Development of a governance framework for improving the performance of basic education in the Eastern Cape Province

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Graduation: May 2025

DECLARATION

I, Nathunathi Ntando Mvunge, declare that this thesis is my original work, has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university, and the sources I have used herein have been fully acknowledged in the reference list. This thesis is submitted to fulfil the award for a Doctor of Philosophy in Public Management and Governance at the North-West University.

Signature:

Date: 8th of November, 2024.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my beloved mother, whose unwavering love, guidance, and support strengthened my resolve to successfully complete my studies. Her encouragement and sacrifices made me resilient, compassionate, and determined to pursue and fulfil my dreams. Her love has been my constant source of motivation, and for that, I am forever grateful.

I also dedicate this thesis to my late grandmother, whose passion for education profoundly shaped my academic path. Her belief in the transformative power of learning and her determination to see me succeed was my guiding light. Though she is no longer here, her legacy lives on.

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ABSTRACT

The Eastern Cape provincial government is responsible for providing citizens with high-quality goods and services. To achieve this objective, public institutions ought to operate efficiently to fulfil the needs of citizens. This study argues that there is a disconnect between the needs of citizens and the performance of the Eastern Cape provincial government regarding basic education outcomes. Consequently, there is poor performance among learners, inadequate infrastructure and resources, and poor school administrative traits. This is inconsistent with the objectives of Public Administration espoused in the Constitution of South Africa. Given these challenges, the researcher developed a Sustainable Governance Framework for Improved Academic Performance in the Eastern Cape.

The study adopts a qualitative research methodology and follows an interpretivist research paradigm. This research design enabled the researcher to collect qualitative data from various stakeholders such as government officials in the Department of Basic Education, School Governing Body members, parents, school principals, and learners. Data collection techniques such as interviews and document analysis were used to collect data about the experiences, views, and opinions of the research participants concerning the performance of learners in the Eastern Cape. An interpretivist paradigm influenced how the researcher selected the study sample for data collection. Interpretivism allows the researcher to perceive social reality as a complex and subjective phenomenon, resulting in various individual perspectives, experiences, and views. An interpretivist research philosophy and a qualitative methodology enable the researcher to collect and analyse complex, subjective data based on multiple viewpoints. Given the foregoing, thematic data analysis was used to analyse the qualitative data collected for this study. Thematic data analysis enabled the researcher to categorise multiple viewpoints into themes. This was crucial to answering the research questions because it allowed the researcher to identify trends in the collected data. The chosen research design is consistent with the research problem given the ultimate objective to develop the framework based on qualitative, complex, and subjective data.

Empirical findings indicate that various internal and external factors contribute to the poor academic performance of learners. The primary challenges schools face include

inadequate resources, high staff turnover, lack of community support, and poor infrastructure. School Governing Bodies are critical in the functioning and performance of schools in the Eastern Cape. They are instrumental in improving performance and ensuring that schools are governed according to the specifications of the Department of Education. Based on the research findings, literature review, and an analysis of existing models and frameworks, the researcher developed a Sustainable Governance Framework for Improved Academic Performance in the Eastern Cape.

Keywords:

Good governance, learner performance, basic education system, Sustainable Governance Framework for Improved Academic Performance, Eastern Cape.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

This study developed a framework to address the learner performance challenges that are faced by the Eastern Cape Province. Governance encompasses an array of institutions, practices, and processes for decision-making to regulate the conduct of institutions (United Nations, 2023). Governance is, therefore, pivotal in enhancing the quality of public goods and services, including educational services required by citizens from the government. This is essential because the academic performance of learners and the quality of educational services are negatively impacted by weak governance systems (World Bank, 2022). For example, political interference and weak governance systems have resulted in poor academic performance among learners in the Eastern Cape Province (Ngumbela, Khalema, & Nzimakwe, 2020; ECSECC, 2023). Political infighting and interference result in maladministration in schools, favouritism in appointing school staff and administrators, poor accountability and misuse and misallocation of resources. As a result, the quality of education in public schools is negatively impacted, resulting in learners performing poorly at school (Brian & Shumane, 2018; Kota et al., 2018).

The Eastern Cape Province faces several challenges such as, among others, poverty and inadequate public services. The province accounts for about a quarter of the country's population. Despite being the largest province in South Africa in terms of land mass, it is, however, the poorest. A large number of learners in the province attend quintiles 1–3 schools. These are the poorest schools in the country. Learners in quintile schools are exempted from paying school fees due to their poor backgrounds (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2022). Given the governance challenges that affect schools in the province, the researcher decided to develop a school governance framework that would help stakeholders to effectively implement provincial educational policies. In this way, the provincial authorities would be able to accomplish the strategic objectives of the province.

1.2 Background to the study

The African National Congress (ANC) led government identified education as a central aspect of development and reconstruction in the post-apartheid dispensation (Breakfast, 2015). That is, education in the country is essential in attaining its national and local development objectives (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2016). Conspicuously, in 1994, the new ANC government inherited an unequal and racial basic education system. That status quo significantly disadvantaged marginalised communities with poor schools (Lemon, 2004). To correct that situation, the ANC-led government sought to reform the basic education sector in order to ensure equitable access to educational services (Engelbrecht, 2006). In particular, the government reforms targeted the school governance systems across the country. The reforms included the introduction of new standards for schools, establishing a body that certifies qualifications, and ensuring equal access to resources. In addition, an outcomes-based education system was introduced to ensure that performance is measured based on educational outcomes (Mancebon & Molinero, 2000).

Despite these policy changes and developments, the South African education sector still faces many challenges. Those challenges include weak political administration, inadequate resources and infrastructure, obsolete infrastructure, and acute overcrowding in schools (Breakfast, 2015). Acute overcrowding negatively impacts the performance of learners in the Eastern Cape Province. Learners in the Eastern Cape struggle to access basic resources required for learning (Department of Basic (DBE) Education, 2016).

The slow pace of economic development in the Eastern Cape Province has resulted in that province being classified as one of the poorest provinces in the country. The Eastern Cape Province is one of the provinces with the highest 'no fee schools' in the country (Van Dyk & White, 2019). This indicates that most schools in the province rely on government support. Quartile rankings are used to assess the performance of schools against the objective indicators. Quintile 1 signifies an unresourceful or poor school, while Quintile 5 signifies well-resourced and affluent schools (DBE, 2016). Schools in the province face numerous challenges. The Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Basic Education noted the deterioration of infrastructure in most schools

across the Eastern Cape Province (National Parliament, 2018). The portfolio committee then highlighted how that deterioration impacts the performance of learners and educational goals in the province (National Parliament, 2018). Despite such significant observation, nothing has been done so far to improve the situation (Chawula, 2021). The province continues to struggle with the provision of good-quality education to learners due to inadequate infrastructure (Mhlekude, 2020; Chawula, 2021). For example, about half of the 2,500 schools in the Eastern Cape Province do not have flush toilets; they rely on pit latrines (Mhlekude, 2020). Pit toilets are generally unhygienic and thus pose health risks to learners (Chawula, 2021). Due to that, the Eastern Cape Province is notorious for its pit latrines in schools. The foregoing is indicative of the poor infrastructural development in that province.

Furthermore, the above is an epitome of how bad educational conditions are in the Eastern Cape schools. Without effective interventions, the province would likely degenerate into conditions worse than before 1994 (Sizani & Gontsana, 2022). Overall, the sad state of affairs has negative consequences on the quality of educational services provided by the Eastern Cape schools. For example, data from the central government indicate that Grade 12 learners in the Eastern Cape perform poorly in Mathematics (DoBE, 2019). Such statistics align with other data sources, such as the systematic evaluation in schools, which show that the performance of learners in the Eastern Cape Province continues to deteriorate year after year (DoBE, 2019).

The Independent Schools Association of Southern Africa (ISASA) (2022) points out that systematic evaluation determines if an educational system accomplishes specific transformational, developmental, and socio-economic goals. The system objectively illustrates the performance of an institution or department, which is measured against specific goals and challenges in the macro-environment. In South Africa, systematic evaluation enables stakeholders to develop effective systems for providing good-quality basic education services (ISASA, 2022). Existing data indicate a downward trend in matric pass rates in the Eastern Cape. This is one of the metrics used in this study to determine the performance of the DBE in the province. For example, between 2019 and 2022, the pass rate fell by 9% (DoBE, 2022; 2019). Furthermore, in 2022,

about 18 schools in the province obtained a 0% pass. These statistics exemplify the low levels of our basic education system in the province.

Data also suggest that the challenges noted above are products of several factors. Factors such as, for instance, weak governance and poor implementation of basic education policies in the Eastern Cape Province. These challenges have resulted in learners from the province migrating to neighbouring provinces such as the Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal, where standards and facilities are believed to be better. In light of the above, the Western Cape Premier, Mr. Alan Winde bemoaned the increased enrolment of learners from the Eastern Cape Province into his schools due to poor governance in the former. The mooted complaint by Premier Winde highlights the poor governance record of the Eastern Cape Province. According to Kota et al. (2018), several elements in the Eastern Cape Provincial Government severely impact the performance of the basic education sector. These include poor leadership, interference by political leaders, weak governance systems, and mismanaging public finances by leaders in the provincial DBE. Worse, the department cannot provide oversight, procure sufficient resources, or provide direction to schools. The results are poor performance and dysfunctional schools across the province.

It is, therefore, inevitable that standards and the performance of learners in the Eastern CAPE Province are on a downward trajectory. This is evidenced by an increasing number of struggling schools across the province (Eric (2021). The issue is that the performance of an educational system is evaluated based on how policies are implemented and procedures followed. The Eastern Cape Provincial Government should address challenges that impact its performance. Challenges such as corruption and the failure to implement existing policies. There are also weak governance systems, such as the failure to plan, budget, monitor, and evaluate performance. Others comprise the failure to address corruption and misuse of resources, manage financial resources, and the failure to account for expenses and decisions that have increasingly crippled the performance of public educational institutions in the Eastern Cape (Thomas, 2020). In contrast, good governance principles ensure that the DBE functions effectively and efficiently to ensure that learners can access high-quality public education services. They also ensure that the performance of public institutions

aligns with the educational policies and development targets. Therefore, good governance principles such as accountability, responsiveness, transparency, efficiency and the rule of law (World Bank, 2022) would anchor the sound implementation of education policies and performance in the provincial DBE. Against this goal, the current study developed a Sustainable Governance Framework for Improved Academic Performance in the Eastern Cape.

1.3 Problem Statement

Basic education in South Africa faces immense governance challenges that impact its ability to meet the objective of providing good-quality basic education services to learners across the country. The policies implemented by the provincial government in the post-apartheid era have failed to produce the expected outcomes. This is when one considers that the basic education services in the province are still poor and unattainable. Schools in the province lack facilities, have poor infrastructure, are poorly maintained, and have poorly trained and skilled educators (Ngundane, Crafford, & Moyo, 2024; Zindi & Sibanda, 2023). This has left the education standards in the Eastern Cape lagging behind other provinces. Poor governance is the chief cause of poor administrative performance in the Eastern Cape Province, as it results in the inefficient provision of services and the lack of accountability (Letseka et al., 2012). This leads to maladministration, corruption, and poor performance by learners (Letseka et al., 2012). In general, the governance challenges have led to learners performing poorly in class, low matric pass rates, and extraordinary school dropout rates in the province (Mutodi & Ngirande, 2014).

The above shows a severe impact of poor administration, a lack of accountability, and an erosion of education standards (poor governance) on the performance of schools and the academic development of learners. Data also show that the dismal pass rates poor and inadequate facilities such as libraries, science equipment, and computers. Most poorly -performing schools in the province lack adequate libraries, science equipment, laboratories and information and communication technology equipment (DBE, 2022). This is worsened by the shortage of basic but essential equipment such as stationery, furniture, and ablution facilities in the province (Ndungane et al., 2024).

Poor adherence to good governance principles is the leading cause of all these problems. For example, poor leadership, abuse of authority and resources, and the lack of accountability have resulted in weak performance management and poor service delivery by the Eastern Cape DBE (Kota et al., 2018). Corruption and the lack of transparency in managing public resources are evidence of maladministration in the Eastern Cape (Corruption Watch, 2022). Micro or local-level governance issues determine the performance of Eastern Cape schools. This is more evident in poorly run schools where resources are scarce. In other words, poor accountability, unethical conduct, and the abuse of resources directly impact the academic performance of learners. These issues deprive learners of essential resources and support systems required for their education (Brian & Shumane, 2018). The said challenges also impact the ability of the province to implement policies, particularly in the education department, resulting in learners performing poorly (Mhlanga, 2022). In light of this, the study examined the governance challenges that hinder the performance of learners in the Eastern Cape schools and, hence, the development of a mitigating framework.

1.4 Research questions

Given the research problem as highlighted above, the study answered the following primary and secondary research questions.

1.4.1 Primary research question

- What are the governance challenges that hinder the effective provision of basic education to learners and hinder their academic performance in the Eastern Cape Province?

1.4.2 Secondary research questions

- Which governance structures were created to improve the academic performance of learners in the Eastern Cape Province?
- How is the state of basic education in the Eastern Cape Province?
- What are the governance framework elements that improve the performance of basic education in the Eastern Cape Province?

1.5 Aim and objectives of the study

The following constitute the aim and objectives of this study.

1.5.1 Aim of the study

The aim of the study is;

- To investigate the challenges that hinder the effective provision of basic education to learners and hinder their academic performance in the Eastern Cape Province.

1.5.2 Specific objectives

- To explore the governance structures created to improve the academic performance of learners in the Eastern Cape schools.
- To investigate the state of basic education in the Eastern Cape Province.
- To develop a governance framework for improving the performance of basic education in the Eastern Cape Province.

1.6 Literature review

Developing a governance framework could lead to improved human capacities that would enhance the development of human skills and capabilities in the Eastern Cape Province. Current literature on improving basic education services provided by public institutions focuses on external factors responsible for the poor performance of learners (Mhlanga, 2022; Pillay, 2022; Van Nierkeke, 2021). Overcoming the challenges facing schools requires an integrated approach. An approach that focuses not only on internal factors (challenges affecting schools/learner) but also on external social and economic environments that affect their academic performance in schools. The belief here is that the academic performance of learners is a product of several factors. To address that issue, stakeholders should examine all those factors.

In that case, theoretical frameworks become critical because they predict and describe the problem being studied. Thus, theories of institutions, morphogenetics, and human capital development were adopted herein to explain concepts such as human behaviour and institutional operations. Most governments in the world use education to solve unemployment issues. Education provides individuals with skills and capabilities, making them relevant to the demands of the labour market. The human capital development theory is used herein to explain this view (Ogujiuba, 2013). Marimuthu et al. (2009: 8) stated that,

> "*Human capital comprises processes that relate to training, education, and other professional initiatives in order to increase the levels of knowledge, skills, abilities, values, and social assets of employees, which will lead to their job satisfaction and performance.*"

Given that the study focused on the education of learners and their skills development, the human capital development theory explains the importance of developing skills and how that affects individuals and societies. The human capital development theory posits that improving the skills and abilities of citizens leads to economic growth. Skills development enables workers to contribute to the national economy or business operations. The key elements of this approach are the health and well-being of citizens, their access to education, and their willingness to acquire education and skills (Samiullah, 2014). The theory postulates that access to education is an important factor in human capital development because education provides individuals with the skills and knowledge required to increase the economic growth of a country. Formal and informal education systems and, training and skills development are all part of the system. Informal education alleviates poverty in peri-urban and rural areas. It also facilitates social change by equipping unskilled and less educated people with skills and knowledge outside of the formal education system (Barua, 2009). These interventions increase and improve the skills and abilities of individuals. In addition, they increase the performance of individuals and hence contribute to human development and economic growth (Costin, 2023).

As this study focused on basic education in the Eastern Cape Province, it was important to explore the role of public schools in providing education to communities. In line with the above, the study used institutional theory to explain the role of public schools in providing good-quality education to learners. It considered here was how an institutional approach could be adopted to improve learner performance. In this sense, the institutional approach is important in analysing how public schools and other institutions essential in the provision of basic education to learners in the Eastern Cape Province are arranged. The South African government is run according to institutional interactions and systems. These are informed by national objectives that help to fulfil governmental obligations to the populace. For example, the state is responsible for providing citizens with basic goods and services and, safety and protection from adversaries, *inter alia* (Kukathas, 2014). Therefore, the historical institutional view points out that the education services of the state should align with the needs for human capital development. The historical institutional view recognises the importance of legacy policies and political institutions (responsible for public policies) in producing fundamental opportunities for policy-making (Kpessa & Beland, 2012). Furthermore, this approach illustrates policy trajectories and explains why some policies are adopted by the government (Pierson, 2004; 2001). This view enables us to understand the historical and institutional legacies of the apartheid policies (Kpessa & Beland, 2012).

In this regard, institutional attributes are vital because they help shape government policies and development trajectories (Lee & Ku, 2007). Institutions such as political establishments, organised labour, and electoral systems are important in this regard. The institutional approach values informal institutions and non-governmental organisations because they can also shape how and which policies are made. This theory is vital in this study because it illustrates the challenges that face the DBE. The theory traces the origins and impact of the challenges and formal and informal institutions that influence policy-making. The foregoing shapes the outcomes of educational policies in South Africa. This means that the historical institutional approach was adopted to account for educational policies by analysing bureaucratic systems, institutions, and role players in the Eastern Cape education sector.

By adopting the above theory to develop a sustainable governance framework, the study explored the research problem from an institutional perspective. The idea is to assist policymakers in developing effective policies to address the challenges facing schools in the Eastern Cape Province. Institutions impact both policy-making and the ideas that form policies. Institutions have embedded knowledge, principles, and experiences that could be used in policymaking (Berner, 2011). This study used the institutional approach to analyse institutional characteristics when developing a sustainable governance framework. Collected data query traditional procedures and techniques used in the teaching and learning process. In view of that, this study calls for the revision of the social realist theory, which emphasises an outdated approach to learning that does not consider some of the processes involved in modern learning (Williams, 2012). Archer (1996) Archer (1995) observed that the external world consists of cultures and structures.

The structure consists of physical objectives and other materials disproportionately distributed in society, as well as the roles, duties, and social positions of various people. Culture encompasses knowledge and ideas like beliefs, science, and myths. Agency encompasses human interactions and activities. In terms of the theory, cultures, agency, and structure are independent and should be analysed separately. Archer (1995) introduced morphogenesis and morphostasis. Morphogenesis refers to shape changes and changes in structure, culture, or agency. A state where there is no change is morphostasis (Archer, 1995).

The morphogenetic cycle could help to analyse the progress of events over time. The cycle is used in education management to analyse the agency of learners. It can also help to analyse the progression of development of learners. For instance, how learners are expected to complete school with specific skills and abilities. These developments and interactions occur in the context of culture and structures. In this context, conditioning is also important. Conditioning can be defined as boundaries imposed by the environment or opportunities in the environment. These conditions shape the status and morphogenesis cycles. Situational logic is important in analysing structural and cultural conditioning (Williams, 2012).

This implies that structural or cultural system complementarity does not produce changes. Morphogenesis occurs when there is a situational logic of contradiction. The study framework is anchored by this viewpoint. The outcomes of the study represent an understanding of the situational logic that underpins the observed outcomes.

1.7 Research methodology

This study used a qualitative research methodology to collect data from several research participants, as discussed in section 1.8.2. Choosing the qualitative research methodology was informed by the research questions, the theoretical framework, and the problem the researcher aimed to solve (Mertens, 2015). The study investigated the challenges faced by the education department in the Eastern Cape Province to develop a sustainable governance framework. The qualitative research methodology approach enabled the researcher to investigate social situations in order to address specific challenges that face individuals or groups (Creswell, 2015). This approach allowed complex realities to be understood by investigating the experiences of the research participants through qualitative techniques. These techniques consider the feelings, views, and perceptions of the participants (Ngulube & Ngulube, 2015). Interpreting data from several stakeholders involved in basic education was also considered (Ngulube & Ngulube, 2015). The qualitative approach was appropriate because it helped the researcher to establish the challenges that face schools in the Eastern Cape Province.

1.8 Empirical research methods

1.8.1 Research design

The research design represents a “blueprint or plan in which a study is structured” (Babbie & Mouton, 2010). The research design is the strategies adopted to accomplish the aim of the study and to help answer the research questions. Creswell (2015) explained the research design as the research strategy comprising techniques to collect empirical or secondary data in order to fulfil the objectives of the study. It is, therefore, instrumental in ensuring that the study collects accurate data to answer the research questions (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993). An exploratory-descriptive

research design was used to answer the research questions of the study. This research design represents a combination of exploratory and descriptive research designs. Exploratory designs are used to investigate emerging research problems that are under-studied. This qualitative research methods gather in-depth data to understand an emerging phenomenon (Creamer, 2018). This research design was suitable for this study because it is flexible. It allowed the researcher to develop the sustainable governance framework model after answering specific research questions using the collected qualitative data.

A descriptive research design is used to describe the characteristics of a phenomenon. Descriptive studies describe the composition, size, and traits of an individual or group (Creswell, 2015). This research approach uses primary or secondary data. Such data could be collected through observations or interviews. The collected data helped the researcher to comprehensively understand the phenomenon studied (Creswell, 2015). The descriptive research methods were suitable for this study because they enabled the researcher to identify and describe educational challenges facing the Eastern Cape Province from the post-1994 era to the present day. This design enabled the researcher to investigate the policy failures in the Eastern Cape DBE. Thereafter, the researcher provided strategies that the provincial government could implement in order to improve the academic performance of learners. In other words, the strategies that helped to address the current challenges are provided herein. Overall, this study used the qualitative research methodology because it allowed the researcher to collect in-depth data about the challenges facing the education department in the Eastern Cape Province.

1.8.2 Population and sampling

This study identified a suitable population to answer the research questions stated in section 1.4. This was important because developing the sustainable governance framework model required primary data from specific stakeholders. It was crucial for the researcher to carefully identify the suitable study population from which to select an ideal sample (Burns & Grove, 2005). The researcher ensured that the study population was broad or expansive, including various stakeholders with varying

insights and views about the research problem. The study targeted specific individuals and experts with knowledge about the challenges facing schools in the Eastern Cape Province. The target population included professionals, administrators, teachers, SGB members, researchers, and stakeholders in the education sector. These groups of individuals were selected because they had expert knowledge and experience in education and the performance of learners. In research, populations are vast, thereby making it impossible for the researcher to study all the people in their target population (Burns & Grove, 2005). In this study, the researcher could not collect data from the entire population. The sample representing members of the targeted population was selected (Struwig & Stead, 2001). Sampling was done to enable the researcher to choose a small group of individuals from the target population.

Spatz and Kardas (2008) said that rigorous and scientific techniques should be used in research to choose the study sample. Similarly, Terre-Blanche, Durrheim, and Painter (2007) asserted that sampling involves deciding about individuals to participate in a study. This was mainly influenced by the objectives of the study. The purposive sampling technique was used to select the sample of individuals with the knowledge required to answer the research questions. The researcher selected individuals to interview so as to obtain data that helped to answer questions. Individuals were chosen based on factors such as race, gender, age, ethnicity, socio-economic level, educational level, experience in the education sector, and geographical location within the Eastern Cape Province. These factors made up the inclusion criteria used in selecting the participants. These characteristics enhanced the validity, generalisability, and relevance of the study findings. The characteristics helped to identify potential disparities or differences within the studied population. The researcher also considered the ethical implications involved in selecting the study sample. He ensured that the inclusion criteria helped to ensure diversity and avoided perpetuating stereotypes or biases. Creswell and Poth (2018) pointed out that purposive sampling allows the researcher to choose specific individuals based on a criterion of characteristics required to answer the research questions. Purposive sampling allowed the researcher to select participants based on the aim of the study, its objectives, and the inherent research questions (Burns & Grove, 2009).

The researcher ensured that the sample comprised individuals with the required expertise, information, and experience about the challenges facing schools and how the sustainable governance framework model could be best developed.

The sample consisted of 150 participants and was distributed as follows: Eastern Cape Department of Education Officials: 20 participants, School Principals: 25 participants, School Governing Body (SGB) Members: 15 participants, Teachers: 35 participants, Parents: 20 participants, Learners: 15 participants, and members of the academia, 20 participants. This distribution ensured an almost even representation of various stakeholders involved in the basic education sector. This allowed for an in-depth understanding of the challenges facing schools regarding academic performance of learners in the Eastern Cape Province.

1.9 Data collection methods

Semi-structured interviews and survey questionnaires were used to collect data. Based on the distribution of the participants, the structured interviews and questionnaires were employed strategically to effectively gather data from each group. The sub-sections below outline the data collection methods used in this study.

1.9.1 Semi-structured interviews

DBE Officials: These individuals held higher positions in the department. They provided in-depth insights into policy frameworks and systemic challenges. Semi-structured interviews allowed for probing questions and detailed discussions to extract comprehensive information.

School Principals: As key decision-makers within schools, principals offered valuable perspectives on operational challenges and policy implementation. Semi-structured interviews enabled probing into specific issues relevant to their roles.

SGB Members: These members were involved in the governance of schools and provided insights into community perspectives, resource allocation, and stakeholder

engagement in the context of schools. Semi-structured interviews facilitated the exploration of their roles and decision-making processes in this regard.

1.9.2 Questionnaires

Teachers: With a relatively larger number of participants, administering questionnaires helped to efficiently gather data on various aspects of their teaching experiences, challenges faced, and suggestions for improvement.

Parents: Questionnaires were used to gather opinions and feedback from parents on their involvement in the education of their children, perceptions of school performance, and suggestions for policy improvements.

Learners: Questionnaires for data collection were distributed among the population sample of learners. The questionnaire included issues to do with their academic experiences, challenges faced, and suggestions to enhance their learning environment.

Academia Members: Academics had diverse perspectives about educational policies, research findings, and theoretical frameworks. Questionnaires were used to efficiently gather their opinions and insights about these issues.

Using structured interviews with the DBE officials, school principals, and SGB members allowed for detailed discussions and deeper insights into policy frameworks and systemic issues. Questionnaires were more suitable for larger groups such as that of teachers, parents, learners, and academic members. Using questionnaires enabled an efficient data collection process that helped to gather diverse perspectives. Interviews were used because they enabled the researcher to collect in-depth data. Interviews allowed the participants to express their views freely, enabling the researcher to collect a lot of data in the process (De Vos et al., 2005).

1.9.3 Document analysis

Document analysis was also used to collect data to complement those collected using semi-structured interviews and questionnaires (De Vos et al., 2005). Documents that were considered included but were not limited to these;

- **Educational Policies and Guidelines**: The National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) issued by the DBE, Education White Papers, and provincial education policies were used to collect data.
- **Government Reports and Publications**: Annual reports from the DBE, National Education Evaluation and Development Unit (NEEDU) reports, and parliamentary committee reports on education also helped with crucial data.
- **Academic Research Papers and Articles**: Studies on education quality, teacher training, and student performance in South Africa published in reputable academic journals were part of the secondary data sources.
- **School Performance Reports**: Annual performance reports from schools, district offices, and provincial education departments, including data on academic achievement, dropout rates, and teacher-student ratios, complimented the above sources.
- **Curriculum Frameworks and Standards**: Documents outlining curriculum objectives, learning outcomes, and assessment criteria issued by the education authorities provided critical and ideal information here.
- **Minutes of Meetings**: Records of meetings between education stakeholders, such as Council of Education Ministers (CEM) meetings or provincial education department forums, provided primary data for this study.
- **Educational Legislation and Regulations**: Laws and regulations governing basic education in South Africa, including the South African Schools Act and regulations about school governance and accountability, enhanced the primary data required for this study.

It should be noted, however, that prioritisation of documents from credible sources such as the Department of Basic Education, academic institutions, and reputable research organisations like the HSRC or the CDE was paramount in this study. The verification of the authenticity and reliability of documents by checking the credentials of authors, publishers, and issuing bodies was done as well. Once the documents were selected, a systematic approach to document analysis was employed. Techniques such as content analysis, thematic coding, and narrative synthesis were

employed to analyse data. Moreover, developing a coding scheme to categorise and analyse key themes, policy recommendations, and challenges identified in the documents was carried out. Qualitative data analysis software like ATLAS was used to facilitate coding and thematic analysis of the collected data. After this, the generation of findings and insights from the document analysis to inform the development of the policy framework and recommendations for improving academic performance in South African basic education were implemented. It was essential for the study to use valid and relevant documents. Therefore, the researcher ascertained the authenticity of all the documents analysed in this study.

1.10 Data analysis

Data analysis methods were used to extract meaning from the raw data collected from the research participants through the data collection methods discussed above. Thematic data analysis was used to analyse the collected data. Thematic data analysis is a method used to analyse qualitative data (Creswell, 2015). The data collected from various sources were arranged to identify their features and characteristics. This process was guided by the research questions, as stated in section 1.4. The research questions helped the researcher to examine the data by first determining their relevance. This also allowed the researcher to analyse and review themes based on their interrelations (Creswell, 2009). The themes were described in relation to the research questions. Thematic data analysis was vital in this study because it extracted meaning from the empirical data (Welman & Kruger, 2001). The findings were used to answer the research questions and to develop the framework.

1.11 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations are crucial in research because they provide a benchmark for the moral behaviour of the researcher during the study. In other words, they underline the right and wrong behaviours that the researcher should note. The researcher should always respect the research ethical guidelines and standards when engaging with the

participants (Best & Kahn, 2006). How these ethical considerations were addressed in this study is discussed below.

Informed consent is crucial in research because it shows that the participants consented to participating in the study. The researcher is supposed to fully inform the participants about the study and allow them to decide whether they want to participate or not (Creswell, 2009). The participants were informed about the purpose of the study and asked to consent to their participation if they so wished. In terms of potential hazards or risks, the researcher expected the participants to hesitate to share opinions due to concerns about confidentiality. These concerns were mitigated through strict confidentiality measures. The participants were assured that their anonymity was guaranteed. Emotional discomfort, particularly when teachers and parents discussed challenges in the education system, was addressed by creating a supportive and empathetic environment. That process allowed the participants to skip answering certain questions or to withdraw if distressed.

The actual names and surnames of the participants were not used in the study. The researcher was guided by the North West University research ethical guidelines. The study was cleared by the Research Ethics Committee. The researcher also sought permission from the participants and other authorities. Participant data were kept in a secure personal computer with a personalised PIN and a lockable drawer. After analysing the collected data and compiling a report, the researcher shared the findings with the participants to enable them to compare them with their responses. The information collected in the study would be disposed of as per the NWU regulations. Triangulation enabled the researcher to assess the consistency of the findings with existing data. Monitoring procedures involved regular submission of progress reports to funders detailing the progress of the study. The study leaders gave feedback and guidance to ensure that the research stayed on track and that it met its objectives.

1.12 Significance of the study

This study is groundbreaking as it addresses persistent problems that are faced by the DBE in the Eastern Cape Province. The study helps to fill that existing gap in

knowledge regarding Public Administration and Management. There is a lack of research on interventions to address the challenges of poor academic performance by learners. The study is significant because it addresses part of that gap in the literature. Furthermore, there has not been much research designed to develop a sustainable governance framework for improved academic performance in the Eastern Cape Province despite the challenges facing the said province. Given the importance of human capital and skills development in the Eastern Cape province, the study is significant as it provides solutions to those challenges.

The study is also significant because it suggests repurposing the education sector in the Eastern Cape Province. The idea is to enable the province to satisfy the needs of learners and other stakeholders there. This is vital because the education sector is responsible for skilling citizens. Education also ensures that citizens have the knowledge and competencies needed in helping to develop the economy of the province. Education also helps to address the skills shortage affecting the Eastern Cape Province. This study is unique because it is designed to address a local developmental issue. Research shows that local economic development in the Eastern Cape Province relies on communities with competent and modern-skilled individuals. Solving the challenges facing the education department would enable the province to fulfil the objective of educating individuals who would contribute to local economic development in communities across the province. The study findings are undeniably important contributions to the current body of knowledge.

1.13 Limitations of the study

Limitations of the study refer to situations or circumstances that limit the quality of the study findings and the applicability of its results. In this regard, several limitations impacted the study results and its recommendations. These limitations included the subjective bias of the researcher, the data from the participants, access to information, and the study time frame. Since the research adopted a qualitative research methodology, which relied significantly on the subjective choices and judgement of the researcher, the research biases in selecting a population and a sample, data collection and analysis limited the study. The study was conducted in a cross-sectional time

horizon. This also limited the phenomenon studied as more time or a longitudinal time frame was needed to study it. The data from the participants' data also became a limitation here because the participants could provide poor or false information, impacting the quality of the study findings. The researcher had limited access to government documents and other information sources from the DBE. This is a significant limitation because the information missed might contain important insights.

1.14 Chapter layout

Chapter 1 introduces the study. It outlines the research background, discusses the research problem, lists the research questions and objectives and, provides preliminary literature review and research methodology used in this study. The chapter provides the study road map to facilitate easy reading.

In Chapter 2, the study reviews literature related to its topic. The main theories discussed in the chapter are human capital development, institutional, and morphogenetic theories. This chapter is important because it provides scholarly views about the basic education sector in South Africa and elsewhere.

The third chapter discusses the approaches, models, and trends in the school of governance. This chapter is important because it provides the background for the sustainable governance framework developed in Chapter 6 of this study.

The succeeding chapter outlines the research methodology and design adopted herein. In this chapter, the researcher discusses how sampling was conducted, data collected and analysed, and ethical issues that informed this study.

Chapter 5 interprets the data collected from the participants. This involves using thematic data analysis to code the collected data, identify patterns, develop and name themes, and report the findings.

The last chapter summarises the study and outlines its contribution by developing a sustainable governance framework model. Thereafter, recommendations to education sector stakeholders and further research are made based on the study findings.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2. 1 Introduction

A literature review constitutes a comprehensive investigation into contemporary studies and other similar works about a specific subject or research inquiry. Ordinarily, such a review encompasses the aggregation, analysis, and synthesis of scholarly articles, novels, dissertations, and other documents to derive insights regarding the current state of knowledge within a given field of study (Booth, Sutton, & Papaioannou, 2016). In the confines of this research, therefore, the literature review simultaneously functions as a navigational compass and a structural framework. The review delineates the principal area of interest in this study, fortifies arguments raised, and situates this inquiry within the expansive context of existing knowledge (Galvan, 2017). The educational landscape in the Eastern Cape Province faces many challenges. The said challenges include inadequate resources, substandard facilities, ineffective administration, and a notable lack of accountability. Education is undeniably a fundamental component of every community. Thus, education is key in shaping the future of individuals, collectives, and nations. Numerous obstacles, however, continue to adversely affect the quality and efficacy of education globally.

This section presents a comprehensive examination of the research area. The section delves into the predominant concerns that shape education. In the process, the section underscores the critical need for an effective governance framework within the educational system of the Eastern Cape Province in South Africa. These issues exert a direct influence on educational quality. The result is subpar academic performance, elevated dropout rates, and a deficit in skilled professionals. Moreover, the Eastern Cape education sector is marked by a notable absence of transparency and accountability. In turn, the above issues facilitate corruption and mismanagement of resources. This review draws upon case studies from a variety of global educational systems of both developed and developing nations. The section also scrutinises the shared obstacles encountered by the education systems in these regions. Notable

obstacles here consist of inadequate funding, deficient infrastructure, and ineffective management. The chapter also investigates the successful governance models and strategies that have been adopted in numerous countries. In doing so, the chapter offers valuable insights and lessons for potential improvement. Nonetheless, the implementation of the formulated strategies to counter the observed obstacles in education delivery is often hindered by systemic challenges. Systemic challenges make the implementation of mitigative strategies a complex endeavour. In view of the above and considering the hardships inherent in the Eastern Cape DBE, this literature review is anchored in three principal theoretical frameworks. These frameworks are human capital development, institutional theory, and morphogenetic theory.

The human capital development theory underscores the significance of education in cultivating the skills and knowledge of individuals. These are crucial for economic advancement and social progress. On the other hand, the Institutional theory elucidates the necessity of effective governance and leadership in moulding organisational culture and performance. Meanwhile, the morphogenetic theory deals with the dynamic interplay between structure and agency in influencing social and organisational transformation. In summary, this literature review offers a comprehensive overview of the issues affecting education. The review is narrowed down to the imperatives that underpin effective governance in the Eastern Cape schools and their parent department. The review draws from global case studies and theoretical frameworks. In this way, our comprehension of the intricate challenges that confront education is informed. Thus, potential solutions for enhancement are explored in that process. The chapter concludes by stressing the significance of a governance framework in fostering quality education and improving the overall performance of the educational sector.

The governance framework of the DBE has significantly evolved over time. That framework reflects the complexities of educational policy and administration. This evolution is not without its challenges, though. For instance, the historical context of governance in education has often been marked by tensions and conflicts. Although there have been attempts to create a cohesive structure, the multifaceted nature of the educational landscape necessitates ongoing adaptations to new systems. Due to

these dynamics, the framework should be understood in relation to various stakeholders and their interests. Such an interplay complicates the decision-making process. Consequent to that, the effectiveness of governance mechanisms could vary considerably. Notably, the influence of external factors, such as social and economic conditions, further complicate the governance landscape. Such an influence highlights the need for a nuanced understanding of the underlying issues. Ultimately, the framework serves as both a guide and a reflection of the values that underpin basic education in the Eastern Cape Province. That province grapples with the realities of implementation and accountability in its education sector.

The educational governance framework in South Africa possesses a convoluted and tumultuous historical trajectory. That trajectory is largely shaped by the transition of the nation from apartheid to a democratic society. The ramifications of apartheid have indelibly influenced the educational landscape. This has resulted in stark disparities in the quality of education, infrastructure, and available resources (DBE, 2020). During the apartheid epoch, educational opportunities were segregated, racialised, and hence inequitable. Black learners, for example, were subjected to an inferior educational experience when juxtaposed with their White counterparts (Mabizela, 2006). The Bantu Education Act of 1953 sought to condition black learners for menial labour, whereas their white counterparts were afforded an education tailored towards leadership roles and professional trajectories (Kallaway, 2002). That intended inequality engendered a considerable deficit of qualified teachers, deficient infrastructure, and a scarcity of resources within black schools. Furthermore, the Bantu Education Act of 1953 emerged as a foundational element of the educational policy of the National Party government. The policy endeavoured to furnish separate and substandard educational experiences for black South Africans. Here, the overarching objective was to equip black people for a lifetime marked by manual labour and servitude to the white minority (Department of Education (DE), 1996).

The enactment of that legislation instituted a system of education that was both separate and fundamentally unequal for black learners. That system was markedly inferior to that which was afforded to white learners. The curricula developed for black schools were intentionally crafted to restrict opportunities for learning and to reinforce

pervasive racial stereotypes. The curricula predominantly emphasised vocational training and rudimentary skills while neglecting critical thinking, creativity, and academic excellence. Subjects such as Mathematics and Sciences were frequently imparted at a rudimentary level. That was compounded by insufficient resources and antiquated materials. Black educational facilities were allocated significantly less funding than those serving white learners (DBE, 2020). Unfortunately for black learners, classrooms became overcrowded, facilities were inadequate, and there was a pervasive scarcity of essential resources. Essential resources included textbooks, desks and teaching and learning materials. Many black schools functioned within dilapidated infrastructure characterised by poor sanitation and severely limited access to electricity and potable water.

The apartheid regime systematically curtailed access to high-quality education for black South Africans. That curtailment included the intentional limitation of opportunities for black teachers to attain adequate training and certification. Subsequently, there emerged a pronounced deficiency of qualified teachers within black educational institutions. Many of these teachers were inadequately prepared, excessively burdened, and insufficiently compensated (DBE, 2020). The results of that were diminished morale and elevated attrition rates (DBE, 2020). Black learners encountered pervasive discrimination and segregation across all dimensions of their educational experiences. They were frequently barred from attending white schools and universities, irrespective of their academic proficiencies. Additionally, black schools were rigidly segregated, which resulted in minimal interaction between black and white learners. That scenario perpetuated racial divides and reinforced the tenets of white supremacy. Nevertheless, the cessation of apartheid signified a pivotal juncture in the educational landscape of South Africa. The newly established democratic government instituted policies that were designed to rectify historical disparities and foster equitable access to quality education for all (DE, 1996).

2.2 Key legislation and policies

It should be acknowledged that the educational governance framework in South Africa has so far experienced substantial transformations since the end of apartheid. Despite

notable progress, challenges persist. Accordingly, a comprehensive governance framework is essential to address these issues and guarantee quality education. Besides, the post-apartheid era in South Africa has witnessed a concerted effort to dismantle the structural inequalities perpetuated by the apartheid regime. Such effort has forged the path towards a more inclusive and equitable education system (Organisation for Economic Co-operation & Development (OECD), 2013). Central to this endeavour is the recognition that education is not merely a tool for imparting knowledge but rather a cornerstone of societal transformation. Education is capable of breaking the chains of intergenerational poverty to foster a culture of empowerment. One of the seminal pieces of legislation aimed at recalibrating the educational landscape was the South African Schools Act of 1996.

2.2.1 The South African Schools Act of 1996

The South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996) aims to develop a uniform and equitable ecosystem for funding and governing schools. The Act is also significant because it recognises the distinction between public and private schools. The Act was designed to democratise educational management and foster community involvement in schools. Conversely, the implementation of the act faces various challenges. Enshrining the principles of democracy and community participation, that legislation aimed to devolve decision-making authority to provinces and districts. The act also sought to empower schools with a certain degree of autonomy (OECD, 2013). Although the intent was clear, the practical implementation often faced challenges because local contexts varied significantly. That complexity underscores the need for careful consideration of local governance structures. The decentralisation of authority from the national government to provincial and district education departments signifies a paradigmatic shift from the top-down methodology typical of the apartheid era. The decentralisation underscores the significance of local context and community engagement in the management of education.

2.2.2 National Education Policy Act of 1996

The National Education Policy Act of (Act 27 of 1996) emphasised the commitment of the government to ensuring equal access to education. The commitment is irrespective of race, gender, or language. That process became the crucial aspect of fostering an inclusive educational environment. The said commitment helped to establish the foundational principles for cultivating a culture of inclusivity and diversity within the education system. That same process challenged the deep-seated notions of superiority and inferiority predicated on racial classifications. Notwithstanding these commendable initiatives, the enduring legacy of apartheid continues to cast a long shadow. That legacy manifests in persistent disparities in educational outcomes and opportunities. Inadequate infrastructure remains a pressing concern, particularly in marginalised communities where schools grapple with dilapidated buildings, overcrowded classrooms and a lack of basic amenities. This situation is exacerbated by systemic neglect. Although progress has been made, the journey towards equity and access remains fraught with challenges. This is because true inclusivity would remain elusive without addressing these fundamental issues. Regardless of the fact that the Act emphasised equal access to education irrespective of race, gender, or language, progress remains uneven across different provinces in South Africa. This inconsistency highlights the complexities inherent in educational reforms. That is, systemic issues often impede the realisation of these noble objectives.

2.2.3 Curriculum 2005

Curriculum 2005 aimed to establish a new framework centred on critical thinking, problem-solving, and inclusivity. Also, the enactment of Curriculum 2005 heralded a pedagogical transformation. The transformation moved away from rote memorisation towards a curriculum that is grounded in critical thinking, problem-solving, and inclusivity. By prioritising skills over mere content mastery, Curriculum 2005 sought to equip learners with the essential tools necessary to navigate an increasingly complex and interconnected world (Kallaway, 2002). The implementation of this curriculum was fraught with challenges. That illustrated the necessity for ongoing teacher training and support to effectively deliver the envisioned outcomes.

2.2.4 Post-apartheid basic education policies

Addressing these infrastructural deficiencies necessitates a multifaceted approach encompassing targeted investment, community engagement, and innovative solutions tailored to local contexts (World Bank, 2018). Nonetheless, teacher shortages loomed. The looming teacher shortages exacerbated educational quality disparities that perpetuated underachievement cycles. Efforts to attract and retain qualified teachers should be complemented by initiatives to enhance teacher training, professional development and support systems. That would ensure that every learner has access to high-quality instruction (Kallaway, 2002). The issue of educational quality extends beyond mere physical infrastructure to encompass the broader social and economic landscape. Schools in affluent areas often enjoy access to many resources. These resources include highly qualified teachers, state-of-the-art facilities, and extra-curricular opportunities. The existence of these disparities has the potential to compromise equitable educational experiences.

In comparison, educational institutions located in underprivileged communities grapple with an array of challenges. Those challenges encompass but are not limited to poverty, unemployment, social instability, and insufficient access to healthcare. Bridging this chasm necessitates a comprehensive approach to confronting the fundamental causes of inequality. Doing so also helps to cultivate a cooperative dynamic among governmental entities, civil society, and the private sector. In light of these adversities, the significance of effective governance mechanisms cannot be overstated. Such governance functions as a pivotal element for actualising the transformative potential of education. That transformative potential offers a framework for accountability, transparency, and stakeholder engagement. By nurturing a culture of collaboration and innovation, governance could empower communities to assume agency over their educational trajectories. By doing so, the government would propel a positive upward transformation from the grassroots level. Still, it is imperative to acknowledge that sound governance within educational systems enhances the efficacious delivery of educational services. Critical components such as appropriate standards, incentives, information, and accountability induce high performance from public providers. The multifaceted nature of these challenges requires sustained commitment and intervention.

In turn, the performance of sound providers elevates the standard of educational outputs, specifically the school retention rates. This contributes to enhanced outcomes such as the learner test scores. In this sense, it is essential to recognise the complexity of the relationship among these variables. The issue is that various factors influence both retention and academic achievement. There is a clear correlation here but one should not overlook the nuances involved in this dynamic.

Enhancing public performance represents a pivotal avenue for augmenting the returns on investments in public education (Lewis & Petterson, 2009). The effects of educational investments in developing and transitioning nations are conventionally evaluated through inputs and outputs. Focusing on inputs such as the number of teachers, the provision of textbooks, or aggregate educational outcomes (like literacy rates, enrolment figures and average years of education acquired) is indeed significant. Yet, that focus fails to adequately capture the performance metrics, fails to ascertain whether resources are effectively deployed, or does not evaluate the efficiency with which resources are utilised. Performance measurement poses considerable challenges. In contrast, though, performance measurement remains essential for educational systems to fulfil their objectives as well as to secure reasonable returns on public investments. By leveraging good governance as a strategic entry point, stakeholders could concentrate on enhancing performance in delivering educational services. Doing so equips policy-makers and programme managers with a solid foundation to elevate performance standards (Lewis & Petterson, 2009). The same could also mitigate disparities in educational provision, provided that interventions are appropriately targeted. So, the endeavour to cultivate a more inclusive and equitable educational system in South Africa is replete with obstacles. Yet, it is equally infused with potential.

Through harnessing the collective will and ingenuity of its populace, South Africa could delineate a novel trajectory towards a future where every child is afforded the chance to realise their potential and contribute meaningfully to society. Nevertheless, the performance of basic education in the Eastern Cape Province remains a complex challenge. To address that challenge, many efforts are underway even though significant disparities persist. Various social and economic factors exacerbate that situation. That is due to the progres being hindered without addressing those underlying issues.

2.2.5 Post-apartheid education policies in the Eastern Cape

The Eastern Cape Province is often perceived as a predominantly rural and economically disadvantaged region. The province frequently receives a substantial portion of the national budget designated for basic education. That allocation is contrasted with consistently disappointing learner outcomes. Improving basic education performance in the Eastern Cape Province is crucial for mitigating poverty and inequality (South African Government, 2013). Cameron and Levy (2016) and Kota, Hendricks, Matambo, and Naidoo (2017) delineated three reasons that underscore the importance of enhancing educational performance in that province. Firstly, education is not merely a privilege but a fundamental right that every child should possess. Education is essential to ensure access to quality learning experiences. Secondly, education plays a pivotal role in economic growth and development. Education equips learners with the requisite skills to become productive future workers and leaders. Thirdly, improving educational outcomes in the Eastern Cape Province serves as a mechanism for reducing poverty and inequality. Education acts as a powerful catalyst for social mobility.

Enhancing the performance of basic education in the Eastern Cape Province is essential for reasons that are both social and economic in nature. The significance of this endeavour is underscored by various scholarly articles and reports, which illuminate the challenges besetting the education system in that region. One salient aspect pertains to the role of education in fostering social development and equity. Reddy et al. (2012) posit that a robust basic education system is fundamental for mitigating social and economic disparities and promoting inclusivity. In the Eastern Cape Province with historical inequalities, addressing educational shortcomings is a cornerstone for dismantling barriers to progress and creating a more just society. Fleisch (2008) highlighted the pivotal role of basic education in shaping the trajectories of individuals and communities. In the Eastern Cape Province, where there are high levels of poverty and unemployment, a well-functioning education system could serve as a catalyst for empowering individuals. This would break the cycle of poverty and contribute to overall economic development. Doing so has its challenges. The systemic issues require comprehensive solutions while the potential benefits are substantial.

Literature elucidates the intricate interconnectedness between educational attainment and health outcomes. Case and Paxson (2008) indicated that enhanced education is correlated with improved health outcomes. These are at the individual and community levels. The Eastern Cape Province has health disparities that are particularly pronounced. Augmenting basic education there could yield far-reaching effects on public health. That would contribute to a healthier and more resilient population. Moreover, the economic ramifications of a well-functioning educational system are underscored in the works of Hanushek and Woessmann (2012). Their research emphasises the positive correlation between the quality of education and economic productivity. In the Eastern Cape Province, addressing educational deficiencies could potentially stimulate economic growth. That would be by equipping the workforce with the requisite skills for a knowledge-based economy.

Despite the critical significance of tackling educational challenges in the Eastern Cape Province, a report issued by the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) (2019) underscores persistent issues. Those issues are infrastructure deficiencies, teacher shortages, and inadequate learning resources. Those challenges necessitate targeted interventions to create an enabling environment for effective learning. Improving basic education performance in the Eastern Cape Province is imperative not only for fostering social cohesion but also for reducing inequalities. Reducing inequalities enhances economic productivity in order to improve overall health outcomes. Here, the emphasis is on the multifaceted benefits associated with a well-functioning education system. Underscored here is the urgency of comprehensive and sustained efforts to address the identified challenges in the province. While these issues are complex, their endeavour is crucial because it lastingly impacts the future of the province.

2.3 Conceptual framework

This section deals with the conceptual framework of the study. The focus is on defining key terms, outlining the relationship between governance and educational performance, and the review of contemporary models of school governance.

2.3.1 Definition of terms

The governance framework could be conceptualised as the constellation of policies, regulations, and legal statutes that steer the management and decision-making processes within an organisation or governmental body. In the educational arena, the framework pertains to the policies and regulations that dictate the management and decision-making dynamics of the educational system (Burns, Koster, & Fuster, 2016). The performance of basic education is characterised by the calibre of educational services rendered to learners during the formative years of their academic journey. Their performance could be quantitatively assessed through various metrics. Those metrics are, *inter alia*, accessibility, efficiency, and the overall quality of outcomes. In educational parlance, accessibility denotes the proportion of learners who gain enrolment in educational institutions. Efficiency pertains to the ratio of learners who complete their studies within the prescribed timeline (Langer, Tripney, & Gough, 2016). Although quality of education encompasses the depth of knowledge and skills that learners acquire throughout their educational experience, it is crucial to recognise that these metrics are intertwined, thereby influencing each other in complex ways.

2.4 The relationship between governance and educational performance

Governance encompasses the systems, institutions, and processes that are responsible for shaping and regulating educational frameworks. This includes notable policies, funding, and oversight mechanisms. The outcomes derived from these educational systems (termed educational performances) encompass various dimensions such as learner achievement, graduation rates, and school quality. These elements are interrelated. That is why understanding their dynamics is essential. Their dynamics influence the overall efficacy of educational initiatives. Thus, the complexity of their interdependence cannot be overstated.

A substantial corpus of scholarship posits that effective governance might exert a favourable influence on educational performance (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2023; Zhao & Wang, 2020; Godana, Nkaabu, & Rintari, 2019; Brian & Shumane, 2018). For example, policies that prioritise funding for educational institutions, along with teacher

training and support services, could significantly enhance educational outcomes (Zindi & Sibanda, 2023). On top of that, oversight and accountability mechanisms are also instrumental in identifying and rectifying areas where educational systems might falter. Improvements could be instituted to mitigate these deficiencies. There exist scenarios in which governance might adversely affect educational performance. This becomes so when the education system is ineffective or misaligned with the exigencies of learners and educational institutions (Zhao & Wang, 2020). For instance, policies that emphasise standardised testing and punitive measures for underperforming schools might not yield the desired enhancement in educational outcomes. Instead, they could foster a culture of fear and evasion that undermines the integrity of the educational experience. Effective governance, therefore, could serve as a pivotal juncture for elevating institutional performance in the provision of educational services.

Effective governance significantly influences the performance of higher education institutions (HEIs) in a favourable manner, leading to enhanced outcomes. It propels performance in the quest for knowledge while simultaneously managing the inherent risks. Good governance serves to concentrate on performance in educational service delivery. Such concentration equips policymakers and programme managers with a framework for elevating performance (Lewis & Petterson, 2009). The calibre of decision-making is established through good governance. Good governance empowers universities to navigate relationships among stakeholders to ensure sustainability. Contrary, the complexity of governance is exacerbated. This is because the policy landscape in higher education continuously evolves. Good governance could inform and facilitate decision-making processes to allow universities to flourish.

Effective governance and educational efficacy constitute a complex and multifaceted domain. This means that there remains a significant amount to learn about the viable solutions to enhance both good governance and elevated performance in education (Lewis & Petterson, 2009). In short, good governance has the propensity to assume a pivotal role in augmenting educational performance. It offers a framework for decision-making to ensure accountability and management of relationships among stakeholders. These elements are essential, but their interplay is intricate. That intricacy demands further exploration due to the continued development of the dynamics of the educational systems.

2.5 Governance in education

Since the previous section outlined the relationship between governance and educational performance, Section 2.5 discusses other aspects of governance and how they impact education and learners' performance. The discussion provides the basis for evaluating governance frameworks in Section 6.

2.5.1 The impact of governance on performance in educational systems

Governance plays a key role in determining the effectiveness of educational systems. In particular, good governance enhances the effective delivery of educational services. Critical components comprise proper norms, incentives, knowledge, and accountability. These components collectively foster optimal performance from public providers. Thereafter, sound performance by these providers enhances educational outputs (school retention rates, for example). They could also contribute to improved outcomes (student test scores). While incentives, information, and accountability are essential, standards also hold considerable importance. One method to augment the returns on investments made in public education is through the enhancement of public performance. For that reason, it is critical to recognise that standards, information, incentives, and accountability are an integral part of achieving high performance (OECD, 2018). Good governance in education incorporates the manner in which a school system formulates policies, generates and expends funds, prepares teachers for instruction, designs curricula, and manages the school populace. This multi-dimensional nature of governance requires thoughtful consideration as it directly influences the educational landscape.

Governance in education relates to the mechanisms of decision-making within the educational systems (OECD, 2018). These mechanisms cover the institutions and dynamics through which these systems allocate roles and responsibilities. They also establish priorities and design as well as execute educational policies and programmes (OECD, 2018). The evaluation of educational investments in the Global South predominantly focuses on inputs and outputs. Missing from the educational agenda are performance metrics that accurately reflect whether educational systems achieve their objectives or not (OECD, 2018). Added here is whether public resources

are utilised appropriately and whether governmental priorities are effectively implemented (OECD, 2018).

The OECD (2018) articulated that policy priorities about governance were more prominently identified within educational systems than any other subject matter analysed. The report also outlined the most frequently noted governance-related policy priorities between 2008 and 2019. These embraced achieving a clear and balanced division of responsibility among national and local authorities and schools, defining national education priorities and goals, and engaging a broader spectrum of stakeholders. In addition, good governance is a significant determinant in enhancing the quality of education. On the other hand, poor governance precipitates numerous challenges within the educational frameworks of developing nations. In this view, governance plays an indispensable role in educational systems. Good governance could facilitate improvements in institutional performance regarding the delivery of educational services. Conspicuously, standards, information, incentives, and accountability constitute essential elements of effective governance in education (OECD, 2017). This underlines the notion that good governance is a major factor in ameliorating the quality of education.

Inadequate governance engenders a multitude of issues within the educational frameworks of the Global South nations. Contrariwise, effective governance serves as a fundamental component in realising educational aspirations. That is because effective governance encapsulates the duties of entities such as government officials (policy architects), educational leaders, service providers, learners, parents, and the broader citizenry. Governance refers to the mechanisms through which decision-making transpires in educational systems (Patrinos & Fasih, 2009). It contains the institutions and dynamics that dictate the allocation of roles and responsibilities (OECD, 2018). Governance establishes priorities, designs curricula, and implements educational policies and initiatives (OECD, 2018). Good governance is articulated by Kaufmann, Kraay and Mastruzzi (2007, 2004) as the "traditions and institutions by which authority in a country is exercised for the common good,". This explanation embodies respect for the state, the administrative capacity of the government, and the process of appointing individuals to positions of authority. These elements are

undeniably significant and might even be essential for the economic and social prosperity of the country. That being the case, though, they, unfortunately, do not suffice, nor are they strictly necessary to ensure the efficient delivery of public education.

Fostering conducive conditions for exemplary governance in education necessitates the existence of standards, performance metrics, and incentives for outstanding achievement. Most crucial, though, accountability remains paramount. The predominant trends (observed consistently) in governance policy evolution from 2008 to 2019 were initiatives aimed at refining the formal structures of the education system and reviewing its objectives. These developments are significant, but they often encounter resistance due to various systemic factors. This complexity foregrounds the need for a nuanced understanding of the interrelations among these elements. This is particularly so because effective governance could be stymied by a lack of clarity in policies. Based on the aforementioned insights, one could deduce that governance significantly influences the performance of educational systems. It is then imperative to establish transparent policies and regulations at the national level. Doing that would provide a cohesive, multi-tiered framework for education.

The delegation of governance to sub-national and school levels could foster local participation and accountability (Abdelaziz, 2022). Abdelaziz (2022) posits that effective management and oversight of public schools and their governing bodies are essential to guarantee the fulfilment of their powers and functions. Regular monitoring and evaluation of educational outcomes could also assist in pinpointing areas necessary for improvement and policy adjustments. Collaboration among government entities, civil society, and additional stakeholders is crucial to promote inclusive development and enhance educational outcomes for all learners. Governance within the education sector involves the institutions and dynamics through which educational systems allocate roles and responsibilities (Supriadi, Usman, Jabar, & Widyastuti, 2021). It also establishes priorities and designs and implements educational policies and programmes (Supriadi et al., 2021).

The practice of coordinating institutions, processes, and norms to facilitate collective decision-making and action is key. Good governance in education is essential for enhancing the development and accountability of schools. It also plays a critical role in legitimising schools as respected institutions. While Supriadi et al. (2021) assert that governance in education is a process that entails managing schools to bolster both their development and accountability, it is equally vital for elevating institutional performance in the provision of educational services. This is a major factor in improving the quality of education to achieve educational objectives. Meanwhile, governance in educational systems is instrumental in shaping the overall performance and effectiveness of the education sector. It encompasses diverse structures, intricate processes, and mechanisms through which decisions are made and subsequently implemented in educational institutions.

The exploration of diverse governance models and frameworks employed in education systems worldwide is a complex endeavour because other factors, such as cultural, economic, and political contexts, shape these models. The effectiveness of each framework could significantly vary. That is, some systems prioritise centralised control, leading to uniformity in educational standards. Seen differently, this could also stifle local innovation. Alternatively, decentralised models promote autonomy among institutions. Then again, some institutions might struggle with consistency in quality. In respect of these intricacies, it becomes imperative to comprehensively analyse the implications of each model. Such an analysis might reveal that while there is no one-size-fits-all approach, understanding the nuances of each framework is essential for fostering effective educational outcomes.

2.6 Models of school governance

Numerous paradigms of educational governance exist. Each operates within the context of various educational frameworks. The first to be mentioned here is the Operational Model (OM). Using this model, the school board assumes responsibility for the quotidian operations of the school district. This board is intricately involved in the management of the district. It renders decisions regarding staffing, budgeting, and other operational concerns. The second one is the Managerial Model (MM). For this

framework, the school board delegates the majority of operational duties to the superintendent or other administrative personnel. The primary focus of the board shifts towards establishing policies and objectives for the district. The board also monitors the progress achieved in relation to these objectives. The third model is the Traditional Model (TM). In this context, the school board is charged with the decision-making process about the policies and operations of the district. The board engages in all facets of the workings of the district, maintaining substantial control over its functions. The fourth model is the Policy Model (PM). Within this construct, the school board formulates policies and sets objectives for the district. The board delegates the task of enacting these policies to the superintendent or other administrative staff. The board subsequently oversees progress towards these goals and makes necessary adjustments as circumstances dictate (Mestry, 2006).

The models in question are not mutually exclusive. Rather, many school boards opt for a combination of these frameworks in order to effectively govern their respective districts. The selection of a governance model is contingent upon the specific needs and priorities of the district. This is in addition to the preferences of both the school board and the community. It is imperative for school boards to select a governance model that is capable of helping them to effectively and efficiently achieve the objectives and aspirations of the community. Effective governance structures could lead to superior educational outcomes. Such structures play a pivotal role in influencing the quality of educational results. In essence, an effective governance framework serves as the backbone of an educational system. It ensures that policies are not only well-formulated but that resources are also allocated appropriately and that all stakeholders are held accountable (Somudorov, 2023). This creates a conducive environment for teaching and learning. It also provides an environment that is ripe for continuous improvement. Ultimately, these culminate in enhanced educational outcomes. Effective governance structures are essential for the enhancement of educational results.

Some key insights emerge here, vis; the influence of school board governance on academic achievement was scrutinised by Michael Ford (2013). That scrutiny revealed that the manner in which school boards operate significantly impacts district-level performance. School boards that partake in strategic planning exhibit a positive

correlation with academic achievement. Then again, the Education Commission of the States offers an extensive array of resources regarding governance structures across early childhood, K-12, and post-secondary education (Ford, 2013). These resources endeavour to elucidate the diverse state models that prevail and provide crucial guidance for enhancing governance frameworks. A report published by OECD iLibrary delineates the evolution of policy priorities regarding education governance from 2008 to 2019. That report emphasised the necessity of refining the formal structures of educational systems to provide more efficient decision-making processes. The report further emphasised the establishment of ambitious yet measurable objectives. It hammered on the need to foster the engagement of a broader spectrum of stakeholders. Now that the landscape of education governance is complex, achieving these goals is a mammoth task. Although improvements are possible, the interplay of various factors complicates the implementation of effective governance strategies.

The governance framework of educational institutions and its consequential effects on learner achievement are subjects of significant inquiry. Zhao made a comparative analysis that examined the ramifications of various school governance structures on learner performance across four provinces in China vis-a-vis nations that excelled in the PISA 2015 assessment. The findings suggest that the authoritative influence wielded by principals, teachers, and other stakeholders in shaping pivotal school decisions could substantially affect learner development. Similarly, the Research Gate investigation revealed that the specific configuration of state education governance structures might shape educational policies as well as learner outcomes. Nonetheless, this relationship is complex and multipronged. A comprehensive study by Brookings, titled Education Governance for the Twenty-First Century, evaluates the persisting strengths and weaknesses within the remnants of traditional governance in education. That study scrutinises the evolution of conventional governance models. It posits that although modifications have occurred, further alterations in governance arrangements are essential to enhance educational outcomes for learners (Ford, 2013).

Effective governance structures could meaningfully enhance educational outcomes as they streamline decision-making processes. Those structures also set ambitious and measurable goals, which could engage a greater variety of stakeholders. This polygonal approach is essential for improving academic achievement. Challenges

might arise in its implementation. That being so, one must consider that the success of such structures often depends on the commitment of all parties involved. Doing so fosters crucial collaboration.

2.7 Role players in the school governance

The primary school governance role players in South Africa are the SGBs, parents, learners, teachers, principals, and the community. Modisaotsile (2012) states that the post-apartheid educational system, particularly the SASA, designed a system of cooperation among stakeholders and citizen participation in ensuring that basic education meets the needs of a transformative society.

2.7.1 SGBs

Before the SASA, which introduced SGBs in school administration, school governance involved school authorities (principals, deputy principals, and inspectors) (Brian & Shumane, 2018). These made most of the administrative decisions without consulting other stakeholders (Brian & Shumane, 2018). The result was an administrative system that excluded key stakeholders parents, communities, learners, and teachers from decision-making and planning (Modisaotsile, 2012). The SASA transformative drive incorporated other key stakeholders in the administration and governance of schools (Modisaotsile, 2012). Therefore, the SGBs are now an eminent structure in school governance. Their roles and duties are articulated in the SASA document. For example, an SGB is expected to comprise the school principal, learners, teachers, and parents (Mohapi et al., 2021). SGBs were established and included in the education sector as a tool for managing school administration (Modisaotsile, 2012). SGBs are a vehicle for ensuring that schools are governed in the best interests of stakeholders. This ensures that the selfish interests of particular individuals or groups do not override the basic expectations of schools. Basic expectations are improved learner performance, high learning standards, and good school administration, among others (Kota et al., 2018). In addition, SGBs ensure that school policies and strategies are

aligned with the policies of the DBE. Hence, the SGBs ensure compliance with educational policies (Khanyile & Mpuangnan, 2024).

Since an SGB compromises diverse people, it ensures that the selfish interests of a few people are not promoted at the expense of the school. This contrasts school governance during apartheid when some interests were not represented or promoted. The results were schools that only favoured influential individuals and groups of people. While the SGBs are crucial structures in school governance, existing evidence indicates that their prolonged weaknesses impede their performance and impact on education. For example, they are sidelined from school governance and administration processes because most of their members are deemed untrained and inexperienced, especially in technical areas of the school administration, such as finance (Modisaotsile, 2012).

2.7.2 Teachers

Kota et al. (2018) indicated that teachers are involved in school governance in South African schools. They are key stakeholders and participants in school governance because they are responsible for educating learners (Brian & Shumane, 2018). Teachers in the Eastern Cape Province have labour rights as granted by the Labour Relations Act. To this end, their right to strike, freedom of association, and other rights are protected. Brian and Shuman (2018) stated that most teachers belong to two trade unions, SADTU and NAPTOSA. The participatory system adopted in the new basic education system makes teachers a pivotal part of ensuring accountability in schools. Bantwini and Moorosi (2022) acknowledge that teachers are essential in school governance because they interact with various stakeholders (learners, parents, SBGs, and principals). Teachers are also responsible for teaching learners according to the standards, guidelines, and protocols of the DBE. This makes them a crucial part of school governance. It is also practical to include teachers in the governance system because they usually recognise and understand challenges in that sector. To exemplify, teachers are the first to detect the poor performance of learners or the effects of poor infrastructure and a lack of resources.

The Eastern Cape province has a teacher deployment and distribution challenge. That shortfall results in an unbalanced demand and supply. Kota et al. (2018) reasoned that the imbalance results from poor governance and the interference of trade unions that represent teachers. This worsens the state of education in the province, especially in rural areas. The province also experiences high teacher turnover, resulting in fewer teachers for a growing number of learners (Mohammed, 2024). As of 2018, the Eastern Cape Province had the lowest ratio of teachers to school (11.8). Regarding teachers in the Eastern Cape schools, Lombo and Subban (2024) state that effective governance is crucial. Effective governance promotes the well-being of teachers by ensuring that adequate resources are available and a conducive working environment.

2.7.3 Learners

Learners are a focal point in the Eastern Cape schools because they are the direct beneficiaries of the education resources, manpower, and planning done by the education department in there. Learners are also used to measure performance in the province (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2023). For example, when school enrolment falls, matric pass decreases. When dropouts surpass previous years, stakeholders point to that as evidence of weaknesses in the school governance system or poor performance by the key stakeholders (Moleko & Xulu-Gama, 2024; Brian & Shumane, 2018). Bantwini and Moorosi (2023) assert that schools should meet the basic education needs of the learners as stipulated by the Constitution. Failure to do so could result in legal consequences since the school would be violating one of the key human rights in South Africa. Nevertheless, Bantwini and Moorosi (2023) indicate that this provision from the Constitution is not always easy to implement due to scarce resources. That tends to discourage schools from enrolling all learners who should be at school.

2.7.4 The community

The current participatory basic education system incorporates the broader community in school governance. That is because communities are impacted by the school's performance. In this way, communities could be positioned to increase accountability

and effectiveness in school administration (Brian & Shumane, 2018). This is important for school accountability and the performance of learners. It positions schools as communal assets jointly owned by the community for the common good. This sense of ownership and belonging is important for the development of schools. Once the community owns an asset, it works towards its betterment and improvement (Brian & Shumane, 2018). The state of the community, for example, their social and economic status, bears on school governance. Schools in affluent communities are better resourced and supported. Feeder communities could afford to pay school fees and other requirements. In contrast, deprived communities struggle to support their schools. Such communities have “no fee schools”, resulting in less access to resources and community support (Brian & Shumane, 2018). Kota et al. (2018) explained that the Eastern Cape Province has 23 school districts that comprise diverse schools in different communities. There is a severe divide between schools in urban and rural communities because the former are well-resourced while the latter suffer from pitiable resources and infrastructure.

2.7.5 Principals

Principals are the accounting officers in schools. They are responsible for implementing education policies. Principals also ensure that education outcomes are consistent with the expectations of all stakeholders (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2023). Before SASA introduced the current basic education school governance system, principals were the ultimate decision-makers. Modisaotsile (2012) argued that this was a top-down school management and governance approach that lacked effective mechanisms for consultations and feedback. The transformative and participatory approach introduced by the SASA has not excluded principals in school governance. Instead, it included other stakeholders to ensure that diverse views and interests are represented in schools. This is essential since schools are regarded as community assets jointly owned by stakeholders impacted by their operations (Modisaotsile, 2012). Mestry (2006) maintained that principals still struggle to collaborate with other partners (SGBS) in school governance. Principals fear that collaborations threaten their power and influence (Mestry, 2006). This illustrates the clash of interests among partners in school governance. Maile (2002) elucidates the contestations between

parents and principals since the latter were used to being the sole decision-makers. In the face of collaborating and partnering with other stakeholders in school governance, school principals remain the prime accounting officers (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2023).

2.7.6 Department of Basic Education

The DBE consists of public leaders, professionals, officials, and education experts employed by the government. The current department was established when the Department of Education was split into two, the DBE and the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). The idea was to streamline services to meet modern trends and developments in the education sector. The DBE is responsible for implementing basic education policies in schools from Grade R to Grade 12. Adult literacy education falls under the DBE (van der Merwe, 2012). The primary objective of the DBE is to ensure that educational standards in basic schools are consistent with existing policies. Van der Merwe (2012) explained that the DBE ensures that the right to basic education for learners and adults contained in the Constitution (see section 29) is fulfilled. Although the Constitution does not provide a definition of basic education, the responsible Minister is traditionally guided by international norms of basic education in this regard. Basic education includes education from Grade R (or pre-school) to Grade 12. Basic education also includes programmes designed to improve the literacy and numeracy of adults. Matlou, Malatji, and Mphahlele (2024) reasoned that the DBE could provide training and support to SGB members. That would enable the SGBs to effectively conduct their duties. The aim here is to improve the functioning of schools. Another mandate of the SGBs is to increase school performance. Currently, data show that most of the SGBs do not have the required skills to effectively manage and run schools to successful levels.

2.8 School governance in the Eastern Cape Province

In post-apartheid South Africa, school governance is designed to transform the education sector in line with the ethos of the new Constitution. Authorities in this sector

acknowledge that during apartheid, education was used as a tool to discriminate against Blacks. It was used to safeguard the interests of the white minority groups at the expense of equity and social development. Incidentally, education in the apartheid era was segregated, non-inclusive, and mostly catered for the interests of a small minority of white people (Mohapi et al., 2021; Xaba, 2011). Post-apartheid school governance in South Africa is transformative (Maile, 2002). Given the history of school governance in South Africa, contemporary governance is regarded as one of the most crucial pillars of education. That is so because school governance is at the core of most school challenges. This view about South African school governance assumes that addressing the governance challenges in schools could significantly improve their administration and performance (Xaba, 2011). In this sense, school governance is crucial as it ensures that specific policies are implemented to increase performance. This is particularly true for public schools. The government uses them as a conduit for providing a conducive environment for acquiring good-quality education (Lokuwaduge & Armstrong, 2015). School governance in South Africa is participatory. It involves several players with diverse interests and common goals (Modisaotsile, 2012). A typical school involves learners, educators, principals, parents, and the community. While these role players have diverse interests, their common goal is to have a functional and effective school that produces good results.

The above reflects a model of collaborative or collective leadership. This model of school governance utilises existing structures and systems to empower individuals and groups previously excluded from school governance. Included here is the empowerment of learners, communities, and parents in school governance (Hallinger & Heck, 2010). That approach to school management is reflective of an increase in the involvement of various stakeholders in school governance in South Africa. The model also denotes that schools have moved away from an autocratic leadership style to a democratic and inclusive system of school management (Mestry et al., 2008).

School governance in the Eastern Cape Province was transformed after 1994 in line with the political transition at the time. Since then, the policies and shortcomings of the ANC-led government have impacted school governance (Kota et al., 2018). The impact has resulted in poor performance among learners and deteriorating schools (Kota et al., 2018). The governance of schools in that province is similar to that of other

provinces, namely the Gauteng and the Western Cape. The governance system covers institutions, communities, and individuals involved in education or who consume public school services (Brian & Shumane, 2018). It also contains the protocols, structures, systems, norms, and mechanisms designed by education authorities or regulators (the Department of Education or policy-makers). These steer, control, or manage the implementation of education policies in various education sectors (Maile, 2002). That form of micro or institutional-level governance ensures that various role players interact and work together to develop schools. A more pressing objective is to promote basic educational goals such as the performance of learners (Brian & Shumane, 2018). Effective governance is crucial because it impacts the performance of learners and the quality of school administration. It is indispensable to develop sound governance systems. Doing so would ensure that education policies are implemented. Once education policies are effectively implemented, public schools will most likely meet the standards expected by learners, parents, and policy-makers (Mohapi, Chombo, & Hamid, 2021).

2.8.1 Governance challenges facing schools in the Eastern Cape Province

Chirowamhangu (2022:1) observed that the Eastern Cape education department governance is in a state of “political cannibalism”. Modisaotsile (2012) decried the crisis unfolding in the education sector. The Right to Basic Education, as stated in the Constitutional Bill of Rights, is under threat in the Eastern Cape due to various governance challenges (Chirowamhangu, 2022). This is a serious matter of concern to her. The Constitution reaffirms that basic education is the basis for improving the attainment of social and economic rights by citizens. Education is essential for improving the lives of people in light of past discriminatory policies. Those policies contributed to the impoverishment of black people. Poor education has severely impacted communities.

One of the key governance challenges in the Eastern Cape schools is that the provincial government is extremely weak and ineffective. That weakness deprives schools in the province of competent leadership, funding, books, infrastructure,

furniture, and school facilities. Also affected here is the support required to further train teachers, performance management, and policy direction. The outcome here is dysfunctional and deteriorating schools that produce academically weak learners (Ndungane et al., 2024; Zindi & Sibanda, 2023; Brian & Shuman, 2018). The resulting challenge here is the lack of accountability in the public education system. The ripple effects amount to several challenges that end up being faced by the Eastern Cape Province. To counter those problems that border on political interference, corruption, and lack of support, stricter accountability is required. Lack of essential resources like furniture, infrastructure, training and skills development for teachers is also part of the chronic problems there (Brian & Shumane, 2018).

“Political cannibalism” in the Eastern Cape Province refers to a governance ideology of selfishly seeking political order at the expense of impacting the access to education by learners (Chirowamhangu, 2022:1). The end game to that is the crisis that is experienced in schools in the province (Chirowamhangu, 2022:1). Governance issues like poor leadership and political interference have a direct impact on performance in schools. They lead to poor access to resources, maladministration, poor accountability and limited access to training and skills among teachers (Brian & Shumane, 2018; Kota et al., 2018). Chirowamhangu (2022) argues that existing challenges that include the health hazard from pit latrines, poor infrastructure, and failure to effectively implement education policies signify poor governance and selfishly seeking political power at the expense of meeting the needs of the people.

Sahoo and Bishnoi (2016) understand that maintaining physical infrastructure, monitoring, and evaluation are key elements of governance. Needless to say, that evidence shows poor monitoring by the provincial government. This has resulted in poor infrastructure, especially in rural schools. These government shortcomings result in poor performance among learners. Incidentally, most of the poorly performing schools in the province are in rural areas (Lombo & Subban, 2024). Kota et al. (2018) believe that most of the challenges in the education department in the province emanate from politicising the provincial governmental resources and authority. The factional battles within the ruling party in the province impact the performance of schools. That is because each faction ensures that its members are elected to the

SGB in their area to increase their influence. Politicisation impacts accountability and financial management.

2.9 Challenges hindering learner performance in Eastern Cape schools

The Eastern Cape Province grapples with a plethora of obstacles pertaining to its educational system. These challenges are particularly pronounced in the domains of infrastructure and resources. Numerous educational institutions in the Eastern Cape Province suffer from a dearth of adequate infrastructure and critical resources. This deficiency manifests itself in the form of insufficient classrooms, libraries, laboratories and a scarcity of instructional materials (Graduate School of Development Policy and Practice, 2017). Poor infrastructure has negatively impacted the learning environment, thereby hindering educational outcomes. The province also faces significant teacher shortages and issues concerning quality. The scarcity of qualified teachers results in inflated class sizes. Inflated class sizes complicate the delivery of personalised instruction to learners. Discrepancies exist in the quality of teaching, which ultimately affect the overall educational experience.

Poverty and social and economic factors exacerbate these challenges. The high prevalence of poverty in the Eastern Cape Province correlates with issues such as inadequate nutrition and limited access to educational resources at home. That condition increases the likelihood of learners withdrawing from school to economically support their families. While these challenges are daunting, they necessitate immediate and concerted efforts to improve the educational landscape in the Eastern Cape Province.

The absence of a reliable transport system affects numerous learners in rural locales. Learners there encounter significant challenges in accessing educational institutions owing to considerable distances and insufficient transport means (Parliament of South Africa, 2017). That predicament translates to irregular attendance. In certain instances, pronounced dropout rates are observed (Parliament of South Africa, 2017). Language barriers in certain communities confront learners as linguistic obstacles. This is especially common when the medium of instruction is not the primary language

of the learner. Faced with such a situation, the learners are impeded in their learning due to ineffective communication and comprehension of the curricula. Lack of parental involvement is another obstacle faced by learners in rural Eastern Cape schools. Less parental involvement in school matters amounts to the limited engagement of parents in the educational process. That adversely affects the academic performance of such learners. Factors such as low literacy rates among parents and the want of awareness regarding the significance of education exacerbate that issue. High dropout rates in the province are the outcome of a relatively dysfunctional schooling system, particularly in secondary schools (Kosie, 2022). It also signifies a failed community in the proper upbringing of children. The phenomenon is often associated with social and economic factors, diminished motivation, and the perception that education might not yield viable employment opportunities. Disadvantaged schools speak of the Eastern Cape Province education system that diverges from that of other provinces. It houses several disadvantaged schools, especially in rural areas.

The South African educational framework is marked by deteriorating infrastructure, congested classrooms, and the privation of adequate educational facilities (Chawula, 2021). This difficulty is especially pronounced in the Eastern Cape, where the absence of fundamental amenities such as sanitation has tragically resulted in the demise of two children in pit latrines in recent years. Overcrowding remains a significant hurdle in numerous educational institutions in the Eastern Cape Province. Crowded classrooms could severely impair the teaching and learning process. It is undeniable that the province has undergone extensive governmental reorganisation after 1994. This has led to the ineffective governance of the educational system. In fact, South Africa possesses one of the most unequal educational systems globally. Such an awkward situation is epitomised by the top 200 schools producing more distinctions in Mathematics than the next 6 600 schools combined. This disparity is particularly glaring in the Eastern Cape Province. Here, learners drop out in large numbers, compelling the education department to resort to the closure of these institutions.

Addressing these challenges necessitates a holistic approach. An approach that incorporates investment in infrastructure, teacher training, community engagement, and policies tailored to the distinctive exigencies of the Eastern Cape Province

(Parliament of South Africa, 2017). The Eastern Cape Province confronts numerous complications with respect to basic educational performance. These concern disadvantaged schools, inadequate facilities, overcrowding, teacher shortages, poor governance, and an inequitable schooling system. Infrastructure, teacher quality, curricula, funding, and learner outcomes cannot be overlooked. These elements are interrelated and critical to fostering improvement.

2.9.1 Infrastructure

The Eastern Cape Province confronts numerous challenges pertaining to inadequate infrastructure in rural areas. Such inadequacies adversely affect the learning environment. Insufficient classrooms, a lack of proper sanitation facilities, and restricted access to technology substantially hinder the overall educational experience (Biney, Selebalo, & Borman, 2021). Teacher quality is paramount for the effective teaching and learning process. The Eastern Cape Province has witnessed fluctuations in teaching quality because of factors such as uneven distribution of qualified teachers, insufficient training and lack of resources. Addressing these issues is not merely important. It is critical for enhancing overall educational standards. The curricula, on the other hand, play a significant role in shaping the educational experience. In the Eastern Cape Province, aligning the curricula with contemporary educational needs and ensuring effective implementation is essential (Biney et al., 2021). It is important to regularly update curricula. Doing so should meet the evolving global standards and prepare learners for the future with endless challenges.

The provision of adequate financial resources is paramount for the optimal functioning of educational institutions. At times, the Eastern Cape Province encounters difficulties in ensuring sufficient funding for educational endeavours. A deficiency in funding could adversely affect infrastructure development, teacher training, and the overarching quality of educational experiences. Overall, the efficacy of any educational system manifests in the outcomes achieved by learners. Challenges such as high dropout rates, diminished academic performance, and restricted access to higher education serve as indicators of systemic deficiencies (Modikoa, Pillay, & Shipalana, 2023). Improving learner outcomes necessitates a comprehensive approach. This approach should not only address academic dimensions but also consider social and economic

factors that might impede the teaching and learning process. Addressing these multifold issues is complex. It involves the interplay of various elements within the educational landscape.

a) Infrastructure challenges

The Eastern Cape Province faces many infrastructural challenges that significantly undermine the quality of life for its inhabitants. Those challenges encompass several domains. The road infrastructure domain persists as a pressing issue in rural locales. Poor road connections perpetuate the isolation of rural communities. That constrains their access to both markets and essential services. The provincial education department acknowledges the pressing difficulties associated with school infrastructure in the Eastern Cape Province. Over 1,000 schools within the province remain reliant on pit latrine toilets, and many lack sufficient sanitation facilities (South African Human Rights Commission, 2025). Apart from these formidable challenges, some districts in the province have attained commendable matriculation results.

Electricity infrastructure is another significant concern in the Eastern Cape Province. Communities there frequently endure prolonged periods of several days or weeks without electricity. That predicament is attributable to inadequate infrastructure maintenance, rampant cable theft, and issues related to non-payment for electricity supply and services (Modikoa et al., 2023). Agricultural infrastructure underdevelopment reflects the untapped potential of the province as an economic hub. Insufficient access to critical infrastructure severely hampers the capacity of the province to diversify its economy and stimulate employment opportunities. This complex web of challenges, therefore, necessitates comprehensive and strategic interventions. The aim is to enhance the overall infrastructure landscape of the Eastern Cape Province.

Enhancing infrastructure within the agricultural sector might facilitate the reduction of the provincial dependency on the automotive industry. The Eastern Cape Province has considerable infrastructural challenges that hinder access to essential services, markets, and employment opportunities. Addressing these challenges will necessitate substantial infrastructure investment, particularly in the province's rural areas. It is fair

to acknowledge that such investments are crucial. They are critical because they could transform the social and economic landscape of the province.

2.9.2 Teacher quality challenges

The disparity in the distribution of qualified and experienced teachers throughout the province depicts a critical point. That point is where remote or disadvantaged locales often endure the deficiency of competent teachers. The said deficiency compromises the quality of education in rural territories. Access to high-calibre teacher training and the ongoing professional development programmes cannot be overemphasised. That is because such access ensures that teachers are well-equipped with contemporary pedagogical techniques and comprehensive subject matter expertise. Challenges associated with the delivery of sustained training might detract from the overall effectiveness of teaching (Modikoa et al., 2023). Low levels of motivation and job satisfaction among teachers could adversely influence educational quality. Factors such as excessive workloads, inadequate resources, and arduous working conditions contribute to a notable decline in teacher morale. The integration of technology into pedagogical practices is essential for adequately preparing learners for the exigencies of the modern world. That said, certain regions in the Eastern Cape Province have significant obstacles in equipping teachers with the requisite training and resources. These two help teachers to adeptly incorporate technology into their classrooms. In some areas, language barriers between teachers and learners have become problematic to the effective teaching and learning process. This is particularly so in locales characterised by diverse linguistic backgrounds.

The efficacy of communication, as well as the overarching processes of teaching and learning, could be significantly impacted. Ensuring robust teacher accountability, in conjunction with effective monitoring mechanisms, is paramount for the preservation and enhancement of educational quality. Challenges associated with monitoring teacher performance and delivering constructive feedback could somehow obstruct professional growth. To address these impediments, a comprehensive strategy is necessary. That strategy should target training programmes for teachers and provide

incentives designed to attract and retain qualified teachers in underserved rural areas. Strategies aimed at bolstering job satisfaction and initiatives to integrate technology into pedagogical practices should be implemented (Modikoa et al., 2023). There should be an ongoing collaboration among educational authorities, community stakeholders, and teachers in order to identify sustainable solutions to the said challenges.

2.9.3 Curriculum challenges

The Eastern Cape Province is a region marked by social and economic disparities. Consequently, the province deals with numerous curriculum challenges that adversely impact educational quality. Among those challenges are insufficient training about curricula implementation, the absence of clear guidelines for enacting curricula changes, and the intricate nature of managing the newly instituted curricula. Even if curriculum reforms have been introduced, they have not been universally embraced by teachers. Many teachers express concerns about the lack of essential resources and support needed to proficiently effectuate those curriculum changes. Schools continue to eliminate elective courses. They thus become unable to provide even the most fundamental resources that learners ought to have within their educational environments. This pervasive inequality in education not only perpetuates poverty but also exacerbates disparities in the province. For that reason, the Eastern Cape Province grapples with profound curriculum challenges that restrict access to quality education and sustain cycles of poverty and inequality. To address these challenges requires substantial investments in training, resource allocation, and the much-needed support for both teachers and their schools.

2.9.4 Funding challenges

The Eastern Cape Province is undeniably saddled with a considerable array of funding challenges in its basic education sector. These difficulties arise from a confluence of historical, economic, and systemic factors. Historically factors are underpinned by the legacy of apartheid. That legacy has a profound influence on the allocation of

resources. That is why the Eastern Cape Province continues to struggle when it comes to the sustained provision of quality education to its rural residents. The policies enacted during the apartheid era produced a landscape of uneven development where particular areas received disproportionately fewer resources than others (SAHRC, 2019). Progress has been made, but the apartheid effects still persist. The apartheid legacy is seen by authorities in the Eastern Cape Provincial Legislature as the situation is exacerbating and perpetuating inequities in educational access and quality. In light of that, the said legacy is said to block the potential of the province for growth and development.

The Eastern Cape Province has insurmountable economic challenges. In general, that province is regarded as one of the less affluent provinces in South Africa. The argument is that the province has constrained economic resources. That consequently results in diminished funding for its educational endeavours. Schools situated in economically disadvantaged areas have historically grappled with providing essential infrastructure, adequate learning materials, and attracting qualified teachers. Systemic issues that include mismanagement and corruption could effectively divert funds from their intended purposes. This not only undermines the quantity of funds available but also compromises the efficacy of their allocation. Another problem is the lack of transparency and accountability in the administration of those funds. The lack of education exacerbates the difficulties faced by educational institutions in the Eastern Cape Province (SAHRC, 2019). These challenges are daunting but efforts to address them should be prioritised. If not, the future of countless learners would be sacrificed.

Besides, the rural characteristics of numerous regions in the province present supplementary obstacles. Isolated locales frequently result in added expenses for transportation and logistics. That complicates the assurance that resources are disseminated equitably among all educational institutions. To deal with those challenges, a holistic strategy is required (Institute for Security Studies, 2021). That strategy could involve policy reforms intended to guarantee a more equitable allocation of resources. Augmented oversight and accountability measures should also form part of the strategy. The aim here is to combat corruption while tackling the distinct requirements of schools in rural settings. Such initiatives should be pursued diligently. That is because the disparity in resource distribution is a persistent issue that cannot

be overlooked. It remains an essential issue to continually assess and adapt strategies to meet the evolving needs of rural communities.

2.9.5 Student outcomes challenges

The Eastern Cape Province harbours a plethora of challenges regarding learner outcomes. Those challenges impinge on the quality of education afforded to learners. The South African education system, distinguished by overcrowded classrooms, inadequate infrastructure, and comparatively poor educational results, perpetuates inequality and predisposes learners to eventual failure (Kota et al., 2018). A recent international survey revealed that over three-quarters of children aged nine are unable to read for meaning (Mohamed, 2020). Some provinces report staggering figures, with literacy rates plummeting to 91% in the Limpopo Province and 85% in the Eastern Cape Province (Mohamed, 2020). Out of every 100 learners who embark on their educational journey, 50-60 are likely to reach matriculation, 40-50 will successfully pass matric and a mere 14 will proceed to university (Mohamed, 2020). A critical shortfall in essential resources plagues numerous schools. That adversely affects the quality of education accessible to learners. Certain institutions lack textbooks, while others are bereft of fundamental facilities, thereby compromising educational quality (Kota et al., 2018). The scarcity of skills development programmes in the Eastern Cape Province has culminated in the sub-par performance of both the teachers and learners across the majority of schools.

In the Eastern Cape Province, there are currently 340 teacher vacancies. On top of that, there are ninety-seven specialized vacancies (GSDPP, 2017). This has become a concern to the province. The implications of these vacancies extend beyond mere numbers. The demand for teachers is pressing. The reasons for these shortages are many. Worse more, they intertwine with various social and economic factors to devastate the pass rate and quality of education offered in the Eastern Cape schools. This situation calls for a comprehensive examination of the underlying causes of those problems.

Under normal circumstances, the ratio of teachers to learners in the Eastern Cape schools should be approximately 1:18 (GSDPP, 2017). Given the overcrowding

scenarios in schools, as explained at the beginning of this chapter, that ratio is too high now, about 1:90 (GSDPP, 2017). To make that ratio more complicated, teacher absenteeism has increased. Teachers take days off to protest against the sub-optimal school conditions. Doing that impairs the learning experiences of learners. The challenges concerning the learner outcomes that adversely affect foundational education in the Eastern Cape Province are inadequate educational results, a scarcity of essential resources, deficiencies in skills development programmes, and the shortage of teachers. These problems contribute heavily to the substandard quality of education given to learners in the province (GSDPP, 2017). To effectively address these pressing issues, a many sided strategy that involves intervention by the government, engagement with the community, and collaboration with various stakeholders is imperative. Investing in teacher training, developing infrastructure, and systematically reviewing and updating the curricula are critical measures aimed at enhancing the quality of education in the Eastern Cape Province. Ensuring the equitable distribution of resources and tackling social and economic factors that influence learner outcomes is essential. That would foster a more inclusive and effective educational system (GSDPP, 2017).

2.10 Existing governance frameworks

In this study, existing education governance frameworks represent templates and models used by national and provincial governments to shape how education policies are implemented in schools across the country. These frameworks are significant to this study because they will enable the researcher to identify existing gaps when developing a sustainable governance framework.

2.10.1 Evaluating the Eastern Cape Basic Education governance framework

Numerous investigations scrutinise the prevailing governance structure in the educational landscape of the Eastern Cape Province. Clientelism and political interference are prevalent there. Entrenched historical patterns of clientelism and political meddling mark the governance mechanisms overseeing basic education in the Eastern Cape Province. The Eastern Cape Department of Education (ECDBE) is

beset with chronic leadership instability, politicisation, and fiscal mismanagement. These factors severely undermine the cohesion and integrity of the provincial school oversight and policy administration. The dominant mode of governance in the province manifests as a personalised/negotiated approach. That exhibits a clientelistic orientation and escalating levels of corruption (Kota, Hendricks, Matambo, and Naidoo, 2017). Despite these challenges, it is crucial to consider the broader implications of such governance issues. These not only affect educational outcomes but also the overall trust in public institutions. Although there are attempts to reform these governance structures, the deeply ingrained practices pose significant obstacles to meaningful change.

The fragmentation that arose after the 1994 democratic transition in South Africa has been particularly severe, especially within the education sector of the Eastern Cape Province. The consequence has been persistent instability in critical policy domains. Particularly in post-provisioning (allocation), which acutely manifests as contestation over posts at the school level. One must consider the deeper implications of these on-going challenges. Those challenges point to an underlying systemic issue that warrants attention. Efforts have been made to address these concerns but the persistence of instability raises questions about the efficacy of current strategies.

The absence of a rule-compliant, insulated, and performance-driven bureaucracy is a salient concern. The governance typology delineated in Chapter 1 earlier posits that the predominant mode of governance in the province is characterised by a personalised and negotiated framework. That exhibits a clientelistic orientation and escalating levels of corruption (Kota et al., 2017). This study elucidates how persistent leadership instability, political interference, and financial mismanagement in the ECDBE have profoundly compromised both the resourcing and oversight of the public educational system in the Eastern Cape Province. The inadequate rule-compliant, insulated, and performance-driven bureaucracy directly contributes to the sub-par quality of education provided to learners in the province. A report by the ECDBE indicates that the existing governance framework governing the Eastern Cape educational system is marked by clientelism, political interference, fragmentation, instability, and a conspicuous lack of a rule-compliant, insulated and performance-driven bureaucracy. These findings imply that the governance framework should

undergo reform because only through such changes could the quality of education provided to learners in the province be ameliorated (Kota et al., 2017).

The strengths and weaknesses inherent in the current governance structure of basic education within the Eastern Cape Province warrant critical examination. The current South African education system is characterised by deteriorating infrastructure, overcrowded classrooms, and relatively sub-par educational outcomes. This situation perpetuates inequality and thus fails numerous learners. The governance of basic education in the Eastern Cape Province is beset with conflict, both within and among a single-party dominant coalition of interests. This has significantly undermined the resourcing and oversight of the public schooling system in the province. Chronic instability in leadership, coupled with political interference and financial mismanagement within the Eastern Cape Department of Education, has resulted in compromised cohesion and integrity concerning provincial school oversight and policy management (GSDPP, 2017). The Eastern Cape Department of Education has repeatedly faltered in achieving its targets related to infrastructure and facilities. Many schools endure poor infrastructure thereby compromising the quality of education accessible to learners (Kota et al., 2017).

The educational bureaucracy in the Eastern Cape Province is fundamentally compromised by various deficiencies. Those could be traced to several factors. Those factors encompass historical challenges, inadequate resource distribution, and systemic complications inherent in the administrative framework. One of the critical historical contexts that influences the contemporary condition of the education system in the Eastern Cape Province is the persistent repercussions of apartheid-era inequities. This historical legacy has imposed an indelible imprint on the foundation of the educational system. That has compounded the challenges encountered by the province. The work of Kota et al. (2017) illustrates these enduring effects. The urgency to address these issues is paramount.

One of the striking issues that contribute to the fragility inherent in the educational bureaucracy concerns the restricted financial and infrastructural resources available. The scarcity of these vital elements significantly impedes the consistent delivery of

quality education across the province. Insufficient resources have evolved into a persistent obstacle. That has hindered the development and implementation of effective educational programmes and initiatives. Legotlo (2014) revealed that weaknesses within the traditional bureaucratic hierarchy further compound the challenges faced by the education system in the Eastern Cape Province. Observably, the conventional hierarchical structure tends to be sluggish in adapting to and addressing local needs and challenges. Centralised decision-making is an emblematic feature of traditional bureaucracies. These bureaucracies often result in a lack of flexibility and responsiveness to the unique issues encountered by schools at the grassroots level (Kota et al., 2017). This rigidity does not merely impede progress. It also aggravates existing disparities within the educational landscape. That is problematic because it undermines the overarching goal of equitable education for all learners.

In response to these deficiencies, the notion of horizontal governance has surfaced as a prospective remedy, particularly in the Eastern Cape Province, beset by challenges. Ansell and Gash (2018) postulated that horizontal governance accentuates the significance of collaborative decision-making. That is in addition to the engagement of diverse stakeholders across various tiers. By integrating local communities, teachers, and parents into the decision-making framework, horizontal governance could leverage localised insights. That would effectively tackle the specific obstacles encountered by educational institutions. A prominent feature of horizontal governance lies in its capacity to inspire school personnel. Empowering teachers and administrative staff through their inclusion in decision-making processes could engender a profound sense of ownership and accountability (South African Government News Agency, 2023). Horizontal governance, which affords autonomy to schools in areas such as curricula development and resource allocation, has the potential to significantly elevate motivation among teachers. That might result in enhanced performance.

The implementation of horizontal governance significantly enhances accountability within the education system. The horizontal governance approach, therefore, fosters a culture of shared responsibility. This not only facilitates the establishment of

accountability mechanisms at the local level but also encourages community involvement in decision-making processes. O'Day (2002) contended that such involvement ensures that schools are held accountable for their performance. This engenders a more transparent and responsive educational framework. Flexibility and adaptability emerge as the inherent strengths of horizontal governance (South African Government News Agency, 2023). This approach permits a more responsive and tailored strategy for addressing challenges. That is so because it empowers local stakeholders to devise solutions that meet their specific needs. That flexibility is particularly crucial in meeting the diverse requirements of schools across the Eastern Cape Province. It is essential, then, to consider the variations in local contexts and circumstances.

Horizontal governance has the capacity to significantly augment local-level capacity building through the facilitation of professional development and the exchange of knowledge among teachers (SAGNA, 2023). The decentralised methodology allows for the identification and application of localised expertise to tackle specific educational challenges. It serves to enhance the overall efficacy of the educational system. While horizontal governance presents itself as a viable institutional alternative, it is crucial to strike an equilibrium between decentralisation and the retention of a certain degree of centralised coordination. That equilibrium is imperative for ensuring consistency and adherence to more expansive educational objectives. By harnessing the advantages inherent in both the horizontal and vertical frameworks, the education system in the Eastern Cape might transcend its historical deficiencies. That might help to cultivate a more effective and responsive bureaucratic structure.

a) Strengths

The current governance structure of the education department in the Eastern Cape Province exhibits several notable strengths and robust leadership. The provincial government has appointed a highly capable and experienced Education MEC dedicated to enhancing educational outcomes throughout the province. The establishment of collaborative partnerships is also significant. The department has

forged strong alliances with universities, non-governmental organizations, and other stakeholders to enhance the quality of education (Kota et al., 2017). The innovation plays a critical role, as the department has implemented various novel programmes and initiatives to tackle the distinct challenges confronted by learners in the region. These include language support and early childhood development programmes. The data-driven decision-making remains essential. The department leverages data and empirical evidence to guide its policies and programmes. It facilitates the identification of improvement areas and the assessment of the impact of its interventions. Community engagement is also pivotal. The department actively interacts with local communities to grasp their needs and concerns. That ensures that its programmes are responsive to local exigencies. In as much as there are strengths, the on-going challenges persist, compelling the continued focus and adaptation of new strategies.

b) Weaknesses

Chronic instability in leadership, coupled with political meddling and fiscal mismanagement, has plagued the Eastern Cape Department of Education. The inadequacies in public school infrastructure regarding sanitation have resulted in the death of two children who fell into the pit latrines in recent years (Kota et al., 2017). The bureaucracy governing education in the Eastern Cape Province is weak. Many essential functions have not been executed effectively. The governance of basic education in this province is riddled with conflict. Those conflicts happen within and among the dominant coalition of interests. That has significantly compromised the resourcing and oversight of the public schooling system.

Strategies, policies, and approaches employed in other regions or countries demonstrate efficacy in enhancing educational outcomes through governance reforms. Those reforms could manifest in various forms and be enacted at multiple levels within the education system. Although the Eastern Cape has the potential for reform, its challenges persist. That is because entrenched interests often impede progress. This complexity necessitates a nuanced understanding of governance dynamics, as the path to improvement is fraught with obstacles.

The adoption of a data-driven policy framework in Norway has not only been widely endorsed by leaders across the political spectrum but it has also engendered sustained advancements in educational outcomes. In Flanders, Belgium, a governance model that seeks to harmonize local diversity with national objectives has emerged. The emergence of that model has resulted in enhanced learner performance and heightened trust in the educational system (OECD, 2018). The Tsinghua University in China has instituted a governance paradigm that facilitates the exploration of various governance models within its schools and departments. That approach has fostered increased autonomy and academic freedom. It nonetheless preserves state authority over higher education institutions. Similarly, the Improving Educational Quality (IEQ) Project in New York State of the USA, has prioritised curricula reform as a mechanism to elevate educational quality. This initiative has contributed to improved learner achievement and graduation rates.

Certain OECD nations are reforming governance through the delineation of comprehensive educational strategies. They want to establish explicit policy priorities coupled with tangible objectives. Estonia has undertaken the refinement of roles and responsibilities. This is either by instituting new institutions or by reconfiguring local governance structures. Stronger leadership at the school level is essential. As systems devolve greater authority to schools, they necessitate enhanced leadership at the school level. School leaders who concentrate on results are capable of fostering the conditions that render effective teaching and learning feasible. This requires a nuanced understanding of educational dynamics.

Policies are aimed at attracting, preparing, supporting, rewarding, retaining, and advancing high quality teachers. There is a widespread consensus that exists among nations characterized by high performance and those experiencing improvement. The consensus is that the efficacy of an educational system fundamentally hinges on the calibre of its teaching faculty (OECD, 2018). These various strategies, policies, and methodologies illustrate that effective governance reforms could yield enhanced educational outcomes. By enacting data driven policies, balancing local diversity with overarching national goals, and exploring diverse governance models, education systems could be reformed. Curricula reform, the clarification of roles and responsibilities, and a pronounced emphasis on the significance of high-quality

teachers and robust school leadership are all critical. This multifaceted approach is essential because it establishes a foundation for improved learner achievement.

2.11 Analysing the practices adapted to the Eastern Cape context

The strategies, policies, and approaches stated above might be adapted and employed within the context of the Eastern Cape Province to reform educational governance. It is crucial to recognise that the distinctive governance characteristics and challenges in the Eastern Cape Province should be considered when executing those reforms (Gaber, 2019). In the adaptation process, engaging teachers, parents, community leaders, and policymakers is paramount. Adapting these strategies to meet the specific needs and realities of the Eastern Cape Province would foster more effective and sustainable educational governance reforms. The on-going monitoring and evaluation are essential for assessing the impact of these adaptations to make necessary adjustments. Adapting successful educational governance strategies from other regions or nations to the Eastern Cape context necessitates meticulous consideration of the unique challenges, cultural backdrop, and existing infrastructure (Jeranji, 2023). This represents an analysis of how some aforementioned strategies could potentially be applied to the Eastern Cape Province. It is essential to remain vigilant about the nuances involved in such adaptations.

2.11.1 Teacher professional development

Adaptation to the Eastern Cape Province strategies is imperative to establish comprehensive and ongoing professional development programmes for teachers. One such idea could be to form partnerships with universities to provide training in pedagogical methodologies, subject expertise, and effective classroom management techniques. The overriding factor here is that universities produce teachers. The quality of teaching represents a critical factor in enhancing educational outcomes. To this effect, strategies such as teacher training, mentoring, and support systems could contribute to improving teacher quality (Kota et al., 2018). Although challenges exist,

this approach could yield significant benefits as it addresses the multiple needs of teachers in the province.

2.11.2 Decentralisation and local autonomy

It is imperative to introduce policies that grant schools in this province greater autonomy regarding decision-making. This would enable them to customise educational methodologies to meet local exigencies. Empowering school management teams to make strategic choices based on the unique needs of their communities is crucial. Educational decentralisation and school governance policies are available in South Africa. These entail significant transformation in allocating power and resources from central authorities to local entities (Kota et al., 2018). Decentralisation could enhance accountability, responsiveness, and efficiency in the governance of the education sector.

2.11.3 Learner-centred approaches

The emphasis should shift from a rigid, examination-centric model of education to a more learner-centred paradigm. This transformation necessitates the encouragement of project-based learning, critical thinking, and creativity. It also requires the revision of assessment methods to encompass a broader evaluation of learner abilities. This shift might present challenges yet it is essential for fostering a more holistic educational experience. In light of these changes, teachers should be prepared to implement innovative practices and adapt to the evolving needs of their learners.

2.11.4 Investment in early childhood education

It is strategic to prioritise investment in early childhood education (especially in rural and underserved areas). That initiative lays the foundation for future academic success. Establishing accessible and high-quality early childhood education centres would ensure that children are well-prepared for primary education. That being the case, challenges remain in reaching these communities. The need is significant but

the implementation of such centres should be approached with careful consideration of local dynamics. The idea is to foster an environment conducive to learning. That would eventually enhance educational outcomes in the Eastern Cape Province.

2.11.5 Technological integration

It is vital to bridge the digital divide between previously disadvantaged rural areas and advantaged urban centres. Investing in technology infrastructure in the Eastern Cape schools is essential. Training for teachers is necessary. Teacher training should focus on effectively integrating technology into the curricula. Provinces should explore public-private partnerships in order to facilitate sustainable access to digital resources. This would likely enhance educational outcomes in the long run.

2.11.6 Curriculum reforms

One must evaluate and subsequently update the curricula to ensure its relevance to the specific needs of learners in the Eastern Cape Province. That should include local content (often overlooked), cultural perspectives, and practical skills. Those elements are essential in aligning educational outcomes with the economic landscape of the region (Kota et al., 2018). It is important to remember that merely incorporating these aspects is not sufficient. The implementation should also engage learners critically. The challenges might arise, but the potential benefits of such adapted curricula cannot be underestimated.

2.11.7 Inclusive education policies

It is crucial to strengthen inclusive education policies in order to address the diverse needs of learners, particularly those with disabilities. Schools in the Eastern Cape Province should be equipped with the necessary resources. These include support services that facilitate inclusive learning. The implementation of these policies could be challenging due to varying local conditions. In the face of the progress made so far, much work remains to ensure that every learner receives the support they need.

2.11.8 Targeted interventions for at-risk learners

One must identify and implement targeted interventions designed for learners who are at risk of falling behind in their studies. Such interventions might encompass after-school programmes, mentorship initiatives, and additional support for learners who face social and economic challenges. The effectiveness of these measures could fluctuate due to varying local conditions. The intention is to provide comprehensive aid. The actual impact might differ across diverse learner populations.

2.11.9 Parental and community engagement

It is essential to devise strategies that actively engage parents and communities in the education process. Forums for collaboration between schools and communities should be created. This would help to address local challenges and promote a sense of ownership in education. The effectiveness of these initiatives could be contingent upon various factors, including community involvement. Implementing these initiatives would naturally face obstacles. That should not undermine the importance of doing so. Such initiatives foster a cooperative environment that enhances educational outcomes.

2.11.10 Flexibility in Assessment

There is also a need to explore flexible assessment methodologies that consider the myriad learning styles and diverse backgrounds of learners in the Eastern Cape Province. There should be a consideration of a synthesis of both the national and locally pertinent assessments to furnish a comprehensive perspective on learner achievements. The equitable allocation of resources is also critical here. The decline in actual per-learner educational expenditure in South Africa warrants immediate intervention. The distribution of resources should be rendered more equitable. This action could favourably contribute to ensuring that all learners gain access to quality

education, irrespective of their social and economic circumstances. The elimination of extreme class sizes also benefits the improved outcomes. Estimates suggest that at least 10% of the Foundation Phase learners in the Eastern Cape and Limpopo Provinces learn in classrooms with 60 or more learners (Wills, 2023). Eliminating such extreme class sizes poses challenges. It can enhance the quality of education and ensure that learners receive the individualised attention they require from teachers. Strengthening school leadership is advantageous to effective education governance. Robust leadership in schools is essential for the effective governance of education. Strategies that involve the training and development of school principals could significantly bolster school leadership (Kota et al., 2018). There should be a concerted effort from all stakeholders to ensure this aspect is realised.

The aforementioned strategies, policies, and approaches could be adapted and applied in the Eastern Cape Province to facilitate the reformation of educational governance. It is essential to recognise that the distinctive characteristics and challenges of governance in the Eastern Cape Province should be duly considered when enacting these reforms. This requires an exploration of the significance of involving stakeholders in school governance. Government officials, teachers, parents, and community members should be involved in developing a robust governance framework. Stakeholder engagement is critical as well. It often presents its set of challenges despite its importance. That is, diverse perspectives embedded therein could complicate the consensus-building process.

Stakeholder engagement holds significant importance in the development of a successful governance framework. Stakeholders, defined as groups or individuals possessing a vested interest in an organisation, are likely to be affected by its actions. Their behaviours could also influence the operational dynamics or business model of the entity in question. Empowerment plays a critical role. Engaging stakeholders in the decision-making process could indeed foster a sense of value and inclusion among them. That could lead to heightened trust, goodwill, and support for the organisational initiatives (Sedmak, 2021).

Effective decision-making is often enhanced through stakeholder engagement. These individuals could offer invaluable insights and perspectives that enrich the decision-making process. Engaging with stakeholders helps organisations to make informed

decisions that align with stakeholder needs and desires. Risk management is another crucial aspect. In this case, stakeholder engagement enables organisations to identify potential risks and conflicts with various stakeholder groups. These might include uncertainty, dissatisfaction, misalignment, disengagement, and resistance to change. As a result, organisations could mitigate risks and resolve conflicts before they escalate into significant issues (Sedmak, 2021). Cost savings are also a noteworthy benefit of stakeholder engagement. Eventually, this approach could lead to considerable savings in both time and financial resources.

Organisations that actively engage stakeholders significantly enhance their probability of completing projects punctually and within financial constraints. Stakeholders could serve as an invaluable repository of information for organisations. Organisations might impart valuable insights to those stakeholders. Engaging with stakeholders fosters a deeper understanding of their needs and desires while simultaneously educating them about the mission and vision of the organisation. Involving stakeholders from various interests and demographics could yield a plethora of perspectives. Stakeholders contribute unique viewpoints to discussions. For instance, government officials often possess a broader policy perspective; teachers are attuned to the practical necessities within classrooms, parents provide critical insights regarding learner experiences at home, and community members can articulate a more expansive societal context. This rich tapestry of diversity contributes to the formation of a comprehensive framework that addresses multiple dimensions (Ronielton et al., 2023). When stakeholders are actively involved, they are more inclined to develop a sense of ownership and accountability for the overarching framework.

This is crucial for successful implementation if government officials, teachers, parents and community members believe they have a voice in the creation of the rules. They are more likely to adhere to them as well. The active support for the governance structure might also depend on this sense of involvement. One might argue otherwise as well in that participation fosters a deeper commitment to the established norms. Considering the above, it is essential to engage all stakeholders in meaningful dialogue.

Teachers immersed in the educational milieu possess invaluable insights regarding what is practically feasible in the classroom environment. The government officials

might delineate the broader policy landscape (Ronielton, Rezende, Oliveira., Gabriela, Fernandes., Daniel, Jardim, & Pardini, 2023). By engaging all stakeholders, one could craft a framework that endeavours to strike a balance between theoretical constructs and practical applications. This balance would make it more likely to yield effectiveness in real-world scenarios. The inclusion of stakeholders engenders transparent communication. This is vital for cultivating trust and ensuring that all parties are aligned in their understanding. When disparate groups contribute to the developmental process, it mitigates the potential for misunderstandings and conflicts that might arise later. Given that needs and circumstances are in a state of flux, involving stakeholders enhances the likelihood of devising a framework that remains adaptable to evolving situations. Regular inputs from diverse stakeholders ensure that the governance framework can be revised and refined as necessary. That would help to maintain its relevance over time. It is essential to acknowledge that different stakeholders frequently uphold varying values and priorities.

Engaging stakeholders is crucial for ensuring that the governance framework is congruent with these foundational values. Parents might prioritise learner well-being, whereas might underscore academic excellence. A well-balanced framework could effectively address these varying values (Hutchison, 2020). Legal and ethical considerations are paramount. Government officials typically possess a comprehensive understanding of legal and ethical norms. Their engagement guarantees that the governance framework complies with pertinent legislation and ethical standards. That would establish a robust basis for its execution. This involvement aids organisations in making more informed decisions that consider the multiple needs and aspirations of all stakeholders. Involving stakeholders in the formulation of a governance framework is indispensable for achieving success. It can facilitate better decision-making, mitigate potential risks and conflicts, conserve time and resources, and empower stakeholders. The challenges and benefits of collaborative governance in education remain intricate and expansive. Collaborative governance in education denotes a process wherein state and non-state actors engage collectively to tackle an issue. This could be civil society entities, public or private organisations, or individual citizens. This collaborative approach could yield benefits for all stakeholders involved through mutual learning and capacity building (Waardenburg, Groenleer, de Jong, & Keijser, 2019). However, challenges also arise

in the realm of collaborative governance in education. These challenges are discussed below.

2.11.11 Challenges

Collaborative governance endeavours frequently encounter significant difficulties in problem-solving primarily due to the intricate nature of the issues under consideration, the heterogeneity of the stakeholders engaged, and the imperative to reconcile conflicting interests. Collaborative governance arrangements are demanding in terms of both time and resources. They necessitate vigilant management, mutual trust, unwavering commitment, and reciprocity among all involved parties. That could render them somewhat fragile. The efficacy of collaborative governance is dependent upon robust leadership. That is essential for ensuring the engagement of all stakeholders and maintaining a focus on the attainment of the established objectives (Waardenburg et al., 2019). The capacity to navigate these challenges is often compromised by various factors. Those factors include the lack of clear communication and differing priorities among participants.

2.11.12 Benefits

Collaborative governance facilitates an enhanced and collective understanding of several problems associated with numerous stakeholders. That permits these entities to collaborate and converge on viable solutions. Collaborative governance could assist policymakers in identifying and targeting specific challenges, thus delivering actions with greater efficacy (Waardenburg et al., 2019). A broader spectrum of ideas and proposals could be fostered through collaborative governance, serving as a mechanism for incorporating diverse perspectives within the policy-making framework. Mutual learning and collective experiences are cultivated. Such governance could engender reciprocal educational opportunities while simultaneously offering guidance for the enhancement of institutional capacities both within and without various agencies and organisations (Coleman, Schultz, Rani Parker, Manyindo, Emmanuel, & Mukuru, 2023). Collaborative governance has gained traction in education in recent years as educational institutions and districts endeavour to establish more inclusive

and efficacious decision-making paradigms. This particular mode of governance also entails its challenges and advantages.

The advantages of collaborative governance are many. They are largely encapsulated in their capacity to facilitate a broader spectrum of voices to be acknowledged within the decision-making paradigm. This engenders more innovative and inclusive solutions to intricate dilemmas (Coleman et al., 2023). Collaborative governance cultivates trust and nurtures relationships among diverse stakeholders. Managing conflicts and disagreements could present challenges. This is particularly so when multiple parties are engaged in the decision-making process. This might prolong the overall duration of that process. The absence of clearly delineated roles and responsibilities could lead to confusion and inefficiency within the decision-making framework. It is noteworthy that collaborative governance might necessitate considerable time and resources for effective implementation. That has the potential to pose significant challenges, especially in the context of underperforming schools situated in the region under investigation (Bianchi, Nasi & William, Rivenbark, 2021).

The deliberation surrounding the adoption of collaborative governance in the educational sector warrants meticulous examination. It embodies both prospects and obstacles. In the realm of education, collaborative governance could serve to enhance the comprehensive practice and efficacy of public administration. Collaboration among teachers might cultivate a more enriching learning experience for learners. It fosters the development of higher-order cognitive skills, augments self-assurance, and self-worth, as well as enhancing social and interpersonal competencies. Collaborative governance is apparent in several countries and has demonstrated efficacy in refining educational policies and practices (Bianchi et al., 2021). In Bangladesh, early childhood education in the majority of institutions is predicated upon collaboration between non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the national government. This cooperative effort has facilitated a more profound and collective comprehension of intricate issues involving various stakeholders. It has also empowered these stakeholders to engage collaboratively and reach a consensus on viable solutions.

Similarly, the efficacy of collaborative governance in the educational framework of Japan appears to be positive, particularly in the enactment of policies. That collaborative approach facilitates operational efficiency in the Japanese educational sector. It safeguards the judicious decisions rendered and that the execution of policies is conducted with efficacy (Coleman et al., 2023). A prime illustration of successful non-profit management and effective collaborative governance in education is evidenced through the AIDS/LifeCycle event in California. That event served as a salient case study. That case study leveraged the event to augment comprehension of pertinent literature by learners, foundational concepts, and essential principles associated with collaborative governance. Collaborative governance was instituted in Jakarta. It aimed to enhance the implementation of school autonomy within educational institutions. The government endeavours to engage a diverse array of stakeholders within the collective forum to collaboratively pursue consensus in decision-making processes or in allocating public goods (Coleman et al., 2023). The constructs of collaboration degrees and models have been employed to evaluate both the extent and the frameworks of educational autonomy.

2.12 Theoretical frameworks

This section discusses the theories adopted in this study. These theories are the human capital development, morphogenetic and institutional theory. The theories are important because they form the basis of the study's theoretical foundation.

2.12.1 The human capital development theory

The human capital development theory has its roots in the 1960s when Schultz and Becker of the Chicago School of Economics first made seminal contributions to it (Ogujiuba, 2013). Thenceforth, the theory emerged as a particularly salient framework for academic inquiry. Marimuthu et al. (2009) explained that human capital relates to the "processes that concern training, education, and other professional initiatives. These increase the levels of knowledge, skills, abilities, values, and social assets of employees. Such increases lead to the job satisfaction and performance of the

employee." The emphasis on skills is what renders the human capital development approach an invaluable theoretical lens for addressing the challenges that pervade basic education. This would be through a sustainable policy framework aimed at enhancing academic performance. Human capital development is fundamentally anchored on abilities, performance, and skills development. It is, therefore, imperative to acknowledge the complexities that accompany its implementation in real-world contexts.

The human capital theory encompasses various issues about investments in education as a conduit for fostering inclusive growth and development. Samiullah (2014) posits that the determinants of human capital are multifaceted, encompassing education, population dynamics, health, and life expectancy. Education unequivocally promotes the advancement of human capital. One could contend that education plays a pivotal role in facilitating the development of human capital throughout the world. Linked to the concept of education is the training of individuals. This aspect is crucial. Schultz (1979) theorised that such forms of education and training significantly enhance the capabilities of individuals, thereby instigating transformative changes in their performance.

Human capital development denotes the systematic enhancement and augmentation of the skills, knowledge, abilities, and overall potential of individuals in a societal or organisational framework. The theory acknowledges that individuals constitute invaluable assets. It thus focuses on investing in the development of individuals to optimise their contributions and productivity. Human capital includes education, training, intelligence, skills, health, and other attributes that employers often prioritise (loyalty and punctuality, for example). The human capital development theory asserts that human beings can amplify their productive capacity through increased education and skills training. Companies possess an incentive to pursue productive human capital and augment the capabilities of their existing workforce. Governments, businesses, and educational institutions play a pivotal role in the facilitation of human capital development. They provide policies, programmes, and initiatives designed to promote education, vocational training, professional development, and lifelong

learning opportunities. The value of these efforts could significantly vary due to the context in which they are implemented. This variability could affect outcomes in meaningful ways. The challenges encountered while making these efforts remain. To that end, the pursuit of human capital development remains essential for sustainable growth and societal advancement.

Investing in individuals via nutrition, healthcare, quality education, employment opportunities, and skills acquisition plays a pivotal role in the development of human capital. That investment is crucial in eradicating extreme poverty and the establishment of inclusive societies (Ross, 2023). The human capital project avails a concerted global initiative aimed at accelerating investments in individuals. The idea is to foster greater equity and stimulate economic growth. It is anticipated that such efforts would create a political environment conducive to national leaders prioritising transformative human capital investments. There are too many advantages to investing in human capital development. For example, such investment could yield enhanced productivity, spur innovation, and bolster competitiveness at both individual and organisational strata. Another advantage is the promotion of economic expansion, facilitation of social mobility, and engendering an improved quality of life. While all these are plausible, the complexities involved therein should not be overlooked.

In the context of education, the human capital theory postulates that the productive capacity of an individual could be augmented through enhanced cognitive abilities and targeted skills training. This theoretical framework establishes a causal nexus between educational attainment and financial remuneration. Specifically, investment in education is associated with elevated earnings and, subsequently, income disparity (Freeman, 1975). In order to cultivate human capital within the educational sphere, it is crucial that states concentrate on three overarching dimensions of the educational continuum. These dimensions are preparation, recruitment, and retention. Preparation involves the processes by which teachers and school administrators are trained, certified, and licensed. This includes the oversight of traditional programmes at university schools of education and alternative certification pathways (Freeman, 1975). On the flip side, recruitment involves the strategic attraction and selection of

exceptionally talented and effective teachers. Retention is primarily concerned with maintaining a cadre of highly skilled teachers and leaders. The emphasis is on addressing the chasm between the underperforming American educational system and the more efficacious frameworks employed by global competitors.

To enhance human capital, corporations possess a compelling incentive to pursue productive human capital augmented with their current workforce. Human capital management concerns the comprehensive process of effectively recruiting and overseeing a workforce. The process consists of recruitment, onboarding, and various other measures to elevate productivity through training and talent management. The human capital development theory acknowledges the significance of education and skills training in augmenting the productive capacity and potential earnings of individuals. To foster human capital within the educational sector, states should concentrate on preparing, recruiting, and retaining exceptionally skilled teachers and leaders (Bowels, Samuel, & Herbert-Gintis, 1975). Companies have an incentive to pursue productive human capital. In doing so, those companies should strive to enhance the human capital of their existing employees using effective human capital management.

The human capital theory impacts education policy. The theory suggests that education constitutes an investment in human capital. Such an investment yields both direct payoffs to the educated individual and external benefits for society as a whole. In this sense, the education policy should focus on developing the skills and knowledge of the population. Developing these abilities would increase the productive capacity and earnings of the workforce. Various factors are at play in this respect but the emphasis remains on enhancing human potential. This perspective underscores the necessity of a robust educational framework that addresses individual needs to cater to societal demands.

Education is often perceived as a pragmatic investment rather than an entity of intrinsic worth in its own right. National education policy operates under the premise that a

significant economic advantage could be derived from fostering an educated and skilled workforce (Bell, 2020). The human capital theory speculates that policies designed to promote education could facilitate objectives such as accelerated economic growth and poverty alleviation. The OECD consistently advises nations to reform their educational and training systems to enhance 'human capital'. Human capital theory has elevated education to a pivotal role in stimulating economic expansion (Bell, 2020). The policy of preparing, recruiting, and retaining exceptionally skilled teachers and leaders is essential for cultivating human capital within the educational sphere. In short, the human capital framework has precipitated a notable transition in education policy. It has framed that policy as an investment in human capital that yields individual and societal advantages. Therefore, education policy should prioritise enhancing the skills and knowledge of the populace to bolster their productive capacity and increase potential earnings.

The impact of the human capital development theory on learner equity and access is a subject of debate among scholars in this field of study. The human capital approach to educational policy claims that education constitutes an investment in human capital that is matched by none in this area. The problem here is that such an emphasis could exacerbate income inequality (Saumen, 2013). Critics contend that this approach often favours vocational and technical education at the expense of liberal arts education. If that is the case, then this could stifle the intellectual and creative growth of learners. The implications for equity and access are significant. This is particularly true for learners from disadvantaged backgrounds who might encounter limited opportunities to engage in liberal arts education. The human capital theory presupposes that education is a neutral and apolitical endeavour to facilitate economic growth and social mobility. This premise neglects the many ways education could perpetuate existing power dynamics and systemic inequalities.

The ramifications of this phenomenon could be profound regarding equity and access. That is, learners from disadvantaged backgrounds often encounter systemic barriers that inhibit their ability to attain high-quality education. It is essential to recognise that these obstacles are not merely circumstantial but deeply entrenched within the educational framework. To minimise the effects, efforts have been made to address

these inequities. The persistence of such barriers underscores the need for a comprehensive approach to reform. This situation calls for a critical examination of the underlying factors that contribute to such disparities. Without targeted intervention, the cycle of disadvantages would likely continue.

The prevailing perspective tends to conceptualise education as a commodity that could be transacted in the marketplace rather than recognising it as a public good that ought to be accessible to all. This theory has significant implications for equity and access. Learners from disadvantaged backgrounds might lack the financial resources necessary to obtain high quality education. The theory presupposes that education follows a linear trajectory, culminating in enhanced earnings and social mobility. This assumption overlooks the countless social and economic factors external to education that could constrict the opportunities and outcomes of individuals (Saumen, 2013). These implications for equity and access are pronounced, as learners from less privileged backgrounds often encounter systemic barriers that impede their social and economic mobility. The human capital approach to educational policy engenders notable ramifications for learner equity and access. It instead sees education as a neutral and apolitical endeavour. The theory commodifies educational experiences and assumes a direct relationship between educational attainment and social and economic advancement.

a) Criticisms of the human capital development theory in education

The human capital approach has significantly influenced the formulation of education policy. In doing so, it has concurrently encountered a variety of criticisms. Specifically, the approach is often condemned for its overly narrow emphasis on economic growth and productivity. This focus could inadvertently lead to the neglect of other paramount educational objectives. These objectives borders on personal development, social justice, and democratic citizenship. Critics contend that the approach disproportionately prioritises vocational and technical training at the expense of liberal arts education. Neglecting these might restrict the intellectual and creative growth of learners. Furthermore, the premise underlying this approach assumes that education operates as a neutral and apolitical endeavour, one that can be wielded to foster

economic growth and enhance social mobility. Such an assumption tends to overlook several ways in which education could perpetuate existing power structures and systemic inequalities (Almendarez, 2014). The detractors of the theory assert that the theory frequently conceptualises education as a commodity that could be traded in the marketplace rather than recognising it as a public good that ought to be universally accessible to all people.

The theory posits that education is a linear trajectory that leads to increased earnings and enhanced social mobility. This premise overlooks the innumerable social and economic factors that exist beyond the realm of education. These could constrain opportunities and resultant outcomes for learners. To summarise, the human capital theory is subjected to various criticisms. It exhibits a narrow emphasis on economic growth and productivity and prioritises vocational and technical education at the expense of liberal arts education. The theory assumes education to be a neutral and apolitical endeavour. It commodifies the educational experience and adopts a linear perspective of the educational process. While this approach has its merits, it is crucial to recognise its limitations.

2.13 Institutional theory

The examination of fundamental educational provision, its methodologies, and resultant impacts on transformation is necessary here. Exploring the foundational institutional characteristics inherent to the entities that support basic education would complement the above. The institutional framework emerges as a pivotal element, furnishing robust analytical instruments for the deconstruction of basic educational arrangements in South Africa. Seen from this angle, the state is regarded as a manifestation of institutional processes that are deeply ingrained in dialectical relationships. These relationships manifest between institutional adaptations responding to welfare imperatives and the prevailing historical contingencies. In terms of this study, the historical-institutional perspective is supreme for dissecting basic education governance, particularly in understanding how the educational framework in South Africa could effectively address the burgeoning demands for human capital (South African Government, 2021). One should consider the complexities involved as

the interplay of various factors could influence outcomes in unexpected ways. Approached from this angle, one would reveal the intricacies of educational provision, although it might also bring to light challenges in the implementation process and its efficacy.

The institutional framework sees institutions not merely as static structures but as dynamic entities that both construct and are constructed by individual actors. This theory, as influenced by Giddens, posits that governmental intervention ought to be both comprehensive and universal in its breadth. The institutional theory serves as a valuable tool for examining the implications of quota legislation, among other elements of the political system, on the choices accessible to political parties. The theory could facilitate an investigation into the ramifications of political institutions on the calibre of democratic leadership (Bjarnegård & Zetterberg, 2016). Institutionalism, the inquiry into the consequences of political institutions, has significantly contributed to the evolution of research agendas over the past three decades. The institutional theory is increasingly subject to scrutiny from the anti-foundationalism perspectives. Those perspectives refer to constructivism and interpretivism. These two challenge the epistemological underpinnings of institutional thought. The institutional theory, as a methodological framework within the field of political science, elucidates the regulation of power across diverse governmental systems (O'Brien & Rickne, 2016). It concentrates on political institutions and their surrounding environments to elucidate the factors influencing party choices.

Kpessa and Beland (2012) contended that historical institutionalism is fundamentally anchored in a perspective that acknowledges both the legacies of policy and the structuring influence of political institutions. These institutions generate opportunities as well as constraints for policymakers. It is essential to consider the insights of Pierson (2004, 2001). Such consideration is based on the fact that historical institutionalism elucidates the trajectories of policy in specific domains and serves to explain why the ambit of educational policies and programmes remains circumscribed. This limitation persists despite efforts made during the early post-independence period to universalise education based on citizenship (Kpessa & Beland, 2012). This raises

questions about the efficacy of those initiatives. Since there have been attempts at reform, the entrenched structures continue to present formidable challenges.

Lee and Ku (2007) clarified the essence of institutional characteristics in shaping the trajectory of governmental policy. Proponents of this theory emphasise the formal "rules of the game". Those rules involve, among others, electoral systems, political institutions, and formal structures of representation for trade unions. They also consider informal institutions and their impact on policy-making processes. The institutional theory assumes heightened importance in studies aimed at addressing challenges within the basic education sector. It illustrates how institutions persistently structure political struggles and shape outcomes. The focus here is often on formal mechanisms but the interplay between formal and informal institutions cannot be overlooked. That interplay influences the efficacy of policy implementation.

In other words, the historical institutionalist perspective has a key weight in clarifying policy developments, particularly in the context of South Africa. This clarification arises from an examination of the roles and capabilities inherent in bureaucratic and governmental machinery. These are pivotal in the design and implementation of sustainable policies. The extent to which political institutions exert influence over policy remains largely obscure in South Africa. This obscurity is primarily attributable to a relative paucity of historical institutionalist literature that predominantly emphasises basic education policy development across African nations. By employing an institutionalist framework for sustainable policy, this study illuminated the incentive structures deeply embedded within institutional arrangements. Moreso, the study assessed the degree to which these institutions either hinder or bolster the efforts of policymakers engaged in formulating a sustainable policy framework designed to address the challenges facing the basic education sector. Berner (2011) acknowledged that institutions significantly impact both policy-making processes and the ideation of policy. He stressed that institutional principles fundamentally shape the characteristics of those institutions.

This study aims expounded whether the institutional arrangements would facilitate a sustainable policy framework conducive to enhanced academic performance or they would prove to be an impediment to its advancement. The salient concepts underpinning the institutional approach are institutions as structures, comprehensive and universal government intervention, rule-governed organisations, ethics, productivity, legitimacy, ramifications of political institutions, and confrontation with the anti-foundationalist paradigms.

The institutional paradigm posits that institutions function as frameworks that both construct and are constructed by individuals. It underscores the pivotal role of institutions in influencing political outcomes. The comprehensive and universal government intervention is a nascent institutional perspective. It is inspired by Giddens, who said that government intervention ought to be both comprehensive and universal in nature. The rule-governed organisations mean that the essence of institutionalism lies in its characterisation as a social theory that concentrates on organisations governed by established rules. Lastly, ethics, productivity, and legitimacy accentuate the interrelation among productivity, ethics and legitimacy. Here, organisations often seek guidance from their peers concerning appropriate conduct.

Looking at the above, it is crucial to recognise that these elements do not exist in isolation. That is because their interplay could significantly impact the overall institutional framework. The ramifications of political institutions contend that institutionalism represents a scholarly inquiry into the impact of political institutions. It has played a pivotal role in shaping the research agenda over the past three decades by revealing which institutions (Bjarnegård & Zetterberg, 2016) are most likely to correlate with superior or inferior political outcomes. Confrontation with the anti-foundationalist paradigms relates to the institutional perspective that is increasingly confronted by constructivism and interpretivism. The last two pose a challenge to the epistemological foundation of institutionalism. This approach could be utilised to investigate how quota legislation, in conjunction with various elements of the political system, influences and delineates the choices accessible to political parties. It serves

as a framework for examining the implications of political institutions based on the calibre of democratic leadership.

2.13.1 Impact of institutional thinking on basic education policies

Understanding the function of institutions investigates the institutional approach that underscores the significance of institutions in moulding political outcomes. Policy analysts could leverage this approach to discern how institutions influence policy outcomes and how they might be structured to realise intended results. Identifying the criticality of institutions is paramount. The institutional approach exposes their role in policy analysis. In this regard, policy analysts could utilise such an approach to ascertain the institutional underpinnings of public policies. That would be to assess policies according to their institutional architecture. Applying the Institutional Analysis and Design (IAD) framework presents a further layer of complexity. The IAD framework serves as a conceptual cartography for comprehending the design of institutions that promote public policies and the dynamics of human interaction in the formulation and implementation of those policies. Policy analysts could adopt the IAD framework to scrutinise and construct policies that are not only more effective but also more efficient (Araral & Amri, 2016). It is telling to consider the nuances inherent in each institutional context because these could significantly affect policy outcomes.

Reintegrating the examination of politics and economics is necessary here. The institutional approach has engendered a paradigmatic transformation in the analysis and design of policy. This has transitioned from supply-driven methodologies to those driven by institutional dynamics. Policy analysts could utilise that framework to amalgamate the study of politics and economics, thereby enhancing their policy endeavours. Improving policy outcomes is contingent upon this approach. It equips policy analysts to discern the institutional factors that either facilitate or impede policy success. Understanding the intricate role of institutions in shaping policy outcomes is crucial. Policy analysts could formulate strategies that are more likely to fulfil their intended objectives (Araral & Amri, 2016). The institutional approach offers policy analysts a robust scaffold for comprehending the significance of institutions within policy outcomes. It also helps them to craft policies that aspire to be both effective and

efficient. By deploying this methodology, analysts could aspire to elevate policy outcomes and successfully realise their predetermined goals despite the complexity inherent therein.

2.13.2 Institutional approach to education policy

The institutional approach to education policy is a perspective that focuses on the norms, structures, organisations, and elements of a system that could support education. This approach aligns and creates coherence among various elements of the education system. Those elements are standards and curriculum, instructional resources, assessments, staff and development, school organisation, governance, and funding (Heikkila & Andersson, 2018). The institutional approach also aims to maximize legitimacy. Legitimacy is the perception of what is socially accepted and appropriate. Education systems are institutions that provide stability and meaning to society. Policies that are perceived as legitimate are more likely to be accepted and implemented. Institutions tend to be rigid and resist change more than organisations. Therefore, policies that are not aligned with the existing norms and structures of the education system might face resistance and be less effective. Policies that take into account the institutional context and are designed to fit within the existing structures and norms of the education system might be more successful (Heikkila & Andersson, 2018).

2.13.3 Impact of institutional approach on education policy

The institutional approach is a perspective that focuses on the norms, structures, organisations, and elements of a system that could support education. The institutional approach seeks to align and create coherence among various elements of the education system. These elements are standards and curriculum, instructional resources, assessments, staff and development, school organisation, governance, and funding. This could lead to more effective and efficient policies that support learner education. The institutional theory points out that institutions strive to maximise legitimacy. Legitimacy is the perception of what is socially accepted and appropriate.

Education systems are institutions that provide stability and meaning to society. Policies that are perceived as legitimate are more likely to be accepted and implemented (OECD, 2004). Institutions tend to be rigid and resist change more than organisations. Policies that are not aligned with the existing norms and structures of the education system might face resistance and be less effective. Institutional rules could have effects on the organisational structure and implementation of work activities that are different from the social.

Policies that take into account the institutional context and are designed to fit within the existing structures and norms of the education system might be more successful. Overall, the institutional approach could impact education policy by promoting alignment and coherence, legitimacy, and effective implementation. On the other hand, policies that do not take into account the existing norms and structures of the education system might face resistance and be less effective.

It should be realised that the institutional approaches to education policy have been applied in various ways in practice. The institutional approach is used to advance a programme of global education by identifying the norms, structures, organisations, and elements of the system that could support global education. This includes aligning and creating coherence between various elements of the system. Those elements are standards and curriculum, instructional resources, assessments, staff and development, school organisation, governance, and funding. The institutional approach is used to develop education in the social and investment model of economic growth in Russia. This approach involves identifying the norms, structures, and organisation of the education system that could support economic growth and development. The institutional theory is also used to inform state education policy regarding exit outcomes for learners with disabilities. This approach involves examining the responses of school districts to educational policy and identifying the institutional factors that influence their responses (Haass, 2020).

Institutional analyses of public education have increased in recent years. These analyses draw on public education to understand the norms, structures, and organisation of the education system that influence educational policy and practice. The institutional theory is applied in practice to advance global education, develop education in developing countries, inform state education policy, and understand educational policy and practice (Center for Universal Education, 2017).

2.13.4 Criticisms of the institutional theory's impact on education policy

The institutional theory's impact on education policy is criticised for several reasons. Critics argue that the institutional approach does not pay enough attention to power relations and how they shape education policy. Power relations could influence the norms, structures, and organisation of the education system (Willmott, 2015). Policies that do not address power imbalances might perpetuate inequities (Willmott, 2015). The institutional theory focuses on the system-level factors that influence education policy (for example, norms and structures), and overlooks the role of individual agency in shaping policy. This could lead to less attention to the perspectives and experiences of teachers, learners, parents, and other stakeholders. Critics also argue that the institutional approach might not address complex problems (achievement gaps and inequities) in education. The argument is that the theory tends to focus on the existing structures and norms of the education system. This could limit the ability of policymakers to think creatively and innovatively about solutions to those problems (Munir, 2020). The institutional approach might face resistance to change because institutions tend to be rigid and resistant to change more than organisations. Policies that are not aligned with the existing norms and structures of the education system might face resistance and be less effective. The institutional approach to education policy is criticised for its limited focus on power relations and individual agency. It has the inability to address complex problems, and the potential to face resistance to change.

2.14 Morphogenetic theory

Research focusing on learner education emerged in South Africa in the last half of the 20th century following the learner uprisings. These events combined the fight for

access to education for marginalised people and the prevailing movement for social change (Snyder, 1971). The morphogenetic approach is a social theory that explains social change and how macro and micro forces are related. It is rooted in morphogenesis. Morphogenesis refers to the process of changing or developing the shape of an entity or a phenomenon. Morphostasis refers to the ability of the system to be sturdy and consistent in a dynamic external environment. The morphogenesis and morpho-stasis approach is rooted in culture, agency, structure, and how these elements interact to form or dissolve new trajectories (Archer, 2020). The morphogenetic theory is a stratified ontology of the social order, endorsing emergence and the causal consequences of the second or third-order interplay among emergent properties. The morphogenetic theory is different from the biological concept of morphogenesis, which is an entirely non-conscious process.

The morphogenetic theory is a systems approach to societal change. Yet, it is unlike the ‘systems theory’ that is associated with organismic evolutionary theorists (Archer, 2020). The essence is not to regard social change as a random pattern of human choices, actions, communications, and desires but to help keep together chance, structural forces, human plans, and agency in one model. The morphogenetic theory is useful for understanding the links among different models of social evolution using the hermeneutics of transition. It provides an understanding of how social novelties come together and how they are generated, established, or rejected (Archer, 1995). The approach is focused on the points where structure, culture, agency, and chance interact to generate, establish, or reject social novelties. The morphogenetic approach is useful for guiding and facilitating community social and economic development.

There is a growing body of evidence in the learner education literature that calls into question the traditional procedures by which learning has been conducted. Williams (2012) indicated a shift in his work, arguing that the social realist theory of Margaret Archer needs to be revisited. The strategy of Archer, as Williams argued, is in line with the 'ontological turn' in learner education, which stresses the 'being' and 'becoming' of learners rather than their knowledge and talents. Archer defined the area of structure of the external world into two parts: structure and culture (Archer, 1996, 1995). Material objects (which are unequally dispersed throughout society), as well as social positions

and roles, are all addressed by structure. Culture contains both propositional knowledge (in which two ideas might be logically related), such as science and engineering, and the world of myths, opinions, and beliefs. Agency refers to the sphere of human activity and interaction. Structure, culture, and agency are examined independently and then simultaneously in the context of the social world through the perspective of Archer. What should be noted is that Archer's (1995) theory revolves around the concept of morphogenesis (and its inverse, morphostasis). Morphogenesis is defined as a change (-genesis) in the shape of objects (morpho-), as well as a change in agency, culture, or structure. Morphostasis, as the name suggests, is a state in which no change happens.

The morphogenetic cycle is a method of analysing the progression of events over time. In the field of education, the focus is on the morphogenesis of learner agency. Learners should graduate with a wide collection of abilities from both higher and lower education. It is crucial to keep in mind that human interactions take place in a context formed by the twin impacts of structure and culture. In this situation, conditioning refers to how the environment sets boundaries or provides possibilities for human conditioning to be used in order to maintain morphogenesis or -stasis cycles. When it comes to analysing structural and cultural conditioning, the concept of situational logic comes in handy (Williams, 2012). When analysing situational logic, it is critical to determine whether the various components of culture and structure are complementary or hostile.

2.14.1 Impact of morphogenetic theory on education policy

The morphogenetic theory is a social theory that explains the relationship between macro and micro aspects of society, or the structure-culture-agency problem. It proposes a way of overcoming the problems of exclusion and superficial, selective, and unsustainable societal development. Despite its potential, there is little information on the direct impact of the morphogenetic theory on education policy (Archer, 2010b). Some studies have used the morphogenetic approach to unpack and understand different levels of the context in which e-learning course learners find themselves in.

A social realist approach using the morphogenetic theory has been proposed to study learner education in higher education. The morphogenesis framework has also been used to research higher education as the academic self-formation of students (Crossley, 2022). Finally, there is an argument that relational realism, which could be informed by the morphogenetic theory, could help to make better educational policy that is more effective in practice.

2.14.2 Morphogenetic theory explanation of education policy

There is little information on how the morphogenetic theory directly explains educational policy. Some studies have used the morphogenetic approach to understand different levels of the context in which e-learning course learners find themselves in. The social realist approach using the morphogenetic theory was proposed to study student learning in higher education. The morphogenesis framework was also used to research higher education as academic self-formation of students. One could argue that relational realism, which could be informed by the morphogenetic theory, could help make better educational policy that is more effective in practice (Crossley, 2019). The morphogenetic theory could be used as a framework to understand educational policy but it is not a direct explanation of it.

2.14.3 Implications of the morphogenetic theory for policy analysis

The morphogenetic theory has several implications for policy analysis. For instance, the approach helps to explain how social change occurs over time. It deals with endless cycles of structural/cultural conditioning, socio-cultural reproduction, and the emergence of new social forms. The morphogenetic theory provides a way of overcoming the problems of exclusion and superficial, selective, and unsustainable societal development. It proposes an increase in the effectiveness of institutional systems to serve human and societal actualisation (Crossley, 2022). The approach could be used as a strategic tool to guide and facilitate community social and economic development. It could help policymakers to understand how social novelties come together and how they are generated, established, or rejected. The morphogenetic theory could help policymakers identify the points where structure, culture, agency,

and chance interact to generate, establish, or reject social novelties. This could help policymakers to design policies that are more effective in achieving their goals.

The approach could also help policymakers to understand the links among different models of social evolution using the hermeneutics of transition. Policymakers could also be helped to design policies that are more responsive to changing social conditions. The morphogenetic theory could help policymakers identify the systemic and cultural incompatibilities and contradictions that arise from policy implementation. This could help policymakers to design policies that are more effective in achieving their goals. The morphogenetic approach could help policymakers to design policies that are more effective in achieving their goals. This could be by providing a way of understanding how social change occurs over time. In the process, identifying the points where structure, culture, agency, and chance interact. Such interaction would help to generate, establish, or reject social novelties. That would enable the identification of the systemic and cultural incompatibilities and contradictions that arise from policy implementation.

2.14.4 Implications of the morphogenetic theory for educational policy implementation

The morphogenetic theory could provide a deeper understanding of the underlying structures and processes that shape educational systems over time, which could inform more effective educational policy interventions. The morphogenetic theory could help policymakers and researchers identify the factors that contribute to educational policy transfer and adaptation across different contexts. The morphogenetic theory could help policymakers and researchers understand the role of agency in educational policy processes. That could inform more effective strategies for engaging stakeholders in policy development and implementation (Case, 2015). The morphogenetic theory could help policymakers and researchers identify the values and relationships that underpin educational systems, which could inform more effective strategies for promoting positive educational outcomes. The morphogenetic theory could help policymakers and researchers identify the broader societal context in which educational systems operate. That could inform more effective strategies for addressing social inequalities to promote social development (Case, 2015). The

morphogenetic theory has the potential to inform more effective educational policy implementation. This could be by providing a deeper understanding of the underlying structures and processes that shape educational systems over time. That said, policymakers and researchers should carefully consider the challenges and limitations of this approach when using it to inform policy interventions.

2.14.5 Criticism of the morphogenetic theory

There is little information on how the morphogenetic theory has been received by the educational policy community. Studies that have used the morphogenetic approach in educational policy research demonstrate its potential in helping to understand the underlying structures and processes that shape educational systems over time. The morphogenetic theory is used to explore educational policy transfer learner education in higher education and to propose a social realist approach to education policy. While the morphogenetic theory has the potential in educational policy research, it is not without its limitations and critiques. One such critique is that the theory is too abstract and theoretical, complex, and does not provide clear guidance on how to intervene in educational systems to achieve desired outcomes. More research is needed to determine the reception of the morphogenetic theory by the educational policy community (Archer, 1982).

The morphogenetic theory is also criticised for being too complex and difficult to understand. That makes it inaccessible to policymakers and practitioners. The theory is criticised for not providing clear guidance on how to intervene in educational systems to achieve desired outcomes. It is criticised for not taking into account the political and economic factors that shape educational policy. The theory is criticised for not being able to account for the agency of individuals and groups in educational policy processes. The morphogenetic theory requires a deep understanding of social theory and its application to educational policy research. That might be a challenge for researchers who are not familiar with this approach. The theory might require a significant amount of time and resources to implement, as it involves a detailed analysis of the underlying structures and processes that shape educational systems

over time. While the morphogenetic theory has the potential in educational policy research, it is not without its challenges. Policymakers and researchers should carefully consider these challenges when using this approach to understand and intervene in educational systems.

As such, it could be seen that complementarities in either the structural or cultural realms are unlikely to result in change. Morphogenesis takes place within the context of a situational logic of contradiction (Archer, 1982). This perspective provides the overall framework for this research. The outcome of research conducted from this perspective is thus more than just the characterisation of learner agency but rather an understanding of the situational logics that underpin the said observed outcomes.

2.15 Policy recommendations for developing a governance framework

Based on the literature reviewed, the following preliminary policy recommendations are suggested for developing a governance framework tailored to the Eastern Cape Province DBE. The DBE should provide clear and consistent details of the model that it instructs provincial departments to use. This would ensure that all departments follow the same guidelines and would help to avoid confusion. The governance relationship among the three institutional layers affecting basic education provision in the Eastern Cape Province should be addressed. Executive politics at the provincial level shows patterns of centralised clientelism marked by factional contestation within the governing ANC. Addressing these issues would help to ensure that the education system is not influenced by political interests. Chronic leadership instability has severely undermined the resourcing and oversight of the public schooling system in the province. Ensuring leadership stability would help to provide consistency and continuity in the education system. Establishing a clear chain of command and accountability within the department, with specific roles and responsibilities assigned to each level of management. Financial mismanagement in the Eastern Cape DBE has also undermined the resourcing and oversight of the public schooling system in the province. Improving financial management would help to ensure that resources are allocated effectively and efficiently. The growth of a rule-compliant, insulated, and performance-driven bureaucracy should be encouraged. This would help to ensure

that the education system is focused on delivering quality education to learners. Developing a comprehensive performance management system with clear goals, indicators, and targets for improvement, as well as regular monitoring and evaluation of progress, is long overdue. The governance of basic education in the Eastern Cape Province should be strengthened by improving provincial school oversight and policy management. This would help to ensure that policies are implemented effectively and that schools are held accountable for their performance.

Ensuring that the department has adequate human and financial resources to support its operations, including the recruitment and retention of qualified staff and the provision of adequate funding for infrastructure and other needs. Encouraging collaboration and partnerships between the department and other stakeholders, including local communities, NGOs, and private sector organisations to enhance the quality of education and promote sustainable development.

Implementing policies and procedures to address issues of corruption and mismanagement within the department, including measures to prevent and detect such behaviour, and to hold those responsible accountable. These policy recommendations aim to address the issues of clientelism, factional contestation, leadership instability, financial mismanagement, and poor policy implementation. These issues have undermined the governance of basic education in the Eastern Cape Province. By addressing them, the education system could be improved to provide quality education to learners.

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2.16 Leveraging the theories to develop a sustainable governance framework

The human development approach is critical to the aim of developing a sustainable governance framework by the researcher in order to improve performance in the Eastern Cape Province. Costin (2023) states that human capital comprises essential skills, competencies, and abilities an individual or group of people possesses in the country. Developing the skills and abilities of citizens is essential because it ensures that they have competencies to be deployed to increase economic growth and human development. Those who support this theory argue that skills, abilities, and knowledge are essential for transforming raw materials into goods, services, and marketable

products. These items create value for various stakeholders and drive economic growth (Samiullah, 2014). The insights are important in developing the theory of this study. They are the backbone of the importance of developing or improving the skills of public servants. The academic performance of learners relies on the skills of teachers, school administrators, public leaders, SGB members, and other personnel involved in education. The proposed sustainable governance framework emphasises developing the skills of the personnel involved in basic education in the Eastern Cape. The institutional theory reviews how dominant social structures are supported by routines, relations, and norms that become established minimum guidelines or norms of acceptable behaviour. The theory suggests that society comprises a collection of institutions, some of which relate together. From an organisational perspective, the institutional theory suggests that organisations are made up of individuals and teams whose behaviour, performance, and beliefs impact organisational performance or overall productivity. These insights are crucial in developing the sustainable governance of this study. They reveal that public organisations such as schools and government departments are part of an ecosystem (government) that is developed to foster cooperation among its various entities and pursue mutual goals. The performance of learners in the Eastern Cape schools is not an isolated phenomenon but the culmination of policies and processes involving multiple institutions, elements, and role players. The theory recommends stakeholder involvement, effective management and oversight, and improved governance.

The morphogenetic approach applied to this study underlies the phenomenon of change and transformation. It was used to motivate systematic changes in a social environment. This viewpoint could be applied to public sector institutions. Part of these institutions are the administrative authorities of basic education in the Eastern Cape Province. They shape and promote structural changes therein. Elements of the sustainable governance framework are modernising the Schools Act and developing new policies. New policies should be consistent with existing challenges. These should be viewed as systematic changes introduced to improve efficiency in the education system of the provincial government.

2.17 Addressing gaps identified in the literature

The study used semi-structured interviews to collect and gather data. Semi-structured interviews, as identified by Kumar (2014), were used for interviews. Interviews were held with officials from the DBE at the district and province levels. The importance of education in South Africa has gained momentum. This is against a backdrop of deteriorating social and economic conditions. The Eastern Cape government is encouraged to tackle the mounting challenges that are evident in the province. By interviewing those participants, the researcher understood the rights of learners. He also acquainted himself with how the governance framework in the basic education sector has been implemented in South Africa. He also discovered what it means for the prospects of a developmental state in the country.

Interviews were held with principals from various selected schools to get a comprehensive understanding of the political, social, and economic situation underpinning the Department of Education in the province. This was based on the fact that these were key stakeholders in several schools. They also engaged in policy research and dialogues that influenced education governance framework discourse in the province. The said participants were highly positioned to give very important insights about the possibilities and limitations of the governance framework in the province. De Vos et al. (2005) rationalised the use of interviews on the basis that they are a flexible and effective method of generating large and in-depth information quickly. Interviews also provide participants with an opportunity to express their perspectives without restraint, resulting in a greater variety of information. Since they are flexible in structure and content, the semi-structured interviews were expedient in extensively probing issues under study. Detailed information about the social and economic rights and basic education governance framework policy formulation was gathered. Information about the implementation of governance policies and the challenges posed by the Department of Education and the schools in the Eastern Cape Province were equally obtained.

2.18 Conclusion

The Eastern Cape Province experienced extensive governmental re-organisation following the 1994 democratic transition in the country. This has had a profound effect on the capacity of the province to shape and implement policy, especially in institutionally fragmented sectors such as basic education. The governance of basic education in the Eastern Cape Province is characterised by chronic leadership instability, politicisation, and financial mismanagement. These have compromised the cohesion and integrity of provincial school oversight and policy management. Based on the foregoing, there is a need for a context-specific governance framework to improve basic education performance in the Eastern Cape Province. Such a framework should take into account the general governance characteristics of the province and those in the education sector. Particularly those that have impeded the growth of a rule-compliant, insulated, and performance-driven bureaucracy. The framework should also address the historical patterns of clientelism that were transplanted into the post-apartheid political and administrative settlement. The result of that was considerable intra-party cleavages amongst the political elite.

The following are some of the reasons why a context-specific governance framework was necessary. The Eastern Cape Province has unique governance challenges that require a tailored approach to address them. The governance of basic education in the Eastern Cape Province is characterised by chronic leadership instability, politicisation, and financial mismanagement. These problems have compromised the cohesion and integrity of provincial school oversight and policy management. Governance typology in the province is a personalised/negotiated type that displays a clientelistic orientation and increasing levels of fragmentation. The primary mode of governance in the province is marked by factional contestation within the governing ANC. The context-specific governance framework was necessary to address the unique governance challenges facing the Eastern Cape Province. The hope is to improve the performance of basic education in the province.

CHAPTER 3

EXISTING MODELS AND APPROACHES OF GOVERNING MODERN SCHOOLS

3.1 Introduction

Chapter two reviews the literature about formulating the governance framework to enhance academic performance given the multipronged challenges that envelop the governance of schools in South Africa and other nations. The literature review clarified the purpose of the SGBs across various educational institutions, in addition to identifying best practices and hurdles encountered in this domain. It scrutinises the methodologies, frameworks, models, trends and capacities of the SGBs globally. This chapter outlines a comprehensive overview of models and analyses their use in several countries. It focuses on how the practices of the SGBs in those countries contribute to the initiatives designed to bolster learner performance. The chapter references the United States of America (USA), Australia, the United Kingdom (UK), India, Germany and New Zealand, inter alia. The analysis of school boards within those countries aspires to illuminate their operational methodologies. This facilitates a comparative comprehension of the functional dynamics of SGBs in South Africa. The chapter delves into both the similarities and the discrepancies in the roles of the SGBs concerning governing and equipping schools.

The preceding chapter extensively examined the complexities inherent in school governance, particularly in South Africa and other comparable nations. It explicated their detrimental effects on educational outcomes. Notably, it underscored the positive correlation between non-assertive SGBs and sub-par learner performance in classroom assessments and national examinations. Holman (2013) pointed out that effective governance and accountability within educational institutions are essential for achieving success. In South Africa, particularly in the Eastern Cape Province, schools lacking a comprehensive School Governance Framework (SGF) face significant challenges in attaining commendable academic results and enhanced learner achievement. A robust SGF not only catalyses academic improvement but it also

cultivates virtue among learners. Holman (2013) contended that the test results should be the beginning, not the end of the story. He emphasised the role of the SGBs in leveraging the autonomy granted by the DBE to augment the academic accomplishments of learners.

As articulated by Williamson and Field (in Holman, 2013), governing bodies could profoundly influence the development of a comprehensive educational experience and the attainment of satisfactory testing outcomes. While the SGBs possess the authority to make decisions about governance and enhancement, robust leadership remains indispensable for the actualisation of these objectives. Competent SGB leadership has the potential to motivate the school principal and staff, thereby ensuring an increase in both commitment and accountability in their respective roles. This directs schools to concentrate on enriching educational experiences through effective teaching methodologies. Also realised here are the provision of essential funding and the establishment of a secure learning environment. If these functions are guided and executed skilfully, they could cultivate confidence among learners (Holman, 2013) while inspiring them to excel in their academic pursuits.

Theories, models, and trends in school governance are multifaceted phenomena that warrant rigorous examination. The interplay among these elements is often complex. This intricacy could obscure their significance. Various frameworks exist to understand governance in schools. The efficacy of each framework might vary because of contextual factors. Trends, in particular, are shaped by societal demands and changing educational paradigms. The persistence of traditional models remains evident despite all that. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for stakeholders to navigate the evolving landscape of educational administration.

3.2 School governance models

The introduction of the SASA through legislation marked a significant shift in the governance of schools. That introduction allowed for the devolution of powers for the principals to work together with parents and learners. With parents gaining the opportunity to participate in school administration decision-making processes, the

implementation of the Act is slow. Maraj (2010) noted that,

> "*A legally supported opportunity has been made available for the millions of historically disadvantaged parents to play a constructive and meaningful role in the education of their children through the formation of democratically elected SGBs in South Africa."*

Some SGBs are unaware of their functions because those functions are poorly defined. There is a need to define the functions of the SGBs to enable them to operate effectively and contribute towards the development of schools (Ehren et al., 2015). Creating school committees could increase the efficiency of the SGBs. This lesson was drawn from the operations of task forces and committees that responded to the disruption in education after Hurricane Katrina in the USA. Their efforts resulted in a quick resumption of learning after that national disaster (Ehren et al., 2015).

3.2.1 School governance models in the Netherlands

The National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) delineates models of school governance aimed at attaining effective and high-quality public education. These three models are the Carver, the cooperative of parents, and the corporate models. It is essential to understand that each model offers unique advantages and challenges. The three models differ in structure, but this variety allows schools to adopt frameworks that best suit their specific contexts. In view of those differences, stakeholders should carefully consider which model aligns most closely with their educational objectives. In that picture, informed decisions could be made.

3.2.2 Parental Cooperative Model

The cooperative model of parental engagement is predominantly employed by the Montessori and Jewish educational institutions. It places considerable emphasis on the contributions of parents. In that model, parents possess the authority to elect the school board (SB) and sanction the budget. The NAIS expresses reservations

regarding this model. Its reservations are based on their concerns about its reliability and sustainability. That is because it is heavily contingent upon parental perspectives. The NAIS argue that this model "often adopts a crisis posture that undermines school leadership and board governance." Analogous to the Waldorf methodology, the cooperative model of parental involvement tends to concentrate on the present condition of the institution rather than its prospective trajectory. This model has its limitations but it continues to operate effectively within certain institutions. It affords parents a sense of local ownership through their active engagement and participation.

3.2.3 The Carver Model

The Carver model is considered an "authoritative sorting mechanism" because it prescribes how the SGBs should operate. The model differentiates between expectations imposed upon the school governing body and those assigned to the school management team. In addition, it endeavours to assist boards in distancing themselves from the limitations inherent in the constituent-driven paradigm. The model has been criticised as it does not sufficiently address the financial dimensions of the school. It ostensibly excludes the board from participatory fundraising endeavours. In as much as these apprehensions exist, the NAIS asserts that the Carver model remains a viable alternative. It adeptly delineates powers and responsibilities, thus permitting specific role allocations and performance evaluations within the governance framework.

3.2.4 The corporate model

The corporate paradigm prioritises strategic planning that is oriented towards the prospective trajectory of the institution. This framework allows school governors to evaluate the stability and growth of the institution over temporal intervals. NAIS (2013) states that,

"*The corporate board model operates from a 'shareholder and*

stakeholder' perspective, making decisions that are in the best interest of all constituents (parents, faculty, staff, alumni, prospective parents and future generations of learners)".

The board meticulously curates stakeholders within this construct, placing a premium on the impending requirements of the institution. It also fosters inclusivity, facilitating all the collective engagement of the stakeholders. This dynamic promotes a forum for the exchange of perspectives that assist SGBs in augmenting the efficacy and achievements of the South African educational institutions.

3.2.5 An optimum model

Effective governance within educational institutions aims to ensure quality education, enabling all learners to excel (Ehren et al., 2015). In the Netherlands, SBs collaborate with school inspectors to systematically monitor and evaluate both learner achievement and school-related documentation. This collaboration enhances the overall school quality (Ehren et al., 2015). Schools categorised as high risk are identified through early warning systems. Those who consistently underperform are subjected to additional interventions. If there is a lack of observable improvements, the repercussions might involve inspections, issuance of warning letters, reductions in funding, and even potential school closures. Although the Dutch Inspectorate of Education does not explicitly evaluate the performance of school boards, it is anticipated that the SGBs would implement methodologies that augment their efficacy in monitoring and elevating school quality (Ehren et al., 2015). Research reveals that, although governing methods differ, a shared objective among all the SBs persists. The pursuit of sustainable, high-quality education is the common denominator here.

Jeff Moredock, serving as governance counsel for NAIS, warned that "no model would operate any better than its users comprehend how it ought to function and, by extension, how effectively the constituent community grasps what the appropriate roles and responsibilities of a board are" (NAIS, 2013). That warning brings to light an intricate dynamic that is, understanding is paramount. One might assume that the model design could inherently facilitate its use. That is not the case, as it is ultimately

the comprehension of the user that dictates efficacy. In respect of that, the emphasis on clarity and communication cannot be overstated.

3.3 Global perspectives on school governance

This section discusses examples of practices concerning the expectations placed upon the SGBs across several nations. The efficacy of the SGBs hinges on stakeholder collaboration and engagement in pursuing institutional objectives and their corresponding targets. Stakeholders ought to collaborate based on interests that are mutually shared. The functionalist theory is the view that society comprises coordinated structures functioning interdependently to achieve collective objectives (Haralambos & Holborn, 2012). Managing educational institutions could be efficiently realised if harmonious relations between stakeholders and SGBs are present (Anderson & Taylor, 2010). Inadequate collaboration might negatively impact the performance of learners. That said, school governors are responsible for establishing a foundation for effective governance. That foundation should embrace monitoring and evaluation, strategic planning, resource management, accountability, and developing strategies to increase the performance of learners.

In order for an educational institution to achieve academic excellence, it is commonly posited that its governing bodies must exhibit a profound interest in matters pertaining to the curriculum. This assertion serves as the foundation for the SGBs' endeavours to cultivate processes and systems conducive to effective operational functionality. That effective functionality includes the orchestration of various school activities. The decision-making processes employed by the SGBs should be geared towards generating a positive impact on the educational experiences of learners. It is equally beneficiary to engage in ongoing evaluations to ascertain the efficacy of current practices. Or whether they necessitate reassessment to truly embody best practices. Maile (2012) emphasised the critical role of SGB accountability in the advancement of educational institutions. He stressed that active participation by all stakeholders is imperative. If SGBs maintain accountability to their constituents, their operational efficiency is likely to be enhanced. This idealistic scenario might encounter challenges, though. Particularly due to the prevalence of illiteracy among certain SGB members.

This is especially so in rural locales, and that could severely hinder access to essential management information and comprehension of requisite legislation. This examination would delve into the governance practices of selected countries, as their experiences might serve as valuable benchmarks for the South African educational context.

It is assumed that deriving knowledge from and contextualising practices deemed effective constitutes a process that necessitates enduring engagement from all stakeholders. These are teachers, policymakers, and community members. Their involvement has positive implications for overall school performance. The countries selected are typically perceived as possessing robust and effective school governance systems. Hence, the achievement of their learners ranks higher in comparison to other nations. This chapter concentrates on how the SGB reforms have positively influenced their respective districts and schools. It would also explore the numerous challenges encountered in executing governance functions. These complexities could detract from the intended outcomes. Progress is observed in those countries reviewed, but the nuances of their reforms require careful examination. That is because understanding the interplay between governance and educational success is essential for sustainable improvement.

3.4 Australian case

This section discusses the operations of Australian educational institutions. It explores the SGBs in public schools, analysing their effectiveness. It also highlights any constraints they encounter in delivering education. These systems are designed to ensure quality. Meanwhile, challenges persist because resources are often limited. This complexity necessitates a deeper understanding of the dynamics at play here.

3.4.1 Perceptions about school governance

To a significant extent, the governance of educational institutions constitutes a voluntary endeavour that permits parents and various stakeholders to contribute to the betterment of their communities (Cassells, 2011). This perspective emphasises the imperative role of adequate financial resources in education, specifically in equipping

learners and youth with crucial life skills. This viewpoint underscores the salient importance of education in promoting social mobility. The Australian government aspires to realise an 'education revolution' that prioritises social inclusion. It thus encourages greater participation in educational endeavours and training. Perceptions of school governance, nevertheless, differ markedly among nations. Some countries regard their SGBs as moderately effective, while others contend that minimal progress has been achieved concerning requisite reforms. The Government of Australia (2017) appraised that school administrators, entrenched in antiquated practices, might inadvertently resist change, thereby jeopardising school performance. This situation highlights how information and resources are unequally distributed in Australia and elsewhere.

This persists across various nations, often correlated with the social and economic status of learners. The social and economic inequalities highly shape learner achievement. The role of the SGBs is central to ensuring equitable access to educational resources for all. Research indicates that disparities in education, frequently linked to sub-par education systems, could result in diminished economic performance. The Australian education system is predominantly subsidised, but disadvantaged groups, particularly Indigenous Aboriginal Australians, often encounter barriers to education. Argy (2017) highlighted the stark fluctuations in academic performance among learners in Australia. She claimed that these disparities are primarily influenced by class, family, and social backgrounds, especially compared to countries like Canada and Finland. The reliance of Australia on private financing complicates efforts to provide equal opportunities for economically disadvantaged learners. Argy (2017) added that inequalities would persist. Governments should expand educational opportunities from early childhood to adult vocational training to reduce inequalities.

The Australian Department of Education and Training (ADET) aims to eradicate barriers to educational attainment. Its strategy is informed by several challenges, such as those arising from class segregation, poverty, poor nutrition, and inadequate child care. Social and ethnic barriers to school governance still persist in Australia. These barriers complicate efforts to achieve equity in education. Numerous initiatives that aim

to address these issues were introduced. Despite that introduction, the complexity of the underlying factors continues to pose significant challenges. Due to that, a comprehensive approach is essential to foster an inclusive educational environment.

Barriers impede educational attainment and school governance, including poverty, drop-out rates, attendance discrepancies, and inequitable opportunities (ADET, 2017). To confront these challenges, Australia collaborates with numerous governmental officials to enhance the accessibility of learning outcomes through comprehensive educational policies. Strategic, operational planning, budgeting and capacity-building initiatives within schools, at both sub-national and national levels, also make up that part of the collaboration. This approach necessitates innovative practices. The development of knowledge and information systems related to the educational framework is being reinforced. Evaluative measures are employed for effective interventions. The authorities should find effective practices within this sector. This would facilitate the standardisation of effective strategies across discussions related to school governance. Increasing collaboration remains essential to amplify the effectiveness of the SGBs in Australia. While significant efforts have been made in Australia, many countries struggle with substantial barriers to effective school governance.

Inequality and class disparities (which persist) remain prevalent. That situation is compounded by misunderstandings and conflicts regarding guiding policies. To be functional and capable of fulfilling their roles, school governors must be supported by relevant and effective policies. Achieving this could be challenging because the dynamics of these inequalities often obscure the efficacy of proposed measures. The intent behind such policies is typically well-meaning, but their implementation frequently encounters significant obstacles. That necessitates ongoing scrutiny and adaptation.

3.5 The German case

SGBs are vital in the educational landscape. This section delineates the functions and experiences of these entities in Germany while also drawing a comparison to South

Africa. There are similarities between these two countries, yet the distinctions are noteworthy. This comparative analysis reveals that the SGBs in Germany operate differently. That is because of the unique social and political environments that shape their governance structures.

3.5.1 Unequal access to resources

German educational institutions suffer from inequalities, wherein preschool and primary education frequently fail to ameliorate the disadvantages associated with diverse backgrounds is a profound concern. Solga (2015) indicated that the limited instructional hours characteristic of German "half-day schools" (which customarily conclude around midday) necessitate parents to assist for the remaining hours. The disparate allocation of resources and other necessities by parents constitutes a significant dilemma in numerous locales. The SGBs should prioritise equal access to resources to assist poor learners.

Moreover, considerable disparities emerge across various nations, states, districts, and schools regarding their respective purposes, visions, and values. Leadership efficacy within certain educational environments could be drastically undermined by a deficiency in direction and expertise. These institutions should cultivate a shared belief system, which is essential for fostering collective practices. In some cases, schools that consistently benchmark their performance against high-achieving counterparts might inadvertently engender a competitive ethos aimed at attaining the targets they aspire to reach.

Fiore (2014) delineates the role of school governors as “educational leaders who promote the success of all learners by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community”. That characterisation (while accurate) raises questions about the efficacy of such leadership structures. The SGBs are tasked with significant responsibilities such that the actual impact on educational outcomes could vary considerably. This variability is often attributable to external factors. These factors are social and economic influences and institutional constraints. One should consider the

complicated nature of educational leadership, which complicates straightforward effectiveness assessments.

The nexus between educational leaders and the community is paramount. The SGBs should facilitate this connection with seamless efficacy. Enhancing learner education is a universally acknowledged objective for both school administrators and governors. The development and execution of policies should then consider external variables, particularly the political and economic milieu that exerts influence upon them. Fiore (2014) explained that motivational theories serve as guiding frameworks for school governors. They assist them in identifying effective strategies to elevate learner academic performance and bolster the morale of both the learners and employees. Helmke, Franz, and Weinert (2016) observed that factors such as "the cognitive and affective entry characteristics of learners, observed efficiency of management, quality of instruction, learner perceptions, time-on-task, and self-reported attention" are essential elements that enhance learner performance and overall institutional effectiveness. Helmke et al. (2016) believe that the management of efficiency within the classroom, optimal utilisation of quality time, and a clear focus on task orientation positively correlate with learner engagement and cognitive outcomes. This correlation is contingent upon several contextual factors.

3.5.2 Racial equity and redress

Numerous nations continue to grapple with the complex issue of racial equity within educational resources and opportunities. There exists a pressing necessity for educational departments and SGBs to execute strategies and tools for facilitating educational reforms that promote racial equity within academic institutions. McArdle et al. (2017) mentioned that resources should be allocated to learners irrespective of their racial identity. This concept further entails the imperative of equitable treatment for all learners, ensuring access to opportunities without racial discrimination. It is essential to allow every learner to fully engage in educational programmes, regardless of their racial background. Achieving such equity is fraught with challenges because systemic barriers persist. Concerted efforts are warranted to dismantle these obstacles.

3.6 The Indian case

Indian school governors ensure educators and administrators are held accountable for the pedagogical processes. Policymakers frequently marginalise SGBs from enhancing initiatives associated with their projects and plans. The Right of the Child to Free and Compulsory Education Act is perceived as a significant commitment to delivering education that is universally accessible (Government of India, 2015). This Act empowers the SGBs by fortifying their authoritative capacity.

That Act establishes the Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) in schools across the country (Government of India, 2015). Those entities comprise parents and teachers from designated schools. Their fundamental mandate is the enhancement of school effectiveness and the promotion of excellence. Typically, the PTAs are elected to fulfil three-year terms, taking into account their leadership capacities and potential to influence their communities positively. Wonde (2012) observed that the PTAs aspire to cultivate a supportive environment conducive to community engagement and to encourage active parental involvement in educational initiatives. The USAID (2018) sees the PTAs functioning at the micro-level, thereby augmenting the relationship between parents and teachers. In this framework, parents could actively participate in the educational process and collaborate to tackle challenges. A notable shortcoming of the PTAs lies in their lack of involvement with learners. That starkly contrasts with the previously established parent-teacher-learner associations in South Africa. An essential measure under the Act is the formation of School Management Committees (SMCs) in Indian villages (Kumar, 2015).

The engagement of community members and the support extended to school programmes are pivotal in facilitating the resolution of educational dilemmas (Johnson et al., 2018). The DoE finds itself at a disadvantage when attempting to address the multifaceted challenges confronting educational institutions because the pertinent contributions of stakeholders are indispensable. Engaging a diverse array of organisations beyond just governmental entities is essential for adeptly managing potential crises within the educational sector. Ongoing challenges impacting learner outcomes include teacher and learner absenteeism, poor teaching standards, limited access to teaching resources and technology, ill-discipline, poor school culture and

insufficient collaboration between SGBs and School Management Teams (SMTs) (Segalo & Rambuda, 2018). In some cases, there is regulatory confusion where two regulatory systems exist in one area (Dixon & Tooley, 2015). Factors influencing the efficacy of school governance in India are elaborated upon in subsequent discussions.

3.6.1 Functions of Indian SGBs

In India, there exists a tripartite categorisation of school management systems. These are the government schools, private-aided institutions, and private unaided establishments (Dixon & Tooley, 2015). Private-aided schools, frequently administered by religious organisations, receive comprehensive funding for their instructional personnel from the state while concurrently adhering to grant-in-aid stipulations. Dewey (2012) applauded the pivotal function of education within society. He said that it metamorphoses cognitive processes and cultivates individual competencies, thereby positioning education as a mechanism for societal transformation. The SGBs enable schools to realise their goals (British Council in India, 2014). This body is also charged with the maintenance of educational standards, the enhancement of fiscal governance, the acquisition of pedagogical resources, and the assurance of employing qualified teachers. In particular instances, the Chigwell School SGBs are required to guarantee compliance with statutory mandates. That includes periodic evaluations of safeguarding and child protection protocols that occur regularly. A notable chasm persists in the comprehension of duties by the SGBs against the actual execution. That is because many members lack the requisite knowledge.

3.7 Capacity building for SGBs

Research indicates that enhancing the capabilities of governing bodies in South Africa, mainly through capacity-building initiatives, would significantly augment their governance effectiveness (Mncube, 2018). Bagarette (2012) admitted that both the SGBs and principals, as pivotal power centres, should acquire adequate knowledge of the SASA to effectively fulfil their functions. That partnership with the DBE seeks to

bolster their capacities while mitigating conflicts. Both entities should protect the interests of learners. The SGBs often find themselves hindered in executing their responsibilities due to a deficiency in specialised knowledge regarding their duties under the SASA No 84 of 1996 (Xaba, 2011). This situation raises questions about the quality and availability of training provided to the SGB members by provincial departments. Mabasa and Themane (2012) explained that "training on the job" frequently engenders challenges within school governance. The SGB members are often willing to engage but they frequently lack the requisite support from stakeholders who are ostensibly tasked with assisting them.

This scenario means that members exhibit a pronounced eagerness to engage in training sans compensation. Mabasa and Themane (2011) contended that should the SGBs defer their training until after the execution of their responsibilities, various issues, such as unfamiliarity with meeting procedures and legislative knowledge, would experience a notable reduction. It is essential to recognise that entrenched power dynamics among members might still obstruct effective participation. The insufficiency of adequate training not only undermines the fundamental functions of the SGBs it also inhibits their capacity to enhance overall school effectiveness. Studies reveal that numerous SGB members return from training inadequately prepared and possess little comprehension of school management or governance roles (Xaba, 2011). Many SGB members lack the requisite academic or financial acumen necessary to comprehend the functions mandated by the Schools Act. That requires specialised understanding in areas including policy development and financial accounting. The intricacy of technical language and concepts continues to present formidable challenges, even in light of training initiatives. The proverb "head knowledge and heart knowledge" serves to illustrate the fallacy in assuming that every elected SGB member could competently fulfil their role without training. This assumption remains pervasive.

Effective governance requires a profound comprehension of the theoretical frameworks underpinning practical applications. To function effectively, the SGBs need to grasp the intricacies of the school operations. That equips management with essential support and challenges for growth. The complexities of educational environments could sometimes obscure these objectives. The commitment is evident

here but governance dynamics require continuous adaptation to respond to an ever-evolving landscape.

3.8 Strategies for managing educational programmes

The government should not possess unilateral authority over the governance of schools. Instead, it should engage in a shared distribution of power with educational stakeholders (Tsotetsi, 2015). The successful devolution of authority is contingent upon empowering SGBs through theoretical and practical knowledge. When the SGBs receive adequate training and resources, they can make decisions to positively influence their schools and communities. Training, therefore, becomes paramount for the preparation of the SGBs. Fostering collaboration among all involved stakeholders is vital for enhancing educational quality. Sayed and Carrim (2017) confirmed that a diverse representation in the governing body ensures accountability and upholds legitimacy and democratic values within the educational system. Strengthening collaboration, along with existing strategies, remains essential for effectively empowering the SGBs in their management of schools. The challenge lies in sustaining these efforts over time.

3.9 The New Zealand case

In New Zealand, the SGBs ensure that learner achievement is high. That goal echoes the South African context (Quan-Baffour, 2006). Efforts undertaken by the SGBs should consistently prioritise the enhancement of academic performance. Factors such as strategic planning and networking within governance policies are critical in accomplishing that. There are cultural and community differences that exist among schools. In light of that, a unifying interest in the success of each institution is warranted. The Board of Trustees instituted an accountability card for schools, a contrast to the practices observed in England and Wales (Thody & Punter, 2010). For SGBs to effectively drive improvements, they should comprehensively grasp their roles and collaborate with other SGBs. Building partnerships predicated on sincere dialogue could foster a shared purpose, thus leading to enhanced outcomes. Regular evaluations and checks strengthen school systems and promote accountability and

transparency. Doing so is crucial for sustained progress.

3.10 The case of the United Kingdom

The United Kingdom (UK) schools engage with their SGBs. That engagement started after reforms designed to decentralise authority and augment accountability were made (Farrell & Law, 2009). Engaging with the SGBs exemplifies a model of effective leadership practices. After the said reforms, the SGBs assumed administrative responsibilities previously held by local education authorities. The SGBs operate under the assumption that they can more adeptly address the needs of schools (Farrell & Law, 2009). The synergy between the SGBs and the Head-teachers is instrumental in ensuring high-quality education. In that respect, the DFE produced guidelines for the composition of the SGBs in May 2014. That process fulfilled the necessity for regular evaluations and opportunities for "reconstitution" to invigorate ideas and perspectives. Thus, governing bodies are mandated to comprise at least seven members, including representatives from parents, a head teacher, a staff governor, and one local area governor. For transparency and harmony, additional regulations were promulgated to constrain co-opted governors while advocating for meticulous negotiations concerning restructuring initiatives. Farrell and Law (2009) explained that the SGBs have been crucial since the 1980s as they bolster local accountability through essential representation. The effectiveness of those bodies is debatable because varying interpretations of accountability persist across different educational contexts.

The governance model of the UK schools is distinguished by its inclusive methodology and its pronounced focus on consensus-driven decision-making. These two issues facilitate school development. The UK Education Act clearly outlines the duties of school governors. The fundamental obligations of governors within the Trust Governance framework are to uphold values such as accountability, ethics, transparency, and responsibility. These guarantee the effective utilisation of resources. The Essex County Council (2016) identified additional critical responsibilities of governors that merit consideration here. The said duties further enhance the overall effectiveness of school governance. The roles of governors might appear straightforward, but the effective execution of those roles needs stakeholders who

understand the education sector. This complexity underscores the importance of collaborative efforts among all stakeholders of the schools. The duties of the governor are determining budget allocations, appointing and dismissing staff, and hearing appeals and grievances.

The formulation of policies about the curriculum and collective worship is essential. Similarly, the establishment of standards for behavioural expectations and disciplinary protocols is critical. Ensuring the safety and inviting atmosphere of educational facilities is paramount. The examination and resolution of school objectives and policies is a necessary undertaking. Governing bodies in UK schools encounter challenges similar to those faced by their counterparts in South Africa, India, and New Zealand. Holman (2013:7) described several significant obstacles to good governance. In describing those obstacles, Holman (2013) ensured that evaluation and accountability were expressed within a coherent framework, itself a substantial task. Developing evaluation capacity and effectively utilising feedback mechanisms is imperative. There is also the need to connect accountability to the actual experiences within the classroom. This could be a complex procedure if governors are not well-versed in school governance issues. Balancing improvement initiatives with accountability measures has challenges, as it requires the careful navigation of competing priorities.

It is essential that accountability strategies address those challenges in order to prevent adverse impacts on the quality of teaching and learning. Holman (2013) emphasised the importance of investing in evaluation competencies. To him, providing support to school agents is crucial. This then raises questions about how American governors are appointed because governance structures could influence educational outcomes. There are various frameworks in place to sustain good governance in the education sector in various countries. But, the effectiveness of these strategies is subject to scrutiny. This complexity necessitates a nuanced understanding of accountability and the quality of education.

Governmental statutes and various Education Acts predominantly regulate the formulation and selection of school governors. Governing bodies typically comprise between nine and twenty members. This composition range is contingent upon the size

of the educational institution (Essex County Council, 2016). Stakeholder participation (parents, local authorities, and community organisations) augments the legitimacy and efficacy of the school's governing bodies. Newly appointed governors usually attend only one induction course to prepare them for their school governance responsibilities (Essex County Council, 2016). Additional training workshops designed to enhance their effectiveness are arranged and held after their initial induction course (Essex County Council, 2016). In some schools or Counties, online training opportunities are provided at no cost. Such an arrangement fosters motivation among school governors. Land (2012) explained that local school boards frequently encounter criticism for their perceived obsolescence and ineffectiveness in spearheading educational reforms. Addressing this issue necessitates formulating meaningful strategies to improve educational quality.

3.11 State and Federal reforms in school governance

The governance of educational institutions is key to the efficacy of school administration and effective management. Local school boards (integral to this framework) collaborate with management teams and staff members to augment the effectiveness of schools. School boards often receive insufficient attention regarding professional development initiatives. Beckham and Wills (2014) confirmed the role of local school boards in executing educational reforms. These authors underlined the necessity for a systematic review of those reforms to discern effective practices. Schools that find themselves devoid of clear governance should prioritise an increased awareness of educational legislation and the policies established by local school boards (Fiore, 2014). Successful governance has the potential to align individual responsibilities with broader educational objectives. This requires a comprehensive understanding of the intricate political, legal, and educational dynamics that influence school governance.

3.12 Governance and policy-making

SGBs encounter countless constraints that impede their effectiveness. Professional

development initiatives for school board members should be meticulously aligned with their respective responsibilities (Willis, 2010). Clear communication between senior management and the SGBs about their roles is essential for effective governance. Critics contend that bureaucratic structures undermine the traditional functions of local school boards, thereby limiting individual decision-making authorities (Beckham & Wills, 2014). Micro-managing tendencies, coupled with the influence of special interest groups, further exacerbate the complexities of governance. Bureaucratic delays could adversely impact the operational capabilities of the SGBs. Beckham and Wills (2014) added that the policy-making process necessitates a thorough analysis of current outcomes juxtaposed with desired outcomes in order to identify existing gaps. This analytical process informs the formulation of strategic plans to achieve the established objectives. Willis (2010) stressed the pivotal importance of investing in the professional development of governance bodies. He cautioned that neglect in this area could precipitate underperformance and potential financial crises.

3.13 Public education trends

The SGBs aim for mutual goals given that they are influenced by various social, economic, and political factors. This complexity cannot be overlooked when discussing the problems that affect school governance. This section explores current trends in public education. In doing so, the section offers insights into the role of SGBs in modern educational landscapes. The evolving nature of these trends requires a nuanced understanding because the influence of external variables might reshape the dynamics involved.

3.13.1 Democratising education

Ornstein and Levine (2010) believed that education is important because it is a democratising force. At first glance, the two terms might appear unrelated but the integration of the two cultivates an appreciation for diversity. Such an appreciation engenders open-minded individuals. Some researchers correlate democracy with the

devolution of central power (Mncube & Mafora, 2017). Explaining this perspective, Marishane (2009) had this to say,

> "*The concept of decentralisation arose from the belief that the State alone cannot manage schools effectively. Instead, the State should share its power with other stakeholders, particularly those closer to schools in a partnership format*."

Including several stakeholders in the SGBs is evidence of decentralisation that shows how schools could be best managed and administered. Deenanath (2013) elaborated that educational governance when decentralised, transfers decision-making authority to lower levels of government. Decentralising decision-making enhances community involvement in school governance. The augmentation of participation is essential for addressing the diminishing efficiency and efficacy of centralised systems.

3.13.2 Transforming SGBs governance

Sustainable transformation in educational institutions hinges on implementing mechanisms to enhance the effectiveness of the SGBs through the active engagement of all pertinent stakeholders. Schools should adopt strategies that guarantee sustainable development. Todaro (2010) equated development with transformation, positing that the former involves multi-dimensional progress across economic, social, and political realms. Change is an immutable reality in life that sparks the ongoing evaluation of practices to ascertain areas for enhancement. In school governance, it is agreed that the SGBs worldwide ought to assess reforms to strengthen effective governance. The reform assessment process is vital for advancing educational frameworks.

3.13.3 Training and development

Armstrong (2009) admitted that training represents a systematic enhancement of the

requisite knowledge, skills, and attitudes that individuals should acquire to effectively execute their tasks. The primary objective of training is to augment employee performance. Effective employee performance leads to heightened competence and job satisfaction and basically increases organisational productivity. Training is indispensable for amplifying the effectiveness of the SGB members. Beach (2010) conceptualised development as a learning trajectory that transcends current roles. He emphasised personal and professional growth for the long term. Development equips individuals for prospective roles that align with their career aspirations. In that process, essential skills that enable the SGB members to navigate challenges in governance are cultivated. In section 3.18, the comprehension of policies pertinent to school governance is encapsulated.

Policies regulate the governance of schools. Policies function as essential frameworks for developing systemic procedures (Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission, 2017). Research examined the comprehension of these policies and procedures (OECD, 2014). The effective realisation of best practices remains underrepresented. This leads to significant challenges in managing educational institutions and delivering high-quality education (UNDP, 2011). This scenario emphasises the need for more robust training and development initiatives to equip the SGB members to fulfil their responsibilities with greater efficacy. The DBE in South Africa initiated a programme that has resulted in the Higher Certificate in School Management and Leadership for School Management Teams. That program enhances the grasp of school management by the SGBs. The said programme has so far failed to adequately address the policies or legislative acts that are pertinent to school governance. Meador (in Baumgardt, 2013) argued that for a policy to achieve its desired effectiveness, it should be informative, direct, clear, concise, current, and comprehensible.

The necessity for targeted investigations into the design of frameworks conducive to efficacious school governance remains pronounced. Schools should engage collaboratively, devising strategies to empower the SGBs. Kern (2009) posited that no singularly ideal governance methodology exists. Indeed, a one-size-fits-all solution is unattainable for educational institutions. He also explained that effective governance might manifest in many forms. That being so, various policies, in conjunction with

procedures, could be adeptly executed across those schools that exemplify sound governance practices. Discerning and comprehending the commonalities among schools, despite their heterogeneous structures and policies, is paramount to ensure effective governance paradigms. Kern (2009) illustrated that 11 features perpetually bolster the capacity of the SGBs to govern their institutions efficiently. Those features are contractual agreement, mutual goals, conservatism, effective leadership, separating functions like technical operations, decision, and policy-making; effective leadership teams, a three-fold perspective, stakeholder engagement, monitoring and continuous review; communication, engagement, honesty and trust, and collaborations.

3.14 Corporate model and effective governance

The NAIS values the corporate model because it formulates a strategic plan that emphasises the future of the institution. That model facilitates school governors as they evaluate stability and growth over time. The model operates from the perspective of shareholders and stakeholders. Mutually beneficial decisions made by those involved cater for the interests of all constituent affiliates. The constituent affiliates are parents, faculty, alumni and, the actual and prospective learners. Selecting board members with future needs is very important here. The model promotes inclusivity through the collective participation of stakeholders. In this sense, the overall effectiveness of South African schools is enhanced.

3.15 Best practices of governing bodies

Collaboration and policy-sharing are paramount for enhancing the efficacy of the SGBs. The SGB members should implement ongoing training and development initiatives to refine their governance competencies. The principal area of focus should be the mitigation of corruption by promoting transparency and accountability. This is backed by Transparency International, which illustrated the pervasive nature of corruption within the education sector due to the compromised procedures and the lack of robust anti-corruption measures. Governors encounter challenges in

comprehending their responsibilities as covered in the SASA. Governors should also establish effective relations with teachers and learners. Key obstacles are foreseen here. That is limited capacity in domains such as financial management and policy formulation, difficulties arising from a highly educated teaching staff against an inadequately educated parent community, conflicts that might emerge between teachers and parents regarding governance roles, and deficiencies in communication between the SGBs and provincial departments of education. These issues should be speedily addressed if effective governance in various schools is to be advanced.

Navigating all the obstacles that confront SGBs is pivotal. Engaging with institutions that have successfully established SGBs is an effective strategy. The said engagement facilitates experiential learning and the exchange of best practices. Such shadowing experiences could aid the SGBs in comprehending effective policies while preparing for emerging trends and future challenges. While the SGBs encounter numerous technical hurdles, a discernible conflation often exists between governance and management roles. Such a conflation further complicates their operational functions. Teachers have reported instances where certain SGBs overstep their designated boundaries. Overstepping those boundaries leads to conflicts about attendance and preparedness. These conflicts are prevalent. Owens observed that the said conflicts tend to be common yet not fundamentally destabilising. The SGBs remain an essential conduit for parental involvement in educational institutions. Section 16A of the SASA empowers the SGBs and encourages their trustworthiness. The duties of the SGBs are, among others, managing fundraising activities, creating the school vision and developing its mission statement, and implementing the Code of Conduct of learners.

It is essential that both the Senior Management Team (SMT) and the SGB comprehend their unique roles. Often, those roles are analogously described as "opposite sides of the same coin." That understanding is vital because it fosters effective collaboration, although challenges might arise when demarcating responsibilities.

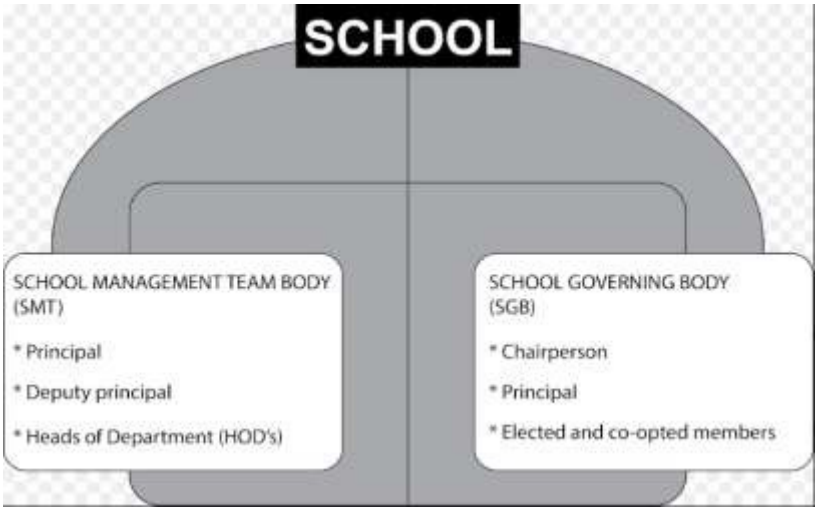

Figure 1: School governance structure.

Source: DoE Eastern Cape, 2001.

The text underscores the importance of collaborating with various stakeholders in educational governance. This resonates with the Functionalist theory, which conceptualises society as an interlinked system. Effective training for the SGBs is imperative for sustainable educational development. That is the requirement; it is noted that many members lack the requisite knowledge and skills. This inadequacy might culminate in challenges. Challenges such as favouritism and diminished engagement are largely due to the voluntary nature of their roles. Capacity-building strategies involve training programmes and selecting members who possess relevant expertise. These are recommended to augment the effectiveness of the SGBs in order to mitigate confusion regarding their responsibilities. Financial management remains a contentious issue, often provoking conflicts between the SGB chairpersons and principals. That would be because of the ambiguous guidelines in the Schools Act. Globally, a pronounced focus exists on enhancing educational quality to empower nations both socially and economically, with the SGBs occupying a pivotal role in advancing school improvement. Research indicates that although comprehensive school reform efforts have been initiated, funding issues widely hinder the actual progress in learner achievement.

The above also underscores the transition towards democratic governance in educational institutions. It encourages wider stakeholder participation. Challenges

persist and remain in the effective implementation of governance policies. This is particularly so when it comes to the representation of the underrepresented groups. The underrepresented groups are largely learners and women. Recommendations include adopting a cooperative management approach, which could enhance inclusivity and ensure effective school governance. In general, the governance structure should concentrate on shared decision-making and collaborative efforts to improve educational outcomes. There is a possibility here that some might argue that obstacles exist because of deeply entrenched practices.

3.16 Striving for educational excellence

One salient factor that is analogous across all the SGBs discussed so far is their mandate to ensure good-quality public education in their educational institutions (Honingh et al., 2018). The primary objective of the SGBs is to promptly address impediments to the pursuit of quality and excellence in education. The aim of the SGBs is to avert the potentially detrimental outcomes. Each SGB tries to ensure that its school fosters holistic development among learners. They also support learners to reach their potential. The SASA gives the SGBs the duty to furnish optimal educational opportunities and cultivate a conducive learning environment for every learner (Khuzwayo, 2017). Achieving the above leads to comprehensive backing from all stakeholders for the school and its teachers. To effectively manage prospective risks and governance challenges, the SGBs should actively engage with pertinent stakeholders. Certain SGBs establish sub-committees that assume responsibility for specific functions. The sub-committees regularly report to the SGB. Thus, the SGBs adhere to the established policies while honouring the legislative Acts of the country as enshrined in the Constitution are markedly more effective (Mahlangu, 2009).

Through adherence to established policies, the SGBs augment their pertinence. They ensure that official regulations, rules, and guidelines navigate their decision-making processes. It is incumbent upon the SGBs to ensure that school policies are accessible to all stakeholders. They thus facilitate an informed understanding of the institutional regulations. The SGBs bear the continuous responsibility to pursue excellence. They execute their mandate in a manner that cultivates accountability, respect, support, and

trust. Dlamini (2014) revealed the significance of fostering a positive relationship between governing bodies and school management as it is vital to mitigate potential conflicts. The DoE occasionally conducts workshops, conferences, and seminars aimed at enhancing the operational efficacy of the SGBs through collaborative efforts with school management. This endeavour has challenges because the alignment of diverse interests is often complex.

3.17 Promoting social justice in schools

Connell (2012) figured that social justice within the educational sphere extends beyond providing equal educational services. It also pertains to the quality of those services and the societal advantages. Social justice should not be perceived superficially as simply levelling the social strata. Rather, it should be appreciated in a more expansive and inclusive manner. Robertson and Dale (2013) advocated for innovative approaches in educational governance. They emphasised the importance of engaging with theoretical frameworks of social justice. That engagement should consider the political dynamics and accountability challenges that arise in globalised educational governance activities. All stakeholders in education should possess access to vital resources and opportunities to enhance their performance as they pursue excellence. This necessity includes dialogues and evaluations of methodologies within workshops in conjunction with the guiding circulars, policies, and legal frameworks. The entire school community is tasked with positively contributing to the overall school's effectiveness. A well-defined illustration of roles between school principals and SGB chairpersons is crucial for achieving this objective.

Enhancing the rapport among these leaders necessitates a profound comprehension of their distinct responsibilities. Khuzwayo (2017) articulated that a deficient relationship between leaders could detrimentally influence the educational milieu. Clear-defined roles serve to mitigate the friction between school management and governors. Dean (2011) explained that role ambiguity might precipitate complications such as parent governors scrutinising the punctuality and attendance of teachers, thereby undermining essential collaboration, cooperation, and community support. Overlapping roles could endanger the foundational principles of social justice and

rights protection. For instance, an SGB chairperson might address teachers regarding performance and discipline. Such an address might create discomfort for teachers navigating dual accountability channels, thus amplifying the potential for conflict.

3.18 Creating effective systems of education

Functional education systems are hinged on accomplishing specific outcomes. A deficiency of genuine democratic principles encumbers educational frameworks in numerous countries (Baumgardt, 2013). Public school governance continues to confront substantial challenges in effectively and democratically administering educational institutions. Education managers and policymakers should reference the Constitution, as it serves as a foundational legal framework for democratic governance and leadership. Bray and Mitchell (2009) asserted that the South African political and legal systems promote freedom, human rights and democracy. They also support stakeholder engagement and collaboration. The premise is that collective education is more efficacious than isolated endeavours. Shared experiences have the potential to generate significant ideas that increase the effectiveness of the SGBs. The focus on equality and diversity compels educational stakeholders to champion human rights, which are, in this context, paramount to the educational system.

Malherbe (2014) stated that the right to equality is inextricably linked to equitable educational opportunities, a fundamental right enshrined within the Constitution. She stressed the imperative of promoting equality, human dignity, and freedom in pursuing equal educational prospects. Although the SGB members might originate from a variety of backgrounds, the necessity for equitable funding remains paramount if they are to attain meaningful educational opportunities. Private institutions, particularly those in affluent locales, frequently establish elevated standards of excellence. With these standards, students from lower-income demographics often find themselves marginalised. For instance, the prerequisite for the SGB membership at a privileged school typically necessitates that one has a child enrolled there. This obligation means that only a limited number of the wealthiest families could fulfil. The expectation of possessing expertise in financial management or negotiation also compounds the barriers faced by potential SGB members from economically disadvantaged

communities. This confluence of factors renders comprehensive equality in opportunities almost unattainable. It obstructs educational advancements and is characterised by inefficacy and inefficiency.

High-performing educational institutions frequently engage in introspection regarding their outcomes, evaluate the leadership capabilities of learners, and ensure their employability (Tondi & Nelani, 2017). Struggling schools might seek mentorship opportunities to attract proficient individuals to participate in their SGBs. The SGB management requires a robust foundation of knowledge, skills, and values to effectively guide office bearers. Haralambos and Holborn (2012) pointed out that values are considered worthy of societal pursuit. A pivotal function of the SGB is to ensure adequate education and that learners acquire knowledge. Indeed, learning from the experiences of others becomes indispensable. John Dewey praised the importance of experiential learning as crucial for acquiring these elements (Rusk & Scotland, 2010). Effective school boards are invaluable role models for those struggling. In this case, exchange visits could engender the observation of effective practices. This would cultivate a collaborative milieu in which challenges could be adeptly addressed. Chaka (2018) claimed that numerous SGB members lack the requisite knowledge and skills for their responsibilities. This leads to a significant dependence on principals and teachers for decision-making.

He observes that the under-representation of African parents in the SGBs often arises from feelings of intimidation (or apprehension) regarding their involvement. This phenomenon is particularly pronounced among individuals who lack relevant education. Lower proficiency in English exacerbates this issue. Less literate governors might feel uneasy during meetings and workshops. Deenanath (2013) indicated that marginalised groups, particularly those with diminished literacy, often encounter difficulties in their SGB roles. Growth transpires when individuals recognise their areas of need and are willing to learn from their mistakes. This process could be challenging at times.

3.19 Summary

This chapter scrutinised the methodologies (approaches), emerging trends, and inherent capacities of the SGBs globally. It thus explored the exemplary practices and inherent challenges in governace situations. The chapter illuminated the experiences of the SGBs in other countries by reflecting on their effectiveness within diverse contexts. The universal construct of the SGBs obliges them to enhance educational environments, cement stakeholder relations, and elevate learner achievement. Effective schools aspire to achieve high educational outcomes, enabling learners to engage productively with society. Despite the persistent challenges noted herein, the SGBs are pivotal in policy initiatives designed to enhance quality learning. The next chapter discusses the research techniques adopted by this study.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research design and methodology that was used in conducting this study. Research design and methodology are important in conducting research as they help researchers to achieve the stated research objectives and provide answers to the research questions (Asenahabi, 2019).

4.2 Research design

The overall strategy or plan a researcher uses to carry out research and collect relevant data is referred to as a research design (Akhtar, 2016). The research design is regarded as the "glue" that holds every component of a research project together (Boru, 2018). Asenahabi (2019) categorised the research design as exploratory, explanatory, experimental, and descriptive. Exploratory research is a type of research design that is typically conducted at the initial stages of a research project to gain a deeper understanding of the research phenomenon (Swaraj, 2019). Its primary purpose is to gain a better understanding of a research problem or phenomenon when there is limited existing knowledge or when the topic is relatively unexplored (Carter, Andersen, Stagg, & Gaunt, 2023). On the other hand, experimental research is used in order to establish cause-and-effect relationships (Rogers & Révész, 2020).

Explanatory research design is used to investigate phenomena that have not been thoroughly studied or explained in the past (Rahi, 2017). Descriptive research focuses on describing and summarising data or phenomena rather than seeking to establish causal relationships or test hypotheses (Loeb, Dynarski, McFarland, Morris, Reardon, & Reber, 2017). Its primary purpose is to provide a detailed and accurate portrayal of a specific topic or phenomenon (Aggarwal & Ranganathan, 2019). Descriptive research is often used to answer questions related to the "what," "who," "where," and "how" rather than the "why." For the purpose of this study, descriptive and explanatory research were used since the main objective of this study is to determine the

relationship between the variables of the study. This exploratory approach used in this study was appropriate because it enabled the researcher to explore an under-researched problem, as stated in Chapter 1. A descriptive approach enables the researcher to accurately describe the research phenomenon. For example, the primary research questions explore the governance challenges that hinder the performance of basic education learners in the Eastern Cape Province. The research design of the study is appropriate because it enables the researcher to answer the research questions and explore an under-studied research problem.

4.3 Research paradigm

A paradigm is a set of ideas and beliefs, which provides a framework or model that could be followed by the research study (Nickerson, 2024). There are numerous types of research paradigms that are available to the researcher namely, positivism, interpretivism, critical realism, postmodernism, and pragmatism. The positivist paradigm is based on the assumption that a single tangible reality exists, which could be understood, identified, and measured (Ulz, 2023). The research process for the positivist paradigm studies proposes an empirical hypothesis, which is then supported or refuted through the collected and analysed data (Park, Konge, & Artino, 2020). The positivist research paradigm is replicable as a result of its structured methodology and the use of standardised instruments. These allow the findings to be verified and tested by other researchers, adding robustness and credibility to the conclusions drawn (Aguinis, Cascio, & Ramani, 2017). The studies that use this research paradigm utilise quantitative methods in their studies.

The interpretivism paradigm is based on the assumption that human behaviour is complex. Human behaviour cannot be studied by probabilistic models such as those used under the positivist paradigms (Ulz, 2023). Knowledge can only be created by interpreting the meanings that people put on behaviours and events. Therefore, studies that employ this framework are necessