Africa. As a result, I did not find much literature on these partnerships, although much has been written about school partnerships with other stakeholders in general, and school and community partnerships specifically. The scarcity of literature in this area of study therefore propels this study to becoming one of the resources in this particular area of study, thereby contributing positively to literature on school-teacher union partnerships.

3.10.3 Impact of COVID-19 on interviews

Owing to the health risks posed by COVID 19 and the resultant regulations on social distancing, travel bans and restrictions on face-to-face meetings, it became necessary to review and adapt data collection methods to include online interviews. Zoom was used and due to network challenges for some participants, some interview responses were not as audible as I would have liked. In addition, I was sometimes not able to conduct face to face interviews with the research participants, to observe their body language, attitude and other non-verbal responses that are attendant to qualitative research methods. Interviews were therefore conducted through online platforms. Network problems also made video interviews impossible for some participants. As a result, I only relied on oral responses of participants.

3.11 Conclusion

Chapter three described the methodological choices that were applied to explore the implementation of a school-teacher union partnership in the case study school. I presented a discussion on the choices I have made regarding the methods of research, sampling and collection of data. I have explained how issues of trustworthiness were ascertained through discussing credibility, confirmability, dependability and transferability.

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<center>**CHAPTER FOUR**</center>

<center>**DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**</center>

4.1 Introduction

As discussed, the previous chapter explicated the methodological choices that were considered to explore the implementation of the school-teacher union partnership in the case study school. In this chapter, I deal specifically with the presentation of the research findings derived from semi-structured interviews and focus groups. Participants were drawn from SADTU, the School Improvement Initiative Team (SSIIT), the Department of Education (DOE), the case study school (Kuzolunga) and the SGB. Supplementary data from SSIIT meeting agenda, minutes and SSIIT paper on strategies to enhance learner achievement was also analysed. The study was guided by three research questions namely:

- How is the school-teacher union partnership planned, organised and coordinated in the case study school?
- What are the views of the key role players in the partnership in the case study school with regard to the implementation and outcomes of the partnership in respect of school improvement?
- What can be done differently to enhance school-teacher union partnership in the case study school to ensure better outcomes in respect of school improvement?

This chapter is divided into five sections. Section A outlines the profile of participants, allocation of codes and pseudonyms. Section B presents study findings and discussion for the first research question. Section C presents findings for the second question and Section D presents findings for the third question. The chapter concludes with Section E.

SECTION A

4.2. Profile of the Participants, allocation of codes and pseudonyms

Nieuwenhuis (2016) highlights the significance of describing the study participants as the first phase of processing data. To this end, the profiles of the participants is presented in three catergories: participants from SADTU and SSIIT; participants from the Department of Education; and participants from Kuzolunga Secondary School.

4.2.1 Profiles of SADTU leaders and the SSIIT

4.2.1.1 The national leader of SADTU was assigned pseudonym 'Mr Sopeni'. He is a principal of a school in Gauteng. He is an adult male between ages of 55 and 65 years. He holds a Master's degree.

4.2.1.2 The provincial leader of SADTU was assigned pseudonym 'Mr Zemfundo' is an adult male of forty-seven years. He is a principal of a school in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) and serves as the provincial leader of SADTU. He holds a Master's Degree.

4.2.1.3 The Circuit Manager was assigned pseudonym, Mr Zabalaza. He works in one of the districts in KZN. Before that, he served as a principal of a well-performing secondary school for fourteen years. When he left, the school had achieved 91% in the National Senior Certificate (NSC) results for 2018. This school specialises science, technical and art subjects and doing very well in Maths and Science. Mr Zabalaza is currently responsible for thirty-five schools: eleven secondary and twenty-four primary schools. In 2019, his first year as a Circuit Manager, the circuit got 87% in NSC examinations with three schools getting 100% pass percentage. The school is doing very well, especially in Maths and Science. He is a member of the SSIIT.

4.2.1.4 Principal 1 in the SSIIT was assigned the pseudonym, Mr Progress and is a principal of a successful Comprehensive Secondary School at Umlazi District in KwaZulu-Natal. He has been a principal for sixteen years. His school is big as it has one thousand seven hundred and seventy-eight learners with two hundred and seventy-three Grade 12 learners in 2020. In 2019, the school got 96%. He is a member and Chairperson of the SADTU School Improvement Initiative Team (SSIIT).

4.1.2.5 Principal 2 was assigned pseudonym Mr Revolution. He is a principal of one well performing Full-Service School at Amajuba District in KwaZulu-Natal. In 2019, the school had one thousand nine hundred and fifty-six learners of which two hundred and sixty-seven were in Grade 12 and the school achieved 95%. He has been a principal in the school for thirteen years. He is 45 years old and the youngest in the team. He represented the KZN DOE in different platforms in the Country on inclusive education and teacher development. He served in various structures in SADTU and has assisted struggling schools in the province.

4.2.1.3.6 Principal 3 was given pseudonym Mr Tshintsho. He is also a principal of a well performing school at Pinetown District in KwaZulu-Natal. He has been a principal for twelve years. In 2020, the school had one thousand four hundred learners of which two hundred were

in Grade 12. When he introduced himself, he reported that his school has been doing exceptionally well having got 100% NSC examination results in 2019. He served in various positions in SADTU, was once a Provincial Education Convener, and is a member of the SSIIT.

4.2.2 Profiles of Participants from the Department of Education

4.2.2.1 Deputy Director General (DDG)

The DDG was given the code DEO1. Participant DEO1 has occupied this position for more than three years. He holds a Doctor of Philosophy. He is a male adult between fifty-six and sixty-five years.

4.2.2.2 District Director (DD)

The DD was assigned the code DEO2. He is a District Director in one of the twelve districts in KwaZulu-Natal. He has been the DD for ten years. His district is one of the most rural districts in the province and has five hundred and fifty-two schools of which one hundred and sixty-five are secondary schools. Kuzolunga Secondary Schools is one of them. In 2011 when he was appointed as the DD, the district was occupying position eleven out of twelve districts with 53% in the NSC examination results and in 2020 the district was number three with 80, 6%.

4.2.2.3 Chief Education Specialist (Circuit Management)

This participant was assigned code DEO3. He is a 52-year-old adult male. He is in possession of various qualifications which included B Paed., Bed. BA. (Hons) as well as the LLB degree. He presented his day-to-day function in his Circuit as being to ensure the smooth running of schools; that schools are adequately staffed; that teaching and learning is taking place in all schools, that schools do their procurement in terms of infrastructure. Also, ensures that the learners do receive their school nutrition programme to say learners have their meals so that they are able to stand the long day of learning. He also stated that as the CES-Circuit Management he works collaboratively with his subordinate Circuit Managers, Directorates in the District like Teaching and Learning that is Curriculum, Governance section as well as Human Resource.

4.2.3 Profiles of participants from the case study school – Kuzolunga Secondary School

4.2.3.1 The principal of the school was given a pseudonym Mr Khoza. He was promoted to be a school principal in 2017. He holds a Master's Degree.

4.2.3.2 Teacher 1 was assigned the pseudonym Mrs Qadi. She is a post level one teacher at Kuzolunga Secondary School. She teaches Grade 12 and has been at the school for more than five years. She teaches Accounting.

4.2.3.3 Teacher 2 assigned a pseudonym Mrs Pheza is also a post level one teacher at Kuzolunga Secondary School. She is an adult female of between the ages of thirty-five and forty-five. She teaches Business Studies in Grade 12.

4.2.3.4 School governing body member. The member of Kuzolunga Secondary School governing body is an adult female of between the ages of 65-70 years. She reported that she served in the school governing body of Kuzolunga Secondary School. Unlike other SGB members, she is always at school as she is also employed as a Food Handler responsible for the National School Nutrition Programme in the school.

In the sections that follow, I present and analyse data gathered during interviews with these participants. I also present and analyse data from selected documents of the SSIIT. Section B below deals with the first research question.

SECTION B

4.3 Planning, organisation and coordination of the school-teacher union partnership at Kuzolunga Secondary School

I present the findings for this research question under three broad themes: planning, organisation, and coordination of a school-teacher union partnership.

4.3.1 Planning of the school-teacher union partnership

According to the   School Development Planning Initiative (SDPI) of Ireland, planning refers to "the work that each school engages in to meet the educational goals of each learner in the school" (Government of Ireland, 2009, pp 30–34). Similarly, the planning is defined as a process that helps the organisation develop strategies to achieve its goals (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2009; Sarker, 2019; Department of Education, 2018). Reading from the data gathered from interviews and documents, I identified three sub-themes:

setting of goals and objectives, decision-making in terms of course of action and development of course of action.

4.3.1.1 Setting goals and objectives

It appeared from participants that the goals and objectives of the partnership were mainly to improve the performance of the school through a process of understanding the environment, the challenges and the performance trends of the school. In describing the process that is followed in setting goals and objectives of the school-teacher partnership work at Kuzolunga Secondary School, Mr Revolution had the following to say:

> *Part of our planning we said when we go to the school, we must be able to provide solutions to some of the challenges*

Adding to the above statement on the goal setting process, Mr Zemfundo highlighted the following:

> *We therefore decided to do preliminary investigations, we established exactly what are the problems being experienced on the ground.*

Mr Sopeni corroborated these comments by saying:

> *The focus has always been the improvement of the school and all role players sharing a goal that unites them.*

This participant (Mr Sopeni) further reported:

> *I must say that communicating a clear objective of the partnership was crucial from the beginning. It is important for us own the problem and its solution.*

The data presented above indicate that role players believed that there must be a common understanding of the challenges that faced the school. The role players understood the centrality of Kuzolunga Secondary School to share its understanding of the challenges that caused poor performance. This shows that role players knew that the goals and objectives they set were to be owned and understood by all of them including the school if they were to be realised for the improvement of the school. This analysis is congruent with the view shared by Myende (2018) and Khuzwayo (2019) that the success of the school partnership hinges on role players' ability to share and work towards common goals and objectives that enhance the quality of teaching and learning, processes and outcomes. Data also shows that role players in a school-teacher union partnership should hold each other's hand, walk together in dissecting the problems that cause poor performance. In doing this role players, SSIIT members to be

specific, went to the extent of *in loco* inspection with the aim of connecting what the school principal had presented in earlier meetings with the SSIIT with what was practically obtaining in the school. Through this practice, role players proved to be transformational leaders. As transformational leaders, role players in the partnership must think together in identifying possible solutions for the school. This approach in planning the goals and objectives of the school-teacher union partnership validates a view by Mora (2012), who asserts that transformational school leaders must effectively mobilise and involve teachers and stakeholders in the setting of goals and objectives for the school improvement initiative.

Adding his view on how goals and objectives of the school-teacher union partnership were planned, Mr Zabalaza reported as follows:

> *This programme requires a lot of pre-planning. For instance, as a point of departure, we have to conduct a SWOT analysis of a school.*

The above data excerpt implies that planning goals and objectives as a collective effort of role players in the school-teacher union partnership make it easy to implement. Such approaches have the potential of yielding the desired outcomes. This finding is confirmed by Forschner (2010) the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Local Economic and Employment Development (2006) which holds that role players in a partnership identify with the goals and objectives and the partnership itself, which cements a base for the success of the partnership. There is no doubt that collectivism in planning goals and objectives of this partnership needed transformational leaders who believe in creating positive attitudes, commitment, and responsibility among role players highly needed to improve the school and learners' outcomes Thomas (2018, p. 1) at Kuzolunga Secondary School. However, it also emerged from the data that not all education leaders involve education stakeholders in their planning. Participant DEO1 confessed how the Department of Education plans the goals and objectives of their school improvement initiatives. He said:

> *The current planning approach is not reflective of the inputs of parents and school governing bodies.*

The exclusion of stakeholders in planning the school improvement initiatives is hazardous because stakeholders may not own the goals and objectives of the initiatives thus

leading to failure of the implementation of the initiatives. This is supported by Steinmann et al. (2018) as they affirm that transformational school leaders influence how their teams perceive organisational goals. For example, where school improvement goals have been jointly decided upon, teachers are most likely to accept them as realistic, motivational and achievable.

4.3.1.2 Decision making in terms of course of action

In the context of the school partnership, al Shra'ah (2015) defines decision-making as the basic function of organisations that relies on the various levels to achieve the organisation's objectives. Russo (2014, p.1) views decision making as a "process wherein an individual, group or organisation reaches conclusions about what future actions to pursue given a set of objectives and limits on available resources" and points out that the process is "often iterative, involving issue-framing, intelligence-gathering, coming to conclusions and learning from experience". It emerged from the participants that the decisions regarding this partnership were informed by the values, beliefs and decisions that are existing in SADTU and the willingness for the case school to improve its performance. This also ignited effective teaching and learning within the school. Decision-making appears to be inclusive and is taken at different levels depending on the task to be done. Mr Zemfundo summed up the decision-making process by stating the following:

> *We assess, we call it an itinerary process where you keep on reflecting on what*
> *you have done, trying to see whether the plan needs any change.*

Mr Sopeni also explained the decision-making process within this planning phase and highlighted the process as follows:

> *As part of planning, the Team would then conduct an audit based on a school*
> *situation this is normally called performance of SWOT analysis. The Team*
> *having identified the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats impacting*
> *on the performance of the school they will agree on the implementation*
> *strategies which culminate in evaluation. So, when the impact study is*
> *performed by the Team as part of planning and the school as a whole so as to*
> *appreciate the contexts and the trends.*

In explaining how the SSIIT came about planning towards making the decision to assist struggling schools like Kuzolunga Secondary School, Mr Revolution had the following to say:

SADTU PEC resolved that it cannot be correct for us as the organisation to fold its arms and allow things to collapse in our schools, therefore, a decision was taken that the organisation will identify few schools and put up the Team of abled leaders to lead the programme.

From these findings, it seems that decision-making was largely reactive to the immediate problem, i.e., fixing matric results at Kuzolunga Secondary School. In addition, decisions about performance improvement seem to have been underpinned by broad institutional values rather than school culture. With transformational leadership, it would have been easy for the case school principal to contextualise and align decisions in the school improvement programme with the mission and vision of the Kuzolunga Secondary School through his idealised influence. From another perspective, Mr Sopeni described the decision to form a partnership as ideological as he added:

The school plays a critical role in the economy and social structure of a society so we believe if we involve ourselves in a partnership to improve learner achievement, to improve the culture of a school in terms of good practices, we will have impacted in these challenges that our country is facing and therefore consequently to the desired economy that works for everybody, that is why SADTU is involved in education transformation and education improvement.

In search of how decisions were taken in relation to the course of action, I analysed the agenda and minutes of the meeting of the SSIIT with lead educators and School Management Team (SMT) of Kuzolunga Secondary School Principal held on 22-24 February 2019. This meeting agenda shows that activities of the school-teacher union partnership were decided upon and informed by in-depth discussion with the case study school and partnership stakeholders. Equally, the Minute Record further indicates that Chairperson of the SSIIT (Mr Progress) also met with the leadership of the SADTU to discuss and decide on critical performance issues affecting the quality of teaching and learning, as well as their action plans for Kuzolunga Secondary School. These included visits to the school, sending lead teachers, preparation, printing and delivery of study material to Kuzolunga Secondary School.

The above evidence (Minute Record) shows that all critical structures, SADTU, Kuzolunga Secondary School management and lead teachers were involved in decision-making processes within the SSII. The participation of all critical structures is consistent with both instructional leadership and transformational leadership theory in terms of educator

participation and involvement in all decisions pertaining to curriculum delivery. Marks and Printy (2003) assert that teamwork is crucial in clarifying, coordinating and implementing a unified school-teacher union course of action that is meant to improve school and learner performance.

4.3.1.3 Planning the course of action

Planning of course of action involves a deliberate effort to determine the overall plan for the achievement of the set goals and objectives (Schaefer, 2018; Akpan, 2018). The analysis of institution's previous results, the context of the school and awareness about other challenges facing the school assist in planning the course of action to be undertaken (Portland, 2000). This is supported by The Hanover Research (2014) which found that the premise in developing the course of action for the improvement of school performance must be the understanding of the school performance challenges. It emanated from the SSIIT focus group that role players were given audience and were fully involved in the planning of the course of action. This means the programme itself was determined by the material conditions that were prevailing at the Kuzolunga Secondary School. To substantiate this view, Mr Tshintsho had this to say:

> *What we were doing was to meet with the SMT get their side of the story as to why the school is doing badly or has challenges, allow them to voice their frustrations and challenges so that we develop programmes based on what the school might indicate as their challenges.*

The above assertion suggests that the course of action is tailor-made for the school. This finding implies that the course of action is not imposed on the Kuzolunga Secondary but the school is actively involved in its planning and execution. This finding is in harmony with the conclusion by Durrant et al. (2000) that successful school improvement initiatives must be planned together with teachers as they are central to its implementation. The SSIIT Minute Record of the 18-19 January 2019 revealed that the school-teacher union partnership had a holistic course of action in that it was not only focusing on improving school and learner performance, but it also aimed at intervening at three levels which were focus on Organizational Culture (total institutional fix), focus on management (support, monitoring and curriculum reviews) and sustaining excellence through support (quality drive-more Bachelor passes).

4.3.2 Organisation of a school-teacher union partnership

From the responses of participants, three sub-themes emerged: the development of structures, allocation of tasks and allocation of resources.

4.3.2.1 Development of structures

The participants seem to be aware of the structures that operated in the school-teacher union partnership. I liken these structures to the work teams that comprise of groups of people who work together for the achievement of set goals and objectives. Pipkin (2015), argues that strong visions, goals and objectives are not everything that is required to realise those set goals but development of structures to lead the implementation of the set plans for school improvement initiatives is equally important. In this respect, participants revealed that structures that were developed for the school-teacher union partnership included SADTU School Improvement Initiative Team (SSIIT). Mr Zemfundo detailed the development of the SSIIT as follows:

> *We put a team in place. The team comprised of SADTU members, school principals, circuit managers and subject advisors.*

Corroborating the above Mr Sopeni declared that:

> *The union (SADTU) identified teachers who were principals of schools doing very well in their schools; identify subject advisors who knew specific subjects, identified lead educators and circuit managers who were doing well in their responsibilities.*

The composition of the SSIIT structure was based on two considerations: firstly, it was determined and only decided by SADTU leadership. This is confirmed by Huxham (2003) who asserts that the funding partner of the partnership may dominate the development of partnership structures. Secondly, members of the SSIIT were only members of SADTU. To add, the application of the principle of specialisation, which allows for the targeting of people because of the specialisations and how they were excelling in their pedagogical responsibilities as school principals, subject advisors and circuit managers. I suppose the motivation for the selection of pedagogically excelling people was to give hope to the people and stakeholders that the school-teacher union was led by teachers who had prior knowledge and experience of how to develop, implement, manage, evaluate school improvement initiatives and been performing exceptionally. This approach seems to have worked in attracting the Kuzolunga

Secondary teachers and learners to accept forming partnership with SADTU. Mr Progress, the member of the SSIIT declared how their credentials gave hope to teachers at Kuzolunga Secondary School. He said:

> *We were cautious of the fact that we needed to introduce ourselves in so far as how well we were doing in our schools to try to create a mentality that says it is possible to perform as a school. That assisted in terms of creating a welcoming kind of an environment where people say, ok let us listen to them how they are making it in their own schools.*

To confirm the existence of structures I perused the minutes of the SSIIT meeting of the 18-19 January 2019, which revealed that the other structure for the school-teacher union partnership was that of Core Lead Teachers who were also part of the implementing team. These data experts show that the development of structures for the school-teacher union partnership relied on the use of team-based structural design approaches and performance-based selection criteria. This form of establishing structures demonstrates good practice and is congruent with principles of transformational leadership. Lambrecht et al. (2020) assert that transformational school leaders harness the diverse strengths, capabilities and talents of their teams to foster productive social relations that are required to achieve strategic goals; including recognition of teachers' contributions and enabling their participation in school improvement structures. Berkovich (2016) affirms that transformational leaders inspire and challenge their teams to become problem-solvers and they strengthen their capabilities through ongoing coaching and mentoring activities to maintain focus and momentum.

4.3.2.2 Allocation of tasks

In the context of the school-teacher union partnership, task allocation entails allocating specific roles and responsibilities to structures, educators, SMT and stakeholders so that they contribute to the successful implementation of the school-teacher union partnership. Examples of tasks allocated to role players included mentoring, lesson presentation, revision of learning materials, programme evaluation, team leadership roles, lesson reviews, group reflection sessions and time management. In understanding how tasks were allocated I relied on the Minutes of the SSIIT meeting of 18-19 January 2019 which revealed that Core Lead Teachers identified subjects to be targeted, developed revision material, relooked and refined the study material.

It can be deduced from the data presented above that there was flexibility in the allocation and implementation of tasks. Some of the tasks allocated to the Core Lead Teachers included development of revision material, relook at and refine documents to be given to Kuzolunga Secondary School. The structure was also entrusted with identifying classroom instructional interventions. Similarly, a study commissioned by the Brandstetter et al. (2006) reveal that a partnership is strengthened when people with the right set of skills and expertise are involved in the implementation of the partnership, as they understand what needs to be done to ensure partnership success. The discussions with participants revealed that they were aware of these requirements and further that these requirements were attended to in the allocation of tasks. Mr Sopeni described the task allocation process in the school partnership as follows:

> *The PEC allowed the SSIIT to decide how they were going to identify people to assist in the implementation of the programme. It came from the participants' introduction that they had that they have the Chairperson, Secretary and Coordinator.*

Collectively, the preceding data confirms that the school-teacher union partnership had team-based structures that were allocated tasks according to four specific criteria, namely specialisation, good performance record and expertise. These tasks comprised leadership roles allocated to the Chairperson, Secretary and Coordinator. Each member of the structure understood their individual and collective responsibilities in fulfilling the goals and objectives of the school-teacher union partnership. This is in line with Amanekwe and Ayeni (2018, p. 10) who caution against uneven allocation of tasks which may lead to work overload, burnout, stress, depression, demotivation and poor performance. Therefore, when allocating tasks to teachers, the management and leadership of the school have to take into consideration that there are other administrative tasks, such as assessments and classroom management those teachers must still execute.

4.3.2.3 Allocation of resources

Partners in a partnership share resources to implement the identified intervention activities so that they achieve mutual goals they have set for their partnership (Gajda, 2004). According to Harland and Sharp (2015) for any partnership to succeed there must be funding available. Similarly, the study commissioned by the OECD LEED highlights that political will, human resources and financial resources are needed for a partnership to succeed (Brandstetter

et al. (2006). Equally, in their pilot study on cultural education partnerships in England, Harland and Sharp (2015) found that lack of funding was highlighted as inhibiting factor for the success of the partnership. The nature of the partnership as it has appeared in the discussions means that there are certain critical resources needed to support the goals of the school improvement partnership. These include funding and human capital. Mr Zemfundo clarified the kind of resources needed for the partnership when he said:

> *Resources in terms of finances, resources in terms of materials that we use in*
> *the programme, resources in terms of the core Team that is involved.*

The above expression clarifies the types of resources that were needed for the successful execution of partnership obligations. Some participants from the case study school believed SADTU understood the economic standing of the community and the prevailing socio-economic conditions as not allowing the school to make any financial and human resource contribution to the partnership. With the challenges that the school experienced, it is clear that there were inadequate resources at the school. This view implies that stakeholders in a partnership must collaboratively identify and implement initiatives that improve performance of schools and learner outcomes, part of this should be to augment the meagre resources the schools have. Mr Sopeni said:

> *The Union was able to deploy the financial resources and human capital and*
> *then parents expressed a view of appreciation, a view of empowerment, a view*
> *that says this Union understands our plight.*

Understanding their plight would be to contextualise performance improvement interventions to ensure that the school functions effectively and sustainably well beyond the partnership. Reflecting on some of the key resources that the partnership provided to the case study school, Mr Khoza explained how the school was provided with human resources that were needed for the successful implementation of the school-teacher union partnership. This view implies that stakeholders must collaboratively identify and implement initiatives that improve performance of schools and learner outcomes. He articulated:

> *SADTU recommended to the Head of Department (HOD) that we be assisted*
> *with two additional posts above Post Provision Norm (PPN) so that we could*
> *ease the burden from other teachers and indeed we were given those posts and*
> *that assisted a lot.*

The data presented above reveals that SADTU and the Department of Education provided resource for the school-teacher union partnership. This shows that despite differences in terms of approach to the partnership, however the stakeholders were able to work together to identify resources needed in the school and collectively secured these resources to improve this sinking school. It also appears that through the school-teacher union partnership, learners at the case school were provided with study material as part of the resources allocated to the school by SADTU. To this effect, Mr Khoza had the following to say:

Based on the shortage of books the Union provided each learner a study material. There was no sharing. Provided by the Union at no cost. It was a well-balanced set of study guide so that it was our learners improved a lot.

If these resources had not been provided the school-teacher union partnership would have crippled the success of the partnership. This practice in allocation and provision of resources is consistent with Ouko et al. (2020) who argue that transformational school leaders optimise resource allocation by mobilising and involving powerful stakeholders who have access to large networks that can be leveraged to generate more resources for the school. Similarly, Deventer & Kruger (2013) suggest that school leaders identify opportunities to augment teaching and learning resources. SADTU appears to have used its power to convince the Department of Education to allocate more teachers to the school. This finding is important as it reveals that powerful teacher unions can use their influence for the benefit of schools. Discussion of the third sub-theme is presented in the paragraphs that follow.

4.3.3 Coordination of a school-teacher union partnership

In management literature, coordination is defined as the process that aligns and integrates organisational tasks and activities to ensure consistent performance and results across functions (Bartol & Martin, 1994). According to Osifo (2013, p. 150), coordination and cooperation lead to better interpersonal and inter-group relations; because they create advance approaches in dealing with issues that emanate from intra-link cross-cultural contexts." By its very nature, the school-partnership represents a multi-cultural environment with complex curriculum activities that need to be properly coordinated. Under this theme, I have identified two sub-themes, which are communication and keeping role players focused.

4.3.3.1 Communication

In a school partnership, communication denotes the routine interactions occurring between principals, educators and stakeholders; as well as the exchange and sharing of information by these stakeholders on critical issues that affect performance and outcomes in the school (Hunt, 2007). It is therefore important for the Union-School Partnership to have clear lines of communication (Brandstetter et al. (2006). These scholars suggest that when communication is good it becomes easy to facilitate meetings, decisions and engagement between the parties involved in the partnership. Also, close examination of the Minutes of 18-20 January 2019 confirm that there was communication among SSIIT members but it was through the office of the Secretary. Communication with Kuzolunga Secondary School was consistent. Minutes of 18-20 January 2019 show that there was communication between the SSIIT and Kuzolunga Secondary School inviting and informing them about the dates of SSIIT members' visit to the school. There was also communication between the SSIIT and Secretary of the Union where the SSIIT needed clear decisions and guidance from SADTU leadership and for adoption of their proposed programmes. There was also communication with the Department of Education. However, it emerged from the discussions with participants that communication was not always clear and without challenges. For example, Mr Khoza, the school principal had this to say:

> *The people who deliver the study material must be traced for instance our last delivery was by luck. ... and if that could be followed up whether the school did receive the material it can assist.*

Judging by this comment, it would seem that members of the SSIIT were committed in ensuring that there was communication among stakeholders at all levels of the school-teacher union partnership. In a study conducted by Veriava (2013) on the delivery of textbooks in Limpopo, it was found that communication and information network on the ground is very critical. This on the ground communication and information network assisted in tracing textbook delivery to schools. The experiences of Kuzolunga Secondary School as detailed by Mr Khoza seem to suggest that people entrusted with delivering learner material in the value chain system in the school-teacher union partnership lacked effective communication. Information flows between the Lead Team, SADTU and delivery people were generally weak, leading to a communication breakdown and poor service delivery. Therefore, the centrality of effective communication ensures that role players in the partnership are focused. The MetLife

Foundation (2014) declares that effective communication engages all partnership role players to focus on their responsibilities that facilitate learner blossoming.

4.3.3.2 Keeping role players focused

Typical of any partnership, this partnership of Kuzolunga and SADTU is composed of many people who are involved with different cultures, beliefs, different responsibilities and approaches (Forschner, 2010). What emerges from the data generated through interviews and the documents is that what made role players focused was their commitment to the shared goal of school improvement. With regard to this, Mr Sopeni said:

> *...the focus has always been to the improvement of the school and all role players sharing a goal unites them.*

This is also corroborated by evidence derived from the Minutes of the SSIIT dated 22-24 February 2019. These Minutes reveal that the SSIIT had embarked on a wide range of activities to maintain momentum and to keep the team focused on the school improvement initiative. This included willingness to travel to Kuzolunga Secondary for on-site activities which included engaging with teachers, learners and relevant local stakeholders to understand the challenges which are a reason for poor performance and how such challenges can be mitigated in order to improve school and learner performance. The other travelling needs involved SSIIT members attending their planning and feedback meetings at SADTU Provincial Office to engage on the goals and objectives of the initiative and to develop teaching and revision materials jointly with lead teachers. This confirms findings advocated by Myende (2018) and Khuzwayo (2019) who assert that people involved in partnerships should identify should themselves with the principles of the shared vision and goals. This suggest that for role players to be always focused, they must be made clear about what the objectives and time frames of the partnership are.

SECTION C

4.4 Views of role players regarding implementation and outcomes of the school-teacher union partnership.

Two themes emerged from the responses of participants to this research question: views of role players regarding the implementation of the school-teacher union partnership and the views of role players with regard to the outcomes of the school-teacher union partnership.

4.4.1 Views of role players with regard to the implementation of the school-teacher union partnership.

Three sub-themes emerged from the data: support provided for the school-teacher union partnership in implementing school improvement interventions, capacity development of implementers to ensure productive implementation of the interventions and motivation of key role players.

4.4.1.1 Support provided for the school-teacher union partnership

The analysis of data reveals that role players involved in the implementation of the school-teacher union partnership at Kuzolunga Secondary School supported the partnership in a number of ways. This support facilitated the achievement of the goals and objectives of the partnership at Kuzolunga Secondary School. The kind of support that role players provided varied from role player to role player, informed by the capacity and level at which each role players operated. For example, the support varied from preparing the ground in terms of informing parents and learners about the partnership and lobbying their acceptance and support for the success of the partnership. This had to be done by the school because of its proximity to both learners and parents whereas SADTU, for example, because of its influence engaged the Head of Department (HOD) for additional resources.

To support the school-teacher union partnership, role players found it necessary to remove all the obstacles that would impede the successful implementation of the partnership at Kuzolunga Secondary. The identified obstacles included late coming and absenteeism of learners that were the defining features at Kuzolunga Secondary School and believed to have been the reason for poor performance. The principal shared how they engaged learners to support the partnership intervention.

We prepared them psychologically that they must accept the teachers that were coming and not to be afraid to ask questions when they come and they interacted very well with them.

Commenting on his views regarding support from parents, Mr Khoza alluded as follows:

They supported it fully and we had to report time and again about our engagements.

The above assertion is confirmed by the SGB member as she said:

Usually, parents are invited to parents' meetings where they are informed about the learners' performance.

In the opinion of other role players, the community around Kuzolunga Secondary needed to support the partnership through protecting the schools from vandalism. This participant claimed that the condition of the school property was too vandalised to create a conducive environment for teaching and learning. Describing the support that the Department of Education provided, Participant DEO2 alluded as follows:

When we met the community, we made them to own the school to begin to protect that property that was getting vandalised. To look after the condition of the toilets so that learners can be inspired by the environment that is conducive for learning.

Adding to the above, role players revealed that they were aware that for the partnership to succeed they needed to support through improving relations among teachers and between teachers and parents. These role players had experienced tense relations characterised before the introduction of the partnership in the school. This revelation confirms the importance of labour peace and peace in general in the school if performance is to be improved. Labour peace facilitates togetherness which allow people to work together in the improvement of quality teaching and learning (Education Labour Relations Council, 2016).

Mr Khoza mentioned:

So, after eliminating fights between educators and the SGB we managed to create an environment of good teaching and learning within the school.

In illustrating his view, Mr Khoza said the following:

> *A recommendation was made that we should receive learner transport. So, we have managed to eliminate the issue of late coming and the issue of prevalent learner absenteeism in the school.*

Overall, the preceding data sets affirm that the school-teacher union partnership received different forms of support from various role players. The key learnings from these findings are that if all stakeholders provide support to the school improvement partnership it would be easy for sinking schools to address critical performance issues that compromise the quality teaching and learning. This confirms the findings by Allen (2017) that the success of the partnership lies on the cooperation of role players in resourcing the partnership and their shared ideas and knowledge they bring to the partnership. Most critically, these findings reveal that SADTU supported the school-teacher union partnership through providing finances needed for this partnership as well as the study materials and revision material. Additionally, the Department supported the school-teacher union partnership through mobilising and encouraging the school community to rally behind Kuzolunga Secondary School. Appropriate support provision for the partnership is key to its success (Forschner, 2010) and demonstrates the commitment to the partnership (Cranston & Crook, 2020).

4.4.1.2 Capacity development of implementers to ensure productive implementation of the school-teacher union partnership

The OECD (2012b) defines capacity development as "approaches, strategies and methodologies which seek to improve performance at different social levels". In view of this definition and in light of the data collected from interviews and captured in minutes of meetings of SSIIT all reveal that there was development of teachers, principal of the school and the lead teachers. For purposes of this study, I look at capacity development as referring to trainings, workshops and professional development of the key role-players involved in the implementation of the school-teacher union partnership activities.

In this regard Mr Khoza, the school principal of Kuzolunga Secondary School explained the capacity building that the school personnel received from school-teacher union partnership which appeared to be in the form of training and strategies for improving school performance from lead teachers drawn from school that were performing. He said the following:

> *In the partnership with SADTU, we were given a lot of training by a team of the Lead Teachers who were, from schools in the province. Schools performing very well. They gave us some very diverse strategies of how to manage schools, how to achieve good results, how to discipline educators, how to discipline learners and how to form good relationship in the schools and community and all stakeholders.*

Confirming the above sentiments, Mrs Qadi, a teacher at the school explained how the capacity development she received empowered her to improve her teaching through applying new techniques. This is what she said:

> *Well, am saying the important thing here is development. I was trained and I felt comfortable. Now I can change the way of doing and take the strategy I have been given because I saw that it gave me a way forward.*

Mr Progress concurred with these participants (Mr Khoza and Mrs Qadi) as he explained how lead teachers who were developers of the teaching and learning material provided capacity building to Kuzolunga Secondary School teachers and learners. This is what he said:

> *Never did we dream that within a period of two years this programme of SADTU would be able to produce educators who are able to produce revision material.*

Taken together, these findings suggest that teachers in this school improvement initiative were capacitated in different ways; for example, curriculum-based training; advice and information, learner management, learner and teacher discipline, motivation and mentoring of teachers and learners. What is striking from these data experts is that the initiators of programme and developers of the teaching and learning material work together with teachers of Kuzolunga Secondary School. As seen from the data, this created confidence in both teachers and learners who were involved in the implementation of the school-teacher union initiatives in the schools. I find it encouraging seeing how Kuzolunga Secondary School teachers viewed the development they got as Mrs Qadi shows that she is aware of the disadvantages of imposing school improvement initiatives. In this regard, she says:

> *We can become dependent on the programme. Lead Teachers must sit me down so that I am more capacitated and develop me so that in future I do not need this Lead Teacher.*

The above revelation is evident to the view that teachers are aware of their shortcomings. This point was further elucidated by Mr Khoza, the school principal who revealed that even before the introduction of the school-teacher union partnership at Kuzolunga Secondary School, the school had sought assistance from another school which was doing better. This is what Mr Khoza said:

> *When SADTU came, we have formed some relationships with teachers from the neighbouring schools who were doing better so teachers were used to being assisted by other educators.*

These capacity development initiatives are in line with the view expressed by Shava and Heystek (2021) that school leaders should employ transformational leadership practices that empower educators to use innovative teaching methods in order to improve school performance and learner achievement. More importantly, the National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa (2007) provides an approach for the successful development of competent teachers ensuring that they are fully prepared to undertake their indispensable and challenging tasks. Equally, The National Education Policy Act (2000) better characterises a competent teacher as teachers who are specialists in teaching and learning, assessment, are administrators and managers as well. According to Msomi (2015), teachers must be supported through capacity development so that they enhance their teaching.

4.4.1.3 Motivation of key role players to ensure effective implementation of the intervention

Mora and Ticlau (2012) identifies inspirational motivation as one of the principles that school leaders can apply in order to inspire those around him, and to raise their confidence in ways that foster a culture of high performance and achievement in the school. Turner (2017) defines motivation as the "psychological force that determines the direction of a person's level of effort and a person's level of persistence in the face of obstacles. These definitions influenced me as I analysed the data collected from interviews and documents. The importance of teacher motivation, for example, is highlighted by Stoll (2015) as they affirm that motivated teachers remain resilient and invest on their capacity to grow and improve. Participants in the study confirmed that role players needed to be motivated for them to ensure the success of the school-teacher union partnership activities at Kuzolunga Secondary School. Illustrating how the role

players were motivated for effective implementation of the school-teacher union partnership Mr Progress said:

> *The third leg of our initiative is to provide motivation. That is why when we address either the SMTs, teachers or learners we try to focus on what the school has been achieving so that we say when we look at your History you have potential because it is only when people are made to realise their potential in themselves that they begin to realise that this can be done.*

The participants also reported that SADTU gave role players an award for improved school and learner performance. For example, Mr Khoza said:

> *It [matric excellence award] was a gesture for positive reinforcement and creating that confidence that indeed we can make it and not that we are inferior to other schools. It gave us a booster for our confidence.*

In addition to the motivation strategies mentioned above, the Minutes of the SSIIT dated 18-20 January 2019 shows that the SSIIT also used other methods to inspire and rally role players behind the school improvement partnership such as: reflection on previous strategies; encouraging team members to discuss and share their concerns and experiences on what is happening in the case study schools and ways to improve implementation of the partnership. It can also be deduced from the data presented above that role players were motivated through various strategies; including peer-to-peer learning opportunities; personalised guidance to address individual needs; joint planning sessions and acknowledgement of teachers' contributions to the school partnership. These findings on motivation of key role players are consistent with the principle of idealised influence which suggests that transformational school leaders need to be receptive and more responsive to the unique individual needs of educators in the school (Erkutlu, 2008, p. 710). In this way, SADTU, the members of the SSIIT and lead teachers displayed transformational school leadership qualities in how they motivated teachers and the principal of Kuzolunga Secondary School. They were able to balance the performance needs of the school with the learning and development needs of teachers of Kuzolunga Secondary School.

4.4.2 Views of the key role players in the partnership with regard to the outcomes of the partnership in respect of school improvement.

The views of key role players are discussed in relation to two subthemes: positive outcomes and negative outcomes.

4.4.2.1 Positive Outcomes

In the context of the school-teacher union partnership at Kuzolunga Secondary school, positive outcomes refer to the benefits that accrued to Kuzolunga Secondary school, its teachers, learners, parents, SADTU and the Department of Education. Four sub-themes were identified under this theme and these include establishment of trust and collaboration among teachers; improvement in school performance; improvement in teacher confidence, and improvement in learner motivation.

4.4.2.1.1. The establishment of trust and collaboration among teachers

Mutual trust and collaborative teaching practices are key to success of the school partnership (Adewumi et al., 2019). Reflecting on the establishment of trust and collaboration among teachers at Kuzolunga Secondary School, participants revealed extensive understanding of impact of trust and collaboration in enhancing teaching and learning thus facilitating performance improvement of the school, individual teachers and learners. Insights from the participants suggested that efforts had been made to promote trust and collaboration among educators. Commenting on how the initiative helped establish trust and collaboration at Kuzolunga, Mrs Qadi said:

> *There were problems before but after there are no problems of relations. The intervention assisted in uniting the staff …to start with; we now trust one another. There is trust between teachers, so you know that if something happens, someone has your back. If there is something, I am struggling with I always count on another teacher… the issue of not trusting one another as the staff does not exist anymore, so we are all comfortable in our space.*

Adding to the role the established trust and collaboration had facilitated peer learning, Mrs Pheza who declared that:

> *We are working as a team. If there is something I am not sure about, I ask the colleague to take over.*

This was further confirmed by Mr Progress who says:

But also, they realised that they needed to support each other, create a buffer around each member of the very small staff so that all the members in the school would feel safe and feel protected and all of them would sing from the same hymnbook.

It can be deduced from the above data excerpt that teachers were aware that the partnership in their school helped them to build concrete relations which ended the toxic environment which had characterised their sinking school thus creating labour peace and cooperation among teachers, learners and the community in the school at Kuzolunga Secondary school. This toxic environment prevented teachers from supporting each other, something that the school-teacher union partnership ended as teachers were now counting on each for their success in their teaching practices, disciplining learners and attending to classroom activities. Participants also stated that through the school-teacher union partnership they developed professional relations which enhance their teaching practice. This confirms the report jointly compiled by the Wits School of Governance and Bridge (2016) as it concluded that teacher unions working together in school improvement partnership "can and do influence the quality of learning in schools". Equally, Huxham (2003) argues that leadership influence outcomes of a partnership. What this implies is that leaders of school improvement initiatives need to apply instructional leadership principles to help educators transition from these negative experiences to embrace positive thinking, mutual trust, cooperation and respect for one another's moral inclinations to ensure success of the school improvement partnership.

4.4.2.1.2 Improvement in School Performance

The data gathered through interviews and focus groups reveal that nearly all participants had consensus that the school-teacher union partnership helped Kuzolunga Secondary School to improve in terms of performance. Participant DEO2 described improvement in school performance as follows:

Remember the school had performed at 0%... the school moved the following year to 56%. It was a dramatic increase and the following year the school moved to 100%.

Mrs Qadi complimented participant DEO2 by stating the following about Kuzolunga Secondary School's performance after the intervention:

> *100% pass rate. The positive attitude that now it gives more confidence, with the learners even the community, they start to see you differently, they were not trusting you. It goes a long way.*

Mr Khoza described the transition from the old school culture (i.e., low performance) to a high-performance culture as follows:

> *So, after eliminating fights between educators and the SGB, we managed to create an environment of good teaching and learning within the school, and when it comes to discipline, we discipline learners as the unity … we work in unison.*

Mr Progress also concurred with the other participants (DEO2 and Mrs Qadi) by stating that:

> *They (Kuzolunga teachers) were able to move from 0% to 56% in 2018 and then to 100% in 2019.*

Considering the above data sets, it is evident that the school-teacher union partnership improved the performance of the school. Parents and community associate well with performing schools. Improved performance of the school can mobilise respect and honour of teachers by the community and parents. There is likelihood that after good performance by the school collaborations between parents and the schools is strengthened (Rubinstein, 2014.) Furthermore, from the discussions above, participants were of the view that this partnership with SADTU facilitated collectivism amongst teachers enabling them to share views, ideas to enhance student learning and outcomes (Wits School of Governance & Bridge, 2016).

4.4.2.1.3 Improvement in Teacher Confidence

In both semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews, it was commonly agreed that the school-teacher union partnership played a key role in improving self-confidence of teachers at Kuzolunga Secondary school. Illustrating this point, Mr Khoza said:

> *The highlights (of the school-teacher union partnership) would be exposure to how other people do their business in their schools and to realise that your hardships that you experience within the school set up are not beyond repair*

and you were not the worst and when you listen to other principals presenting
their cases in some cases you whisper into your own self and say am not alone.

The above data resonates with the view expressed by Hartsell et al. (2010) that educators' confidence can increase if they are professionally groomed and provided with adequate knowledge sharing, peer learning, mentoring and coaching. Adding to this, Hallinger (2007) indicates that transformational leaders reinforce and sustain excellent performance through recognition and rewards. In support of this view, Mr Khoza said:

Yes, I think it was a gesture for positive reinforcement and creating that
confidence that indeed we can make it and not that we are inferior to other
schools. It gave us a booster for our confidence.

In addition to peer learning and incentives, the school-teacher union partnership also improved teacher confidence through positive attitude towards Kuzolunga Secondary teachers. To this effect, Mrs Qadi noted as follows:

The positive attitude that now it gives more confidence, with the learners even
the community, they start to see you differently, they were not trusting you. It
goes a long way.

Parallel to this view, participant DEO2 noted that positive attitudes played an important role in lifting teachers' morale and confidence in the case study school, saying:

As Departmental officials sometimes we bring issues of being judgemental, we
judge teachers as failures, even before we bring the programme, they see
themselves as people who have been judged, they see themselves as people who
are failures and as a result, they tend to be passive, they tend to be disinterested
in the programme as a whole.

The above assertion by participant DEO2 has serious implications for teacher confidence in that it highlights the need for Department of Education officials to be empowered on how to build and maintain high confidence of teacher engagement necessary to improve performance and outcomes in the school partnership. Equally, what participant DEO2 says here finds expression in teachers forced to implement copies of lessons designed at head offices of the department (Lesch, 2017) and this approach does not develop the teacher.

4.4.2.1.4 Improvement in learner motivation

Leaner motivation entails energising, engaging and getting learners to actively participate and contribute to their own learning (Saeed & Zyngier, 2012). The findings in this study suggest that prior to the launch of the Union-School partnership, learner motivation levels were generally low but through the school-teacher union partnership learners showed signs of being motivated. This is evidenced by the following comments from an SGB member:

The school was chaotic, learners were absenting themselves and others were coming late and leaving early. There was always noise.

Mr Progress of the SSIIT described efforts to improve learner motivation and engagement as follows:

The argument was to say among the six of you, you can adopt a learner and you treat the learner as your own child. If it means taking the learner home, so be it.

Mrs Pheza:

My learners improved a lot and some were telling me that you know Ma'am you can sit down we will teach you. So, it helped a lot.

The above data taken together reveals that learners at Kuzolunga Secondary school were motivated in a number of ways. It appears that participants knew how to improve the engagement of learners through motivation. The National Education Policy associate increased learner motivation with improved academic performance; high engagement of learners in instructional programmes, and enhanced understanding of fundamental concepts and theoretical principles in the learning programme (Department of Basic Education, 2008, p.2). Where learners are not sufficiently motivated, the result is disengagement and poor performance as was the case before the introduction of the school-teacher union partnership at Kuzolunga Secondary School. Where teachers are themselves encouraged to motivate learners, they become transformational school leaders inspire their learners to actively participate in classroom activities as their morale and self-esteem is enhanced when they realise their teachers love and care about them.

4.4.2.2 Negative Outcomes

The Oxford South Africa Concise Dictionary (2010) defines an outcome as "a measurable or quantifiable result" and that in education means "the skills or knowledge that a learner or students expected to have acquired on completion of an activity or course". The same dictionary defines negative as "undesirable or unwelcome". For purposes of this study and based on the above definitions, negative outcomes therefore, refer to the unintended results of the school-teacher union partnership including the unpleasant experience's role players have. Data analysis revealed two sub-themes under negative outcomes: lack of parental and community support and comparisons between the school-teacher union partnership and the Department of Education.

4.4.2.2.1 Lack of Parent and Community support

Although the school-teacher union partnership embraced inclusivity and stakeholder involvement, however there were concerns about the limited participation of parents and the community in supporting improvement initiatives at Kuzolunga Secondary School. This is confirmed by Mr Tshintsho who says that:

> *The other issue was lack of parental support and involvement in the governance of the school. We discovered that parents were not taking interest in the education of their children.*

Commenting on the limited role of parents in the school-teacher union partnership, participant DEO2 said that:

> *Sometimes when you ask SGB about the vision of the school, they do not know the vision of the school. They have never sat even in one meeting to discuss the vision of the school so if they do not even know the vision of the school, they will not market the school.*

These findings are consistent with Myende and Nhlumayo's (2020) view that parents are not supporting their children's learning. Importantly, the Department of Education (2014) emphasises that schools must form partnerships with parents and families of learners. Therefore, limited parental involvement in school improvement initiatives runs contrary to the School-Parent-Community Engagement Framework (NECT, 2016, p.9), which seeks to foster collaboration among the key role players, for example, school leaders, educators, school governing bodies, parents and learners to improve performance and outcomes.

4.4.2.2.2 Comparison between SADTU and the DOE programmes

Department of Basic Education (2011) asserts that achieving quality education for all learners is the responsibility of all role players. Chapter 9 of the National Development Plan: "Improving Education, Training and Innovation" recognises the critical role that teacher unions play in improving the quality of education and learner achievement in schools (NDP, 2012). As a result, SADTU partnered with the National Education Collaboration Trust (NECT) with a view to address the challenges that prevent schools from achieving their performance targets (Phakathi, 2017). However, the data collected through semi-structured interviews and focus groups reveals that instead of collaboration, there was sometimes competition between the representatives of the Department and those of the SADTU regarding the desired school improvement initiatives. The existence of this competition is confirmed by Mr Sopeni who reported that:

> *They [teachers]tend to believe that SADTU can play the role that the employer should be playing they tend to have more faith, more trust in SADTU than the government believing that the government is not responding when they ask things, and SADTU is there for them.*

To some extent, these findings about the competing programmes from the Department of Education and the school–teacher union partnership may cause confusion in teachers, it may result in duplication of programmes which may lead to teacher burnout. One of the fundamental lessons from these findings is the need for stakeholders such as Department of Education and teacher unions to plan together, implement, monitor and support Kuzolunga Secondary School in a way that optimises teachers' workload without compromising the quality of the school improvement initiatives. This competition between the DOE and SADTU defeats the intention of the Teacher Union Collaboration (TUC) initiative that aims to mobilise and unite stakeholders towards improving school performance and learner achievement (DBE, 2017, p. 17).

These comparisons reveal that Department of Education's school improvement programmes in the school were mainly subject based whereas those of SADTU recognised both subject content challenges of teachers and the criticality of school leadership and management in the school improvement programmes. To this effect, it can be deduced from minutes of the SSIIT meeting of the 18-20 January 2019 that thorough analysis of the reasons for poor performance was conducted for Kuzolunga. It can be seen in these minutes that the

school-teacher union partnership introduced special programmes to help improve the leadership skills of the principal and to enhance teaching practices of teachers. This can also be found in the SSIIT Discussion Paper adopted in the SADTU KZN Provincial General Council in 2016 wherein the SSIIT viewed school leadership as the catalyst for school and learners' performance (Khomo, 2019). This paper declared that school principals once developed are elevated into a source of influence in the school. According to this document, school leaders as sources of influence earn respect inside and outside their schools, enjoy labour peace and become reference points for school improvement and growth. It can be declared that because of these contentions the school-teacher union partnership had to include mentoring and development of school principal of Kuzolunga Secondary School and this facilitated the improvement the partnership needed to achieve. It can be assumed that if the Department of Education continuously focusing its intervention programmes on subjects, it misses an opportunity of addressing the leadership and management gaps that most principals of poor performing schools resemble.

Still comparing the school improvement initiatives of the Department of Education and those of the school-teacher union partnership, another Kuzolunga Secondary School teacher, Mrs Qadi shared her lived negative experiences through comparing the Department of Education's and school-teacher union partnership declared that in most cases she learned nothing from those programmes offered by the Department of Education. She had this to say:

> *My experience is that when people from the Department, I will say not all of them, but most of them, when they come to assist, when they leave the school premises, I will be relieved and ask myself, what is it that I learnt from these people and it is nothing.*

Commenting on the SADTU-teacher union partnership Mrs Qadi declared that:

> *Right, so with this one, with the Union what I understand is that it was not really based on statistics, it was on development.*

The views of participants regarding the Department of Education and SADTU's programmes raised doubts about the Department's commitment to contextualise school improvement initiatives as the school–teacher union partnership had done. There is no doubt that teachers get disinterested in programmes which excluded them in planning and contextualisation to correspond to their individual school challenges which led to poor performance. Failure of stakeholders to complement each other contrasts with the NDP (2012)

which asserts that education stakeholders need to align their interests and Myende (2018) who argues that instead of competing role players in the partnership must combine their different competencies to achieve partnership goals and objectives. This follows on Weber's guidance (1996) that instructional school leaders must be concerned with improving those conditions that favour learning and productive working relationships rather than competition. He further posited that instructional school leaders know that even when their schools are moving, they have to create conditions that ensure that such schools do not derail in future. In the following section, I focus on the third research question, namely: what can be done differently in order to enhance the functionality, performance and outcomes of the school improvement partnership in the case study school.

SECTION D

4.5 What can be done differently to enhance the school-teacher union partnership at Kuzolunga Secondary School?

This section discusses the participants' responses of research question three. Two themes emerged from the data gathered in interviews and documents: the need to eliminate threats to the school-teacher union partnership and the need for better capacitation of school principals to work with stakeholders.

4.5.1 Eliminating threats to the partnership

As articulated by the participants, threats generally include potential and existing risks or challenges in the school system that hindered implementation of the school partnership. Three sub-themes emerged for this theme: the commitment of role players to the school improvement intervention; adequate consultation between and among various stakeholders and guarding against overstretching resources and personnel through intervening in too many schools at once.

4.5.1.1 Commitment of role players to the school improvement intervention

Commitment is broadly defined as the willingness and ability of educators and stakeholders to provide both moral and material support to ensure success of the school. It involves demonstrated loyalty and attachment to the school's values and strategic goals (Celebi & Korumaz, 2016). The commitment of all role players in implementing the school improvement partnership programmes is vital for its success. Equally, it is essential to know whether all role players are equally committed to improving schools. Consequently, teachers

and school principals are central to school performance, hence their full commitment to the school improvement programme. Discussing the threat of lack of commitment of teachers to education programmes and explaining how it can disrupt the school improvement goal, Mr Revolution said the following:

> *We have different types of educator corps or human resource employed by the Department of Education. We have those who would always want to see disruptions, and we have those who want to see progress and those who want disruptions always want to hide behind unions.*

From the above assertion, it can be deduced that the SSIIT knew about different characters of teachers they were likely to meet at Kuzolunga. The SSIIT understood that the school-teacher union partnership required the commitment of all role players including teachers for it to improve the school. Data from the participants further revealed that indeed Kuzolunga had a combination of teachers as explained by Mr Revolution. Mr Khoza declared the situation at the schools as follows:

> *I have already mentioned the issue of teacher absenteeism that was very rife at the time. Some of teacher absenteeism was deliberate, you could find a teacher absenting himself/herself for three months and when she come back another one takes the leave again.*

The above data excerpts reveal that there are teachers whose actions hinder performance of the school and learners. Participants further contend that these teachers believe that they have the protection of their unions. These revelations are confirmed by Motsohi (2011); Zengele (2013) and Bayeni et al. (2014) who argue that teacher unions are self-serving protecting their lazy members. As the NDP (2012) lobbies for the support of teachers' unions to grow beyond only serving their members. The same Department calls for teacher unions to involve themselves in education improvement initiations. Whilst teacher unions acknowledge the responsibility they have towards improving schools' performance they may be at risk of losing members who view their unions as sell-outs when they call for teacher discipline and commitment to quality teaching and learning initiatives aimed at improving performance of schools and learners. Participants revealed that unions were also aware of this responsibility hence them revisiting the commitments they made in their constitutions. Mr Sopeni, talking about how SADTU manages to make their members commit to their classroom duties, said:

> *To improve the quality of education as a tool to emancipate. We always go back to our preamble, go back to our code of conduct. So, this is also covered in what we call our 2030 Vision.*

Mr Revolution who further narrated the threats corroborated the above sentiments. His assertion suggests that members of unions sometimes expect blind defence from their unions. In expressing this point, Mr Revolution said:

> *If the Union is taking a stance of saying let us now focus on ensuring that there is quality public education and let us create a learning nation as Pillar number two, so the Union is standing a risk of losing members to disruptive members. So that is the threat because you know that Unions work in terms of numbers; you will find that the Union will lose quite a number of members who are pro-education, on those who are just cheque collectors.*

It can be deduced from the preceding data that unions may have to take a stand against lazy and destructive teachers. SADTU seem to have taken a risk as a revolutionary teachers' union to drive school improvement programmes through its SADTU Vision 2030 Pillar Number two (Creating a learning nation) where it calls for teachers to be always in class, prepared and teaching (SADTU, 2020). Furthermore, the notion that some teachers lacked commitment in the case study school suggests gaps in staff motivation and staff retention efforts. It challenges the SSIIT to strengthen its approaches to teacher development and talent retention strategies to address the underlying causes of poor performance and low teacher morale. These challenges can be addressed through the application of the four principles of transformational leaders by all school leaders. The first principle is idealised influence where the school leader becomes a role model to his followers. The second principle is inspirational motivation which raises the commitment of followers to a shared vision. Then there is intellectual stimulation which encourages teachers to participate in professional development programmes and innovation to improve instructional practice and results in the classroom. The fourth principle is individual consideration where the transformational school leader pays special attention to the personal needs of each team member in the school, including rewards, support, guidance, counselling, mentoring and coaching. Through the principle of inspirational motivation, the transformational school leaders will be able to energise and lead his team of educators to accept, support and internalise the mission and vision of the school improvement partnership. With intellectual stimulation, school leaders would be able to instil a culture of

critical thinking and self-reflection among educators in the school partnership. In order to address educators' individual development needs, transformational school leadership sits down with each educator and listen empathetically to their needs and take corrective action to effectively address those needs through support, guidance, counselling, education and mentoring (Farnsworth et al., 2020). As noted by participant DEO1, *"Motivation was needed to elevate educators' spirit and commitment to SSII goals"*.

4.5.1.2 Adequate consultation between and amongst various stakeholders

McTavish and Kolb (2006) underline the importance of consultation by stating that educators nowadays are expected to work in highly complex social environments with diverse stakeholder needs and expectations. Only school leaders who possess both transformational and instructional leadership qualities invest in consulting their teachers and other role players for their school improvement initiatives to succeed. To this effect, Hallinger (2007) argues that these school leaders model the desired values that seek to positively change the school culture where leaders and their teacher consult each other to develop shared sense of purpose. Consultation is therefore necessary to ensure that the educators and the lead team share the same common vision towards school improvements initiatives. Participants highlighted the need to eliminate the threat of lack of consultation with the teachers beforehand, as highlighted by participant DEO1 who pointed out that *"the analysis by the Department of Education was not done with the stakeholders on the ground, but happened elsewhere, at another level and the school gets informed about the decision without the consultation process."* Participant DEO1 further explained with an example, how this consultative process between the Department and the teacher unions should be undertaken when it comes to the development of policies and guidelines by stating the following:

> *If we develop a guideline as the Department and then we say this guideline is*
> *for dealing with underperformance, then the Department must take that to the*
> *teacher unions to discuss it, get input, ensure that by the time you get to the level*
> *of implementation you are implanting something that has been consulted with*
> *and becomes implementable.*

Participant DEO2 also echoed the same sentiments around consultation, contending that the Department of Education has to collaborate with the teacher union. He stated the following in this regard:

As officials of the Department, we must learn to work together with the union members, teachers or leaders within our schools ... because most of the time we would have plans that cross different directions to each other and that makes us not succeed.

The Kuzolunga School personnel also highlighted the need to eliminate the threat of lack of consultation to the partnership, and to underscore this point, Mrs Qadi had this to say:

What we need to take care is consultation all the time, that if we come together, we analyse all what needs to be analysed and done.

Whilst the results suggest that school improvement initiatives led by the Department of Education were implemented without adequate consultation, however, role players recognised the benefits of consultation in the school-teacher union partnership. Participants believe that for the partnership to succeed there must be regular consultation of role players. From the views above, participants believed that role players must always be taken on board through consultation and understanding the targets that the partnership should aim at. This confirms the findings by Mufeed (2018) that transformational leaders must influence employee engagement in a positive way. I believe that when teachers are consulted they become more engaged as they own up to the aims and objectives that must be achieved by the partnership. What this means is that in a school where the principal adopts a transformational leadership style, teachers are likely to be inspired as they emulate their leader's instructional practices and collaborate to help the school achieve its strategic goals. With transformational leadership, school principals are strategically positioned to deal effectively with school improvement interventions (Ouko, 2020).

4.5.1.3 Guarding against overstretching resources through intervening in too many schools at once

Prioritisation of resource allocation decisions is critical in ensuring scarce financial and human resources are efficiently deployed and used to meet the needs of sinking schools. This is particularly important as most of the schools targeted for intervention are located in social contexts that are not only under-resourced but also prone to relatively high levels of poverty, unemployment, inequality and underdevelopment. Given the above, participant DEO2 warned that good initiatives could fail when they are overstretched. His view was that the partnership must not take too many schools. In his view, too many schools will be difficult to supervise, and to this effect he said the following:

If you take many schools, you overstretch your resources, you overstretch your time, and you compromise quality, and it becomes difficult to sustain.

Mr Sopeni echoed the sentiments shared by participant DEO1 and also highlighted that the threat of overstretching the resources and personnel is imminent if the project grows too fast through taking the partnership interventions to too many schools which will in turn impact on the standards and quality of the project. He summed up these points this way:

The threat that the Team will have been becoming overworked. The Team is currently overworked, tiredness sets in and the possibility that the Team grows bigger and when the Team grows bigger there is a threat of how we maintain the standards that we have, that we maintain the unity that we have within structures because we foresee this programme growing in leaps and bounds in the next few years.

Also coming out of the above data is that the SADTU must avoid overstretching the resources as that may compromise the outcomes. What is striking and perhaps even more revealing in these findings is that members of the SSIIT understood the need to constantly monitor and contain the rising costs of implementing the Union-School Partnership. High dependence on SADTU for resource mobilisation posed a serious threat to the school improvement partnership. The key learning from the data is that role players in the partnership need to have a strategy of raising funds to support the partnership.

4.5.2 Better capacitation of school principals to work with stakeholders

Under this theme, two sub themes emerged namely, marketing the vision of the school to mobilise stakeholders for school improvement, and engaging stakeholders and forming partnerships for the school improvement programmes.

4.5.2.1 Marketing the school vision as a stakeholder mobilising strategy for school improvement support

Marketing the school mission and vision entails conducting internal and external awareness campaigns; fundraising events and parents' days to create brand awareness within and outside the school. In any school improvement initiative, school leadership is critical for the success of the initiative (Sammons & Bakkum, 2011). Equally, Grant et al. (2016)

concluded that school principals have to adapt to the changing conditions in which they find themselves. Principals and their SGBs therefore need to lead the process of marketing and communicating the vision of the school to the external world, namely the stakeholders that are key for school improvement interventions. Participant DEO2 pointed out that currently the Department of Education is not providing any training to school principals on this subject matter. Participant DEO2 said the following in this regard:

> *We have not been able to train them to market the vision of the school, but as far as this bringing together of stakeholders, there are programmes in place.*

The above assertion is supported by participant DEO1 who declares that:

> *School principals are working in a sector where they are not getting any guidance.*

The preceding data proved that principals are expected to perform miracles in making their school perform without any induction and training. This may be the reason why the principal of Kuzolunga Secondary School faced so many challenges as a new principal. He did not receive any support from his disruptive SGB. Echoing the above sentiments, participant DEO2 revealed that the school governing bodies did not view marketing of the school as their responsibility hence them not knowing how to do it. His views are critical because principals are part of the SGBs and should be marketing the school. He explains as follows:

> *When you ask SGB about the vision of the school, they do not know the vision of the school. So, if they do not even know the vision of the school, they will not market the school.*

The above data shows that the Department of Basic Education (DBE) had not trained school leaders on marketing the vision of the school. Key learnings from these findings are that until the Department of Education develops a clear implementable programme of empowering school governing bodies (SGB) and school leaders on drawing and understanding their school purpose (vision and mission) schools will remain the same. In this case, these schools will not benefit from sponsorships support and formation of partnership that enhance the capacity of the school to improve school and learner performance. Modiba (2001, p. viii) draws attention to the need for school leaders to align their mission and vision statements with the strategic plan of the school. Properly aligned, the mission and vision statements may have a positive impact on teaching and learning processes and the overall management of the school.

4.5.2.2 Engaging stakeholders and forming partnerships for school improvement interventions

According Shava and Heystek (2021) instructional and transformational leaders know how to mobilise stakeholders and form coalitions necessary to implement school improvement programmes. School Principals are placed to be responsible for identifying and engaging stakeholders that can partner with the school (Haines et al., 2015). However, data collected from interviews revealed the opposite. Participant DEO1 pointed out that there was a difference between what needed to be done and what was being done in schools. Participant DEO1 says:

Principals are ought to be given a programme, they must be guided on how to work with stakeholders but it is not happening ... the Department of Education should be preparing principals, meaning the Department should come up with a programme that says this is the programme, work with the stakeholders but I doubt that there is any programme like that.

To add participant DEO2 declared his view as follows:

We have not done much except the Quality Learning and Teaching Campaign (QLTC) programmes which are meant to bring together stakeholders.

Participant DEO3 contended that principals had a refresher workshop as part of their orientation as he declares that:

They are workshopped in their orientation programmes on stakeholder management.

Again, it is difficult to decide whether the Department of Education prepares principals for forming partnerships, as the participants from this Department could not give a similar response to the question. This ambiguity from the Department's officials exposes inconsistencies in the preparation of school leadership to rely on their stakeholders for their schools' support for improvement. This is despite school principals known to be responsible for the turning around of their poor performing schools (Lesch, 2017). According to him, the school principal has to navigate through, guide stakeholders whilst motivating and inspiring all in mobilising external organisations to form partnerships for improvement of schools.

SECTION E

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the data gathered from the interview responses and document analysis to the three research questions posed in this study. The data presentation was arranged thematically, using the key themes and sub-themes that emerged during the thematic data analysis process. The chapter also discussed the key findings of the study from the views of the interview respondents. The key statements made by the respondents were widely quoted in the discussion of the findings. In summary, the data sets derived from the participants suggest that the union-school partnership contributed to school performance improvement and learner outcomes in the case study school; although there is still a need to improve parent and community involvement. The next chapter presents a summary of the study, conclusions and recommendations.

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CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF STUDY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I dealt with data presentation, analysis and discussion. This chapter deals with three issues. First is the presentation of a summary of the study. Second are the study conclusions. Third is the presentation of study recommendations.

5.2 Summary of the study

As a reminder, in this study, I sought to explore the role of a school-teacher union partnership in improving the performance of the school. To guide the study, I formulated the following three critical questions:

- How is the school-teacher union partnership planned, organised and coordinated in the selected school?
- What are the views of the key role players in the partnership in the selected school with regard to the implementation and outcomes of the partnership in respect of school improvement?
- What can be done differently to ensure better outcomes in respect of school improvement?

In chapter one, I contextualised the study by presenting the background and orientation of the study. I also stated the focus and purpose and objectives of the study which was to examine the impact of the school-teacher union partnership on improving the quality of education in schools. In this chapter, I presented categorisation of schools informed by the conclusion by Stoll and Fink (1996) that schools sometimes find themselves in different levels of performance and effectiveness. It is here that I elaborated and grounded my choice of using the metaphor to describe the performance level of the case school. Followed next was the presentation of the motivation for the study which is embedded in my personal experiences and observations both as the teacher, school deputy principal, a member and leader of a teacher union. Furthermore, the chapter noted the public view about teacher unions in particular SADTU.

This chapter had two sections dealing with the review of literature on educational partnerships that involved schools and various stakeholders and the theoretical framework.

Section one focused on the review of literature wherein I presented and discussed the definition and centrality of partnerships in facilitating the success of schools. Among the governmental policies reviewed was the National Development Plan, which calls for education stakeholders to work together in the interest of the goals, mission and vision of the school. I further presented and discussed the already existing school partnerships wherein schools partnered with communities, parents, business and universities. Furthermore, I critically reviewed these partnership typologies and exposed how beneficial they can be to schools. Equally, I exposed an omission (knowledge gaps) made by most schools for not establishing partnerships with teacher unions. I further discussed the discourses around the negative and positive perspectives the public has about teacher unions. Whilst discussing partnerships and their centrality in improving school and learner performance, teacher development, school leadership capacities, capabilities, and teacher allocation emerged as the interventions that can boost school performance. I also reviewed literature on school leadership and management in the performance of schools. Section two of this chapter discussed the theoretical framework underpinning the study; a two-legged theoretical framework taken from Burns' (1978) transformational leadership theory and Weber's (1996) instructional leadership theory. I also explained how these theories worked together to provide a theoretical lens for analysing the research findings. This chapter enhanced understanding of the role of partnerships in improving school performance and learner outcomes.

In Chapter three, I presented and justified the research design methodology that I adopted for this qualitative case study. The case study explored the role of school-teacher union partnership in improving schools. I adopted an interpretivist paradigm in order to understand the role of the school-teacher union partnership in school improvement from the perspectives and experiences of the participants. During the data generation process, I had to use both face-to-face and virtual (Zoom) semi-structured interviews as my primary data generation method. Initially, I had no plans of conducting virtual interviews to gather data but Covid-19 regulations, part of which were lockdowns, observance of social distancing and minimised travelling, I found myself having to adapt to the new environment and abide by the regulations put forth by the Government to curb the spread of the virus. During the engagement process, I established a relationship of trust and genuineness with the participants by declaring the purpose and objectives of the study upfront. This initial engagement helped to ease tension and anxiety among participants. This approach encouraged them to be more open with their feelings and shared some truthful experiences freely with limited hesitancy. I was always aware of and

I maintained ethical standards that guide research activities, including ethics clearance and participant consent.

Chapter four covered data presentation, analysis and discussion. With regard to the first research question, *planning, organisation and coordination of the school-teacher union partnership,* the key finding was that role players in the school-teacher union partnership planned together. This planning together made it easy for role players to implement the activities of the school-teacher union partnership. It was also that decision making was done collectively by role players. Involvement of role players in decision making facilitated ownership of decisions which further ensured that there was full understanding of what had to be done, when and by whom. Having clear communication lines within the partners and role players in the school-teacher union partnership led to the success of the initiative. Therefore, the centrality of effective communication ensured that role players were always focused on the task. Effective resource mobilisation and allocation helped improve the quality of teaching and learning and learning outcomes in the case study school. SADTU used her influence and collective bargaining power to negotiate with the Head of Department of Education in KZN to allocate additional human resources to the school.

In respect of the second research question, *views of the role players regarding the implementation and outcomes of the school-teacher union partnership,* I found that when role players and stakeholders give support to the implementation of the school-teacher union partnership, obstacles such as capacity constraints and teacher disengagement are mitigated. A key learning from this finding was that capacitated teachers are empowered to apply innovative teaching methods which contribute to the improvement of schools and learner outcomes. One strategy used in the school-teacher union partnership was peer learning which entailed collaboration between partnership lead teachers and teachers at Kuzolunga Secondary School. These interactions facilitated knowledge sharing and improvement in instructional classroom activities. The other learning was that incentivising teacher performance helped to elevate staff morale and learner engagement. This also helped to build and strengthen teachers' self-confidence. This school-teacher union partnership ensured the establishment of professional learning communities and strengthened teamwork amongst teachers.

With regard to the research question, *what can be done differently to enhance the school-teacher union partnership in the case study school,* the key finding was that some teachers deliberately abdicated their responsibilities in bad faith and therefore were against the

principles of the vision and values of SADTU. A vital learning from this finding was that the school-teacher union partnership success hinges on the ability of role players to consult all the time and all levels of the partnership. Frequent consultations enabled role players to reach consensus on critical school improvement priorities such as task allocation, role clarification, teaching and learning practice in the classroom. Whilst recognising the positive outcomes of the school-teacher union partnership, there was the realisation that there are other poor performing schools that may be in need of similar interventions, however, it was admitted that limited resources would not allow immediate extrapolation of this partnership to other needy schools. To address this challenge, it would be prudent that the Department of Education as a stakeholder in the partnership must support the partnership through mobilisation of additional human and financial resources. To support the partnership, all key role players in a school-teacher union partnership must share the costs through integrated fund-raising strategies. Most importantly, values of co-production and co-ownership should underpin all school improvement efforts in the partnership.

5.3 Conclusions

The conclusions presented are formulated based on findings for each research question.

5.3.1 Partnership planning, organisation and coordination strategy

This study demonstrated that the success of the school-teacher union partnership depends on the quality of planning, organising and coordination. The case study school was fully involved in these processes. This ensured that activities of the school-teacher union partnership contextualised to respond to observed and identified challenges. The key learning here was that SADTU was not primarily concerned with union and political affiliation but rather the improvement of school performance, teacher engagement and learner outcomes. As a result of this inclusive approach, inputs and suggestions of key role players were reflected in the school improvement plan. Effective coordination of the partnership was achieved through the establishment of structures including the SADTU School Improvement Initiative Team (SSIIT) and lead teachers which was based on competencies and expertise. The school-teacher union partnership provides an opportunity for inexperienced teachers to learn from these experienced lead teachers. This teacher empowerment is critical in ensuring that the school partnership contributes to professional development of teachers and sustainability of school turnaround initiatives.

Decision-making in the school-teacher union partnership was primarily driven by bottom-up approach which embodies transversal working relationships rather than the top-down approach which imposes solutions in sinking schools. This bottom-up approach created a platform for case study school to state what they think of their situation, including appropriate interventions. From another angle, I have also learnt from the findings that teachers generally associate themselves with good performance and as such, they do not want to be belittled and judged when they underperform. Instead, teachers want to be listened to and most importantly afforded time to make meaning of their underperformance given other challenges such as delays in the provision of teaching and learning resources. Therefore, anyone planning, organising and coordination of the school-teacher union partnership should treat teachers humanely, respectfully, professionally and with dignity. The positive attitudes facilitates establishment of trust and support which ensure that the partnership achieve its objective of improving the performance of the school. Lastly, constant communication helps role players in the school-teacher union partnership to focus on the tasks and activities assigned to them. This study shows that when communication goes wrong, the execution of important partnership activities get distracted. Poor communication compromises the efficiency of the school-teacher union partnership coordination.

5.3.2 Views of the key role players on the implementation and outcomes of the school-teacher union partnership

In this section, I present conclusions on the views of each role player in the school-teacher union partnership. They included SADTU, Kuzolunga Secondary School teachers and Department of Education officials.

5.3.2.1 Views of the South African Democratic Teachers' Union (SADTU)

From a teacher union perspective, the school-teacher union partnership was implemented to improve performance and outcomes in the case study school- Kuzolunga Secondary using evidence-based approach. It was the Union's view that peer learning helped to fill subject content gaps which contributed to underperformance by teachers thus resulting in low learner outcomes. Teachers need other teachers as their role models to grow in their instructional activities at school. These role models are teachers with expertise in specific subjects. The implementation process yields mutual benefits for teachers, principals and learners. Both the case study teachers and lead teachers had their skills and competences

sharpened. One of the key learnings emanating from the SADTU perspective was the strategic role of teacher unions in shaping the discourse about the quality of education. This learning is corroborated by Stevenson et al. (2018) who equally argue that education trade unions are activists for investment in public education to enhance quality. SADTU viewed this school-teacher union partnership as a great success because it managed to achieve the desired outcome despite constraints in resources; helping to revitalise working relationships and work ethics through teamwork. Mestry (2013) noted the growing importance of teacher empowerment; noting that in today's highly turbulent school environment, no leader can single-handedly deal with the complex transformation issues facing schools. What I am learning from SADTU's view is that in order for teacher empowerment, efforts need to be crosscutting and inclusive to ensure that every educator and learner in the school system becomes part of the change process. Another key learning was that the principal's role, therefore, shifts from administrator to a school transformation agent who leads and achieves results through close collaboration with all key role players in the school-teacher union partnership (Mataboge & Mosonge, 2021). Johari and Yunus (2021) state that educators are primary actors in the teaching and learning process and therefore key to improving the quality of education and outcomes in school partnerships.

5.3.2.2 Views of Kuzolunga Secondary School

Kuzolunga Secondary School had to prepare learners psychologically and guide them not to be afraid of lead teachers who came to help the school. They encouraged their learners to be actively involved through questions of clarity. Their view was that they were empowered as management, educators, learners and the community. Another view was that this partnership resulted in an establishment of effective culture of teaching and learning, improved their confidence and felt motivated to continue with their work in the school. One of the major highlights (learnings) from Kuzolunga Secondary School's view was that teachers relied for learning and sharing of expertise because they had been empowered as this translated into enhanced school and learner performance. Another learning was that other than developing educators it is important to capacitate the management of the school. The partnership created opportunities for synergies and a common focus on goal achievement, intergroup learning, relationship building and mutual interdependence. Kuzolunga Secondary School felt empowered and learnt best practices form lead teachers and SSIIT that visited their school. The key learning from this, was that teachers learn better from their peers. Teachers' view was that

the school-teacher union partnership developed them thereby ensuring that they approach their teaching with confidence.

5.3.2.3 Views of the Department of Education

The department hails the intervention of the partnership in that they say that there was dramatic improvement of results from zero percent to fifty six percent in the first year then hundred percent in the subsequent year. The department acknowledged that before this partnership they were judgmental in their approach towards teachers in poor performing schools, which eventually led to resistance amongst educators. From the perspective of the Department of Education, teacher unions are an important stakeholder in achieving the goals of the Partnership. Another view from the Department of Education was that approach and attitudes play a role in the acceptance and success or failure of the school improvement initiatives. In the end, education officials admitted that SADTU's holistic and multi-stakeholder approach was useful in dealing with complex school and learner performance issues. A key learning was that the school-teacher union partnership created a platform for role players to reflect on their result-based practices leading to them realising the need to review and adapt their approaches to reflect key socio-economic challenges undermining performance in sinking rural schools. Another learning was that attitudes and approaches of officials of the Departmental of Education can make or break teachers in underperformed schools. This means schools can continue sinking despite intervention programmes brought to their schools.

5.3.3 What can be done differently to enhance the school-teacher union partnership at Kuzolunga Secondary School?

In this section, I discuss three learnings on what could be done differently to enhance school-teacher union partnership.

5.3.3.1 Refocusing teachers' commitment to improve implementation and outcomes of the partnership.

The study showed that sometimes schools underperform because of learner and teacher disengagement which is characterised by tensions and infightings. I also learnt that school leaders sometimes allow such situations to get worse instead of resolving them. As another key learning is the centrality of school principals in influencing positive attitudes of teachers towards their schoolwork which is much needed for the success of the partnership. In part of addressing these challenges around disengagement of teachers, school principals must be

empowered to foster and build a nurturing and supportive environment that allows and encourages social and emotional learning, sustained school positive relationships that facilitate collaborative teaching and learning practices (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). Teacher unions working with the Department must introduce developmental programmes that motivate and empower teachers to fully participate in the decisions making in their schools. This will ensure that teachers have a buy-in in the activities of the school and partnership and instil accountability.

5.3.3.2 Developing principal capacity that supports the effectiveness of the school-teacher union partnership

The key learning on what needs to be changed to enhance the school-teacher union partnership is the capacity of school leaders. It is evident from this study that school principals sometimes lacked capacity especially new principals who have difficulty in inculcating school leaders through their good leadership, influence good human relations at school (Cele, 2013). These leadership and management deficiencies sometimes displayed by principals are the reason why some schools are dysfunctional. Another learning was that principals were not implementing the policy on the South African Standards for Principalship - 2015. For school-teacher union partnership to be enhanced, school principal working with teachers, learners, SGB and parents to review the mission, vision and establish new goals for the school. This review process will help all these role players to establish a common purpose for the school and identify specific roles and responsibilities for each to achieve the set goals. The school principal needs to take a lead in mobilising support for the school (Lesch, 2017). Teacher unions working with the Department of Education will have to develop principal capacity development programme which must focus on the policy for Standards for South African Principalship and other contextual factors affecting performance in rural schools.

5.3.3.3 Repositioning communication strategy in the school-teacher union partnership

The key learning from the findings of the study was that sometimes communication was not always effective. Ineffective communication in the school-teacher union partnership threatened the coordination and success of the partnership. Inadequate communication impacts negatively on goal setting, understanding and execution of tasks. For example, the delivery of teaching and learning resources (TLR) to Kuzolunga Secondary School was delayed and got delivered to the wrong location. In order to address the observed communication challenges in the school-teacher union partnership, the top-down approach to communication needs to be

discarded in favour of more inclusive and engaging forms of communication. This approach will ensure that delivery of TLR will be jointly monitored by the office where the material comes from, the school and the delivery personnel. The leaders of the school-teacher union partnership must introduce digitised communication systems for the school-teacher union partnership. Practically, this means leveraging information and communication technologies (ICT) tools such as WhatsApp, Zoom, Microsoft Teams which enable instant interactions and sharing of vital information and documentation without long travelling thus cutting on travelling and geographical constraints.

5.4 Recommendations

I have three recommendations emanating from this this study. These recommendations cover policy, practice and theory.

5.4.1 Recommendations for policy

These include institutionalisation of the school-teacher union partnership, funding model schools, allocation of teachers in schools, and special qualification for principals.

5.4.1.1 Institutionalisation of the school-teacher union partnership

Looking at the success of the school-teacher union partnership at Kuzolunga Secondary School, the Department of Education and teacher unions must formalise the establishment and integration of partnerships to enhance the functionality of schools which must include other role players in the community. To ensure that more stakeholders, (like the school governing bodies and other community leaders) form part of the school improvement partnership, this partnership can be implemented as part of the programme of Quality Learning and Teaching Campaign (QLTC). Therefore, a new policy on school partnerships must be introduced. This proposed policy will have to follow the steps and procedures to implement the existing QLTC accord on basic education and partnerships with schools. The core mandate of the proposed policy should be to regulate and direct the institutionalisation of the school-teacher union partnership. Key regulatory areas of this policy include roles and responsibilities of role players, planning, organising, coordination, resource mobilisation, participation of parents, learners, SGBs, local businesses and community-based organisations, monitoring and evaluation of school-teacher union partnership activities. This policy recommendation is consistent with the strategic goals of Action Plan 2024: Towards realisation of schooling 2030, which include creating functional schools; improving the participation of parents and the

community in school activities; strengthening school infrastructure to improve attendance and improving access to essential support services such as health, poverty reduction measures and psychosocial support services, among others.

5.4.1.2 Funding model for schools

To enable school principals and their governing bodies to be innovative and creative with the funds they receive from the Department of Education, the Department of Education needs to review its policy of school funding norms and standards. The Government must amend the South African Schools Act 84 (Republic of South Africa, 1996) specifically by integrating section 20 and 21. These two sections address the functions of the school governing bodies. Their integration into one section will mean public schools have similar functions. In this way, the no-fee schools will like the fee collecting schools to be allocated funds and made responsible for utilising the school funds in a way that empowers schools to enhance their performance. School principals, SMT and their SGBs will get the opportunity to exercise creativity and innovation using the funds at their disposal to procure resources their schools need. Through this recommendation, the no-fee schools which are instead of procuring what the Department of Education list for schools, Principals will buy what his/her school needs which may not be needed by another school elsewhere. This will mean school principals are be given more powers to use the funds to address issues of concern based on the context and environment the school is in.

5.4.1.3 Allocation of teachers to schools

The current policy on teacher post provisioning allows for the number of learners to determine the number of teachers a school can have. This has resulted in many rural schools to witness declining number of teacher posts. This decline can be attributed to poor performance leading to some parents deciding to move their children to better performing schools. As a result, some schools in rural areas discontinued certain subjects in the curriculum due to human resource shortages. In such schools, learners have no choice to make but have to take the subjects their schools offer. This is disadvantaging these learners because their schools determine what they become in future when under normal circumstances the learner has to do subjects guided by the careers they want to pursue in future. This is evidence that inequalities of the past still persist and the Department of Education has to deal with it. Given these challenges, I therefore recommend the review of the Post Provisioning Norms (PPN) policy to set a baseline for all schools as the minimum teacher posts that a school must have. This

proposed policy review will assist in ensuring that at least all secondary schools have seven teacher posts which in turn will guarantee that even when the learner enrolment declines, the school can still offer quality education within its limited capacity. This recommendation can still be accommodated in the current budget framework through reprioritisation of the budget for rural incentives which was initially meant to attract qualified teachers to rural schools. Considering that there is no longer any shortage of teachers, this budget reprioritisation will help to augment the budget for appointment of a compulsory minimum number of teachers in disadvantaged rural schools.

5.4.1.4 Compulsory qualification for school principals

I recommend the introduction of a special qualification for school principals. This qualification must be added to compulsory qualification requirements for promotion as a school principal. Ideally, this recommendation calls for the amendment of the Chapter B section 3.2.1 of the Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM) (Department of Basic Education, 2015) which deals with the educational qualification, statutory requirements and expertise. Currently the Department is in engagements with universities on the development of an advanced diploma for school management team members. It is hoped that the programme can be introduced in 2023 (PELRC-KZN, 2021). The firm recommendation is that the qualification must be compulsory for any new school principal appointed. It must also be compulsory for already employed principals to enrol and complete the programme within the time-frames that should be stipulated by the employer. Part of what the content of this qualification must cover may include fundamental competences of principals such as relationship building, conflict resolution, strategic school management, team building skills, resource mobilisation and stakeholder engagement skills, school project management, school organisational development, emotional intelligence (cultural competence), school stakeholder management and school resource management and mobilisation.

5.4.2 Recommendation for practice

This recommendation proposes the use of two approaches in implementing school improvement initiatives. These include the holistic approach in the school improvement initiatives and collectivism in the implementation of school improvement partnerships.

5.4.2.1 Holistic approach in school improvement initiatives

It is recommended that any school intervention programme must be holistic, inclusive and informed by contextual circumstances of the target school. The holistic approach in school improvement intervention must involve all stakeholders in all levels of the intervention such as planning, organisation, coordination and implementation. It is hoped that should all school improvement interventions include all stakeholders and role players, then learner performance will be enhanced. The holistic approach in school improvement interventions ensures that when there is buy-in in into programmes by role players, then role players develop clarity and commitment to their roles and responsibility and accountability from role players improves. The practice of holistic approach serves as a paradigm shift from subject-based approach in school and learner performance improvement.

5.4.2.2 Using collectivism in the school improvement partnerships

I recommend that schools should ideally apply collectivism in their day-to-day activities which include curriculum delivery and management and maintaining the discipline of teachers and learners. Through collectivism, teachers understand themselves as equal stakeholders in the school-union partnership rather than separate groups. Through collectivism in a school, oneness among teachers, learners and parents is the order of the day. This new school culture (collectivism rather than individualism) has the potential to heal the mentality and attitude of teachers and learners about the school and its purpose and to reinvigorate their purpose of being at school. Within the collectivist approach, teachers collaboratively identify goals and plan together (Naicker & Mestry, 2016). The school becomes an environment where teaching and learning takes place without any disruption. School improvement partnerships depend on such collectivism practices to succeed. Collectivists subject their individual interests to the general interests of the collective/school. Teachers and role players in the school improvement partnership rely on each other for the fulfilment of the partnership goals. They seek assistance from other role players in the school-teacher union partnership all the time a need arises. Such teachers see value in being at school and collectively ensure discipline among themselves and learners.

5.4.3 Recommendation for theory

For theory, one recommendation is made, which is an African leadership perspective on school-teacher union partnership. This recommendation builds on the theoretical framework underpinning this study, namely instructional and transformational leadership. The African perspective leadership rather replaces these theories.

5.4.3.1 An African leadership perspective on school-teacher union partnerships

The African perspective on school-union partnerships is recommended for implementation of school-teacher union partnership. While the study recognises the contributions of both transformational and instructional leadership in promoting collaborative approach in school improvement, however the common limitations in both leadership theories is that improvement in the school-teacher union partnership is largely centered on the charisma and persona of the school leadership as a catalyst for change rather than change being a collective responsibility. By contrast, the African leadership theory embraces the principle of Ubuntu as a catalyst for change in school improvement initiatives. Therefore, this study advances an African leadership theory necessary to facilitate transformation and performance improvement in sinking schools. An African leadership theory to school improvement initiatives is appropriate when considering the complex social and institutional challenges facing under-performing schools in rural areas. As it is grounded in the principle of Ubuntu, in South African context, Ubuntu is associated with fundamental human values such as humility, harmony, unity, solidarity, cooperation, compassion, caring, mutual respect, concern for others, dignity and selflessness. These values were instrumental in bringing together a wide range of social actors and leveraging their unique strengths, talents and skills to expedite implementation of the school-union partnership. Central to the notion of Ubuntu is the need to approach education challenges in a constructive, humble, engaging and non-threatening manner to build consensus and enduring solutions (Letseka, 2011). From the beginning, the school-union partnership emphasised the need for interconnectedness of teachers, school leadership, learners and parents which is a hallmark of South African culture and lifestyle (Mbigi, 1997). Prior to the partnership, working relationships in the case study school were characterised by tensions, mistrust, divisions and unsatisfactory teaching and learning outcomes. By emphasising collectivism rather than individualism, the school partnership instilled a culture of collaborative based on the concept and principle of Ubuntu. This study has demonstrated how the African leadership theory can be leveraged to improve the

effectiveness and continuity of school improvement, particularly in disadvantaged communities. A unique strength of the African leadership theory is that it fosters bottom-up approaches to school improvement initiatives than conventional approaches led by district officials who are sometimes authoritative and imposing.

5.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I addressed three issues. First, I presented a summary of how the study was conceptualised and executed based on the interpretivist paradigm and case study methodology. Second, conclusions were drawn on the basis of the data that emerged around the three critical questions. Third, recommendations were then tabled for policy, practice and theory to help schools, teacher unions and the Department of Education to rethink their practices in undertaking school improvement initiatives.

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APPENDIX A: UKZN ETHICAL CLEARENCE

15 April 2020

Miss Primrose Nomarashiya Caluza (217077817)
School Of Education
Edgewood

Dear Miss Caluza,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00001250/2020
Project title: From a Sinking School to a Moving School: A Case Study of a School -Teacher Union Partnership to Facilitate School Improvement
Degree: Masters

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 18 March 2020 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**

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

This approval is valid until 15 April 2021.
To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

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

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

Yours sincerely,

Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
UKZN Research Ethics Office Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000
Tel: +27 31 260 8350 / 4557 / 3587
Website: http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics/

Founding Campuses: ■ Edgewood ■ Howard College ■ Medical School ■ Pietermaritzburg ■ Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS

APPENDIX B: PERMISSION LETTER FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Enquiries: Phindile Duma/Buyi Ntuli   Tel**:** 033 392 1063/51   **Ref.**:2/4/8/4

Miss Primrose Nomarashiya Caluza
P.O. Box
4329 DURBAN
4000

Dear Miss Caluza

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: **"FROM A SINKING SCHOOL TO A MOVING SCHOOL: A CASE STUDY OF A SCHOOL AND TEACHER UNION PARTNERSHIP TO FACILITATE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT",** in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education
Institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1.   The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2.   The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3.   Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4.   Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5.   A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the Intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6.   The period of investigation is limited to the period from 26 February 2020 to 10 January 2022.
7.   Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.

KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Postal Address: Private Bag X9137 • Pietermaritzburg • 3200 • Republic of South Africa
Physical Address: 228 Pietermaritz Street • ExNED Building • Pietermaritzburg • 3201
Tel.: +27 33 3921063 • **Fax.:** +27 033 3921203• **Email:** Phindile.duma@kzndoe.gov.za •**Web:**www.kzneducation.gov.za
Facebook: KZNDOE….Twitter: @DBE_KZN….Instagram: kzn_education….Youtube:kzndoe

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8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Miss Phindile Duma/Mrs Buyi Ntuli at the contact numbers above.

9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report/dissertation/thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Office of the HOD, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.

10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to schools and institutions in KwaZuluNatal Department of Education.

Dr. E. V Nzama
Head of Department: Education
Date: 26 February 2020

...Leading Social Compact and Economic Emancipation Through a Revolutionary Education for all...

APPENDIX C: REQUEST LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS

17 Strathcone Place

Woodlands

Durban

4004

26 January 2019

To: The Participant

Dear Sir

RE: REQUEST TO PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH

My name is Primrose Nomarashiya Caluza. Currently, I am a master's degree student in the Education Leadership, Management and Policy at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Edgewood campus. The degree I am doing is a full research master's degree. I have sought permission to do my research from the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The title of my study is **"From a Sinking School to a Moving School: A Case Study of a School and Teacher Union Partnership for School Improvement".** I have decided to locate my study on the role of SADTU in partnership with schools to improve learner outcomes in the Province of KwaZulu-Natal. The study will be focusing on the already existing initiatives the Union has in the province. I therefore hereby intend soliciting your participation in this study. You were identified to participate in this study because you directly participated in the SADTU School Improvement Initiative. Participation in this study entails one on one and focus group interviews.

During the study you will be requested to participate in either personal interviews and or focus group interviews. Interviews will involve semi-structured questions. You will only respond to questions that you are comfortable with. Each interview will take not more than two hours. It is important that you know that your participation in the study is voluntary. A taping device will be used during the interviews to ensure that data collected is a true version of the interviews.

In order to ensure confidentiality and /or anonymity participants will be given pseudo names in the final product of the study.

Should you agree to participate in the study you will be guaranteed all your rights as a participant. These include the following:

- The right to pull out from the study at any point should you feel uncomfortable or for any other reason,
- To remain anonymous in the final product of the study,
- Not to participate in the study without any prejudice.

For further information on this study, please be at liberty to contact my supervisor, Professor Inba Naicker, who can be contacted on (tel) 0312603461 or at (email) naickeri@ukzn.ac.za at the school of Education and Management at UKZN.

My contact details are ████████████, work 0313051828, email: nomarashiyacaluza@gmail.com.

Your positive response will be highly appreciated.

Thanking you in advance

Yours faithfully

████████████████████

………………………

Miss P. N. Caluza

APPENDIX D: CONSENT BY THE PARTICIPANTS

I ⬚⬚⬚⬚⬚⬚⬚ hereby confirm that I have been informed about the nature, purpose and procedure for the study: **From the Sinking School to a Moving School: a case study of a school and teacher union partnership to facilitate school improvement** conducted by Nomarashiya Caluza.

I have also received, read and understood the written information about the study. I understood everything that was explained to me, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I know that my participation is voluntary and understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

I have been assured that my real name will never be revealed during and after the study. I will be given a false name.

I was informed that interviews will be recorded using a recording devise.

If I have any questions or concerns about my rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about any aspect of the study or the researcher then I may contact:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001

Durban

4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

The interview will be audio recorded using a relevant device. Please tick in the boxes below to indicate whether you agree to the audio recording of the interview.

I hereby provide consent to audio record the interview**:**

Yes	No

██

Signature of Participant   **Date**

APPENDIX E: REQUEST LETTER TO THE CASE STUDY SCHOOL

17 Strathcone Place

Woodlands

Durban

4004

14 February 2020

The principal

.... **High School**

Dear Sir/Madam

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT YOUR SCHOOL

I, Miss P. N. Caluza (student number 217077817), currently studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, a teacher at Luthuli High School and KZN Provincial Secretary of SADTU request permission to conduct research at your school. I am presently enrolled for a Master of Education Degree. I therefore kindly seek permission from you to conduct research in your school. My title of my study is" From a sinking school to a moving school: a case study of a school and teacher union partnership for school improvement". I have decided to locate my study on the role of SADTU in partnership with schools to improve learner outcomes in the Province of KwaZulu-Natal. The study will be focusing on the already existing initiative the Union has in the province and which your school is part of. The study will give light on whether this form of partnership is of benefit to the school and how it can be strengthened. This study will be beneficial to the school since it will allow teachers to understand the importance of partnerships in achieving common goals.

My study entails interviewing you as the principal of the school, Chairperson of the School Governing Body and the School Management Team (SMT) as a focus group. I humbly request permission to conduct these interviews. Interviews will be audio recorded. Interview questions will be semi-structured to allow flexibility and the entire interview will occur once for the duration 30 minutes.

PLEASE TAKE NOTE THAT:

There will be no financial benefit that participants may accrue as a result of their participation in this study.

Participants' identities will not be revealed under any circumstances, during and after the final product of the study.

All responses will be treated with strict confidentiality.

Pseudo names will used for all participants.

Participation is voluntary which means participants are free to pull out at any time they so wish without incurring any negative or undesirable consequences on their part.

Interviews will be audio-recorded to assist me in concentrating on the actual interview.

Participants will be contacted in advance about the interview dates and times.

For further information on this study, please be at liberty to contact my supervisor, Professor Inba Naicker, who can be contacted on (tel) 0312603461 or at (email) naickeri@ukzn.ac.za at the school of Education Management at UKZN.

My contact details are ███████████, work 0313051828, email: nomarashiyacaluza@gmail.com.

Your positive response will be highly appreciated.

Thanking you in advance

Yours faithfully

....

Miss Primrose Nomarashiya Caluza

APPENDIX F – PERMISSION LETTER FROM KUZOLUNGA SECONDARY SCHOOL
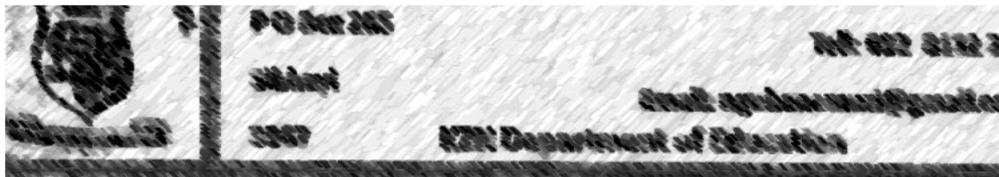
Miss N CALUZA

RE: REQUEST TO CONDUCT A STUDY AT......................... SECONDARY SCHOOL

WE, AT......................... SECONDARY SCHOOL HEREBY ACKNOWLEDGE THE

RECEIPT OF YOUR REQUEST TO CONDUCT A STUDY AT OUR SCHOOL.

WE THEREFORE WISH TO INFORM YOU THAT YOUR REQUEST IS WARMLY WELCOMED AND YOU MAY START YOUR

STUDY AT ANY TIME FROM NOW HENCEFORTH AT YOUR EARLIEST CONVENIENCE.

YOURS IN SERVICE

.... (PRINCIPAL)

CELL: ....
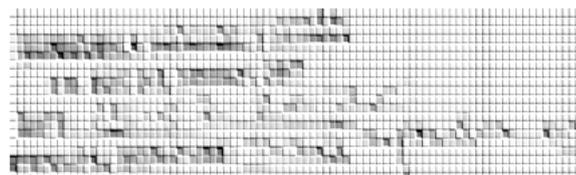
APPENDIX G – REQUEST LETTER TO SADTU

<div align="right">

17 Strathcone Place

Woodlands

Durban

4004

</div>

The General Secretary

South African Democratic Teachers Union

Portion 74 C/R Dann and Loam Street

Glen Marais, Ext 144

Kempton Park

1619

Dear Sir

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

My name is Primrose Nomarashiya Caluza (student number 217077817). Currently, I am a master's student in Education Management and Policy at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Edgewood campus. The degree I am doing is a full research master's degree. I have sought permission to do my research from the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The title of my study is **"From a Sinking School to a Moving School: A Case Study of a School and Teacher Union Partnership for School Improvement".** I have decided to locate my study on the role of SADTU in partnership with schools to improve learner outcomes in the Province of KwaZulu-Natal. The study will be focusing on the already existing initiatives the Union has in the province. I therefore request your permission to conduct this research with your union. The permission sought includes permission to interview leaders of SADTU i.e., the selected national and provincial leaders, members of the SADTU School Improvement Initiative Team (SSIIT), as well as permission to have access to SADTU documents that are relevant to the study.

The study will only focus on the programmes of the SSII in one of the schools that are part of SSII. The study will seek to establish whether the partnership between a teacher union and schools can improve schools thus leading to improved learner outcomes.

For further information on this study, please be at liberty to contact my supervisor, Professor Inba Naicker, who can be contacted on (tel) 0312603461 or at (email) naickeri@ukzn.ac.za at the school of Education and Management at UKZN.

My contact details are ███████████ work 0313051828, email: nomarashiyacaluza@gmail.com.

Your positive response will be highly appreciated.

Thanking you in advance

Yours faithfully

………………………

Miss P. N. Caluza

"Claiming our right to have our human dignity and safety protected
and respected in pursuit of a decolonised, quality, public education"

SADTU Village
Portion 74
Corner Dann Road &
Loam Street
Glen Marais, Ext 144
Kempton Park, 1619

Postnet Suite 106
Private Bag X 5
Aston Manor
1630

Tel: 011 971 2000

Email: sadtu@sadtu.org.za

www.sadtu.org.za

South African
Democratic Teachers' Union
SADTU

@SadtuNational

SADTU, the largest affiliate
of Education International
in South Africa

28 January 2020

To: Miss P.N Caluza
Re: ███████████████████

Dear Ms. Caluza,

Your letter dated 26 January 2020 has reference.

We hereby permit you to ████████████

████████████████████████

your research / study under the title ██████

████████████████████████

Partnership for School Improvement".

We wish you all the best in your research.

Kind Regards,

Mugwena Maluleke
General Secretary

APPENDIX I-INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR THE SADTU NATIONAL LEADER (Mr. Sopeni)

1. Biographical information of participant

1.   Age: 25-35 -------------------- 36- 45 ---------------- 46-55-------------------6- 65 ------------

2.   Gender: Male-----------------------Female --------------------------

3.   Formal Qualification/s: -------------------------------

QUESTIONS

1. PLANNING, ORGANISING AND COORDINATION OF A SCHOOL-SADTU PARTNERSHIP

    (a) How did your Union – SADTU become part of this partnership, how was it formed and how have you been organising and coordinating its activities?

    (b) Understanding that teachers belong to different teacher Unions and the fact that there are other stakeholders how does SADTU manage to participate in such an arrangement and are you able to get the support of other people who are not necessarily members of your union?

    (c) Why did SADTU decide to be part of such initiatives?

2. VIEWS OF STAKEHOLDERS ON SCHOOL-TEACHER UNION PARTNERSHIP

    (a) Describe the attitude of various role players in education with regard to the role of your Union in implementing your school improvement initiatives.

    (b) How are different role players prepared to work and embrace school improvement initiatives?

    (c) What is the relevance of teacher unions in the performance of schools?

3. IMPROVEMENT OF THE PARTNERSHIP

    (a) What do you regard as possible threats for the success of initiatives of this nature and how can those be avoided?

    (b) Should the same initiative be extended to other schools what would need to be taken care of to ensure its success?

    (c) Is there anything that you would like to add that might be pertinent to my study?

APPENDIX J- INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR SADTU PROVINCIAL LEADER (MR ZEMFUNDO)

Biographical information of participant

4.   Age: 25-35 -------------------- 36- 45 ---------------- 46-55-------------------6- 65 ------------

5.   Gender: Male-----------------------Female --------------------------

6.   Formal Qualification/s: -------------------------------

QUESTIONS

4.   PLANNING, ORGANISING AND COORDINATION OF A SCHOOL-SADTU PARTNERSHIP

    (d) How did your Union – SADTU become part of this partnership, how was it formed and how have you been organising and coordinating its activities?

    (e) Understanding that teachers belong to different teacher Unions and the fact that there are other stakeholders how does SADTU manage to participate in such an arrangement and are you able to get the support of other people who are not necessarily members of your union?

    (f) Why did SADTU decide to be part of such initiatives?

5.   VIEWS OF STAKEHOLDERS ON SCHOOL-TEACHER UNION PARTNERSHIP

    (d) Describe the attitude of various role players in education with regard to the role of your Union in implementing your school improvement initiatives.

    (e) How are different role players prepared to work and embrace school improvement initiatives?

    (f) What is the relevance of teacher unions in the performance of schools?

6.   IMPROVEMENT OF THE SCHOOL – TEACHER UNION PARTNERSHIP

    (d) What do you regard as possible threats for the success of initiatives of this nature and how can those be avoided?

    (e) Should the same initiative be extended to other schools what would need to be taken care of to ensure its success?

    (f) Is there anything that you would like to add that might be pertinent to my study?

APPENDIX K - INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR THE DEPARTMENTAL OFFICIAL DDG (DEO1)

1. Biographical information of participant

1.　　Age:　　　　　25-35 -------------------- 36- 45 ---------------- 46-55-------------------56 - 65 -----

2.　　Gender:　　　　Male-----------------------Female --------------------------

3.　　 Formal Qualification/s: -------------------------------

QUESTIONS

1. PLANNING, ORGANISING AND COORDINATION OF A SCHOOL-SADTU PARTNERSHIP

    (a) How and when does the department know that certain schools are not going to perform and which programmes are brought to such schools? How did Kuzolunga Secondary School benefit from such programmes?

    (b) How does the Department of Education in KwaZulu-Natal encourage school principals to work with stakeholders?

    (c) How does SADTU as a teacher's union work with the department especially with regard to schools' educational programmes?

    (d) What is the relevance of labour peace in school, how is it beneficial to the teachers and learners and how can labour peace be strengthened in schools?

2. VIEWS OF STAKEHOLDERS ON SCHOOL-TEACHER UNION PARTNERSHIP

    (a) How can schools benefit from partnering with stakeholders especially teacher unions?

    (b) What is the responsibility of the school governing bodies in relation to learner outcomes and how are they executing this responsibility?

    (c) What is your understanding of school improvement initiatives driven by stakeholders in the province and focusing on Kuzolunga what successes or challenges are identified and how can they be addressed?

3. IMPROVEMENT OF THE PARTNERSHIP

    (a) What do you regard as possible threats for the success of initiatives of this nature and how can those be avoided?

    (b) Should the same initiative be extended to other schools what would need to be taken care of to ensure its success?

    (c) How does the department prepare principals of schools and SMTs to work with stakeholders?

    (d) Can you give account of previous partnerships you were once part of to improve schools?

    (e) Is there anything that you would like to add that might be pertinent to my study?

APPENDIX L - INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR THE DEPARTMENTAL OFFICIAL DISTRICT DIRECTOR (DEO2)

1. Biographical information of the participant

4.   Age: 25-35 --------------------- 36- 45 ----------------- 46-55-------------------56 - 65 -----

5.   Gender: Male-----------------------Female --------------------------

6.   Formal Qualification/s: -------------------------------

QUESTIONS

4. PLANNING, ORGANISING AND COORDINATION OF A SCHOOL-SADTU PARTNERSHIP

   (e) How and when did you realise that certain schools are not going to perform and which programmes are brought to such schools? How did Kuzolulunga benefit from such programmes?

   (f) How do you as the District Director encourage schools to work with stakeholders?

   (g) How does SADTU as a teacher's union work with the department especially with regard to schools' educational programmes?

   (h) What is the relevance of labour peace in school how is it beneficial to the teachers and learners and how can labour peace be strengthened in schools?

5. VIEWS OF STAKEHOLDERS ON SCHOOL-TEACHER UNION PARTNERSHIP

   (d) How can schools benefit from partnering with stakeholders especially teacher unions?

   (e) What is the responsibility of the school governing bodies in relation to learner outcomes and how are they executing this responsibility?

   (f) What is your understanding of school improvement initiatives driven by stakeholders in the province and focusing on Kuzolunga what successes or challenges are identified and how can they be addressed?

6. IMPROVEMENT OF THE PARTNERSHIP

   (f) What do you regard as possible threats for the success of initiatives of this nature and how can those be avoided?

   (g) Should the same initiative be extended to other schools what would need to be taken care of to ensure its success?

   (h) How does the department prepare principals of schools and SMTs to work with stakeholders?

   (i) Can you give account of previous partnerships you were once part of to improve schools?

   (j) Is there anything that you would like to add that might be pertinent to my study?

APPENDIX M: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR THE DEPARTMENTAL OFFICIAL- CHIEF EDUCATION SPECIALIST (DEO3)

1. Biographical information of participant

7. Age: 25-35 --------------------- 36- 45 ----------------- 46-55-------------------56 - 65 -----

8. Gender: Male-----------------------Female --------------------------

9. Formal Qualification/s: -------------------------------

QUESTIONS

7. PLANNING, ORGANISING AND COORDINATION OF A SCHOOL-SADTU PARTNERSHIP

    (i)   How and when did you realise know that certain schools are not going to perform and which programmes are brought to such schools? How did Kuzolulunga benefit from such programmes?

    (j)   How do you as the Circuit Manager encourage schools to work with stakeholders?

    (k)   How does SADTU as a teacher's union work with the department especially with regard to schools' educational programmes?

    (l)   What is the relevance of labour peace in school how is it beneficial to the teachers and learners and how can labour peace be strengthened in schools?

8. VIEWS OF STAKEHOLDERS ON SCHOOL-TEACHER UNION PARTNERSHIP

    (g)   How can schools benefit from partnering with stakeholders especially teacher unions?

    (h)   What is the responsibility of the school governing bodies in relation to learner outcomes and how are they executing this responsibility?

    (i)   What is your understanding of school improvement initiatives driven by stakeholders in the province and focusing on Kuzolunga what successes or challenges are identified and how can they be addressed?

9. IMPROVEMENT OF THE PARTNERSHIP

    (k)   What do you regard as possible threats for the success of initiatives of this nature and how can those be avoided?

    (l)   Should the same initiative be extended to other schools what would need to be taken care of to ensure its success?

    (m) How does the department prepare principals of schools and SMTs to work with stakeholders?

    (n)   Can you give account of previous partnerships you were once part of to improve schools?

    (o)   Is there anything that you would like to add that might be pertinent to my study?

APPENDIX N: FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR THE SADTU SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT INIIATIVE TEAM (SSIIT)

1. Biographical information of participant

10.   Age: 25-35 -------------------- 36- 45 ----------------- 46-55-------------------6- 65 ------------

11.   Gender: Male-----------------------Female --------------------------6. Formal qualifications

QUESTIONS

10. PLANNING, ORGANISING AND COORDINATION OF A SCHOOL-SADTU PARTNERSHIP

    (m) Describe the partnership between SADTU and Kuzolunga High School and how was Kuzolunga identified to be part of this partnership?

    (n) What are the main activities of this partnership and how are they planned and implemented?

    (o) What are the main causal factors for low learner outcomes, were these the same reasons for Kuzolunga High School what do you think is the best way of addressing your identified factors?

11. VIEWS OF STAKEHOLDERS ON SCHOOL-TEACHER UNION PARTNERSHIP

    (a) Describe the attitude of various role players in school with regard to the role of SADTU implementing the school improvement initiatives.

    (b) How are different role players prepared to work and embrace school-SADTU partnership improvement initiatives?

    (c) What is the relevance of teacher unions in the performance of schools?

    (d) As the team how do you view the initiative, has it been able to achieve the required outcomes, which are those outcomes and What are the highlights for the success of this initiative?

12. IMPROVEMENT OF THE PARTNERSHIP

    (p) What do you regard as possible threats for the success of initiatives of this nature and how can those be avoided?

    (q) Should the same initiative be extended to other schools, what would need to be taken care of to ensure its success?

    (r) Is there anything that you would like to add that might be pertinent to my study?

APPENDIX O: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR THE KUZOLUNGA SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS FOCUS GROUP

1. Biographical information of participant

12.   Age: 25-35 --------------------- 36- 45 ----------------- 46-55-------------------6- 65 ------------

13.   Gender: Male-----------------------Female --------------------------

14.   Formal Qualification/s: -------------------------------

QUESTIONS

13. PLANNING AND COORDINATION OF A SCHOOL-SADTU PARTNERSHIP

    (p) How and when did you know that the school was not going to achieve the desired outcomes in terms of learner performance and what strategies and programmes did you employ?

    (q) How did your school form partnership with SADTU and how has the partnership assisted the school?

    (r) Teachers belong to different teacher unions. Describe the nature of relations amongst teachers in your school before and after the partnership and explain whether the partnership assisted or did not and how that happen/

    (s) Is there a relationship between labour peace in school and learner performance?

    (t) What are the main causal factors for low learner outcomes, were these the same reasons for Kuzolunga High School what do you think is the best way of addressing your identified factors?

14. VIEWS OF STAKEHOLDERS ON SCHOOL-TEACHER UNION PARTNERSHIP

    (a) As teachers in the school, what made you to embrace the partnership?

    (b) How were teachers lobbied to participate in the partnership programmes?

    (c) How did you involve learners in the process and what was their attitude towards the partnership?

    (d) How was the school governing body and parents informed and how did they view this partnership?

    (e) How did the department especially your circuit and district get to know about the partnership and what support did you get?

15. IMPROVEMENT OF THE PARTNERSHIP

    (s) Having been part of the partnership what do you think needs to be enhanced to ensure the partnership is successful and sustained?

    (t) What do you regard as possible threats for the success of initiatives of this nature and how can those be avoided?

(u)   Should the same initiative be extended to other schools what would need to be taken care of to ensure its success?

    (v) What are the highlights of this initiative?

(vi) Is there anything that you would like to add that might be pertinent to my study?

APPENDIX P: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR THE SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY MEMBER

1. Biographical information of participant

15.   Age: 25-35 -------------------- 36- 45 ---------------- 46-55-------------------6- 65 ----- -------

16.   Gender: Male-----------------------Female --------------------------

17.   Formal Qualification/s: -------------------------------

18.   Years in SGB-------------------------------------

QUESTIONS

16. PLANNING, ORGANISING AND COORDINATION OF A SCHOOL-SADTU PARTNERSHIP

  (a) The school got 0% in 2017. What were the reasons for this dismal performance and how do you think SGBs can assist in avoiding the same from happening?

  (b) How did you get to know that the school has a partnership with SADTU and how were its programmes implemented in the school?

  (c) How often do you get reports about learner performance in the school?

17. VIEWS OF STAKEHOLDERS ON SCHOOL-TEACHER UNION PARTNERSHIP

  (a) In your view how can parents get involved and support their children's academic performance in the school?

  (b) How do you view teacher unions and their programmes?

  (c) How has the partnership benefited the school?

  (d) What can be done by the SGB to support learner academic achievement?

18. IMPROVEMENT OF THE PARTNERSHIP

  (v) What do you think the SGB and the school need to do for the partnership to be successful?

  (w) What do you regard as possible threats to the success of initiatives of this nature and how can those be avoided?

  (x) What are the highlights of this initiative?

  (y) Is there anything that you would like to add that might be pertinent to my study?

APPENDIX Q: SIMILARITY REPORT

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4 JANUARY 2022

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

LANGUAGE CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

This serves to inform that I have read the final version of the dissertation titled:

FROM A SINKING SCHOOL TO A MOVING SCHOOL: A CASE STUDY OF A SCHOOL-TEACHER UNION PARTNERSHIP TO FACILITATE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT by Primrose Nomarashiya Caluza, student Number: 217077817.

To the best of my knowledge, all the proposed amendments have been effected and the work is free of spelling and grammatical errors. I am of the view that the quality of language used meets generally accepted academic standards.

Yours faithfully

DR S. GOVENDER

B Paed. (Arts), B.A. (Hons), B Ed.

Cambridge Certificate for English Medium Teachers

MPA, D. Admin.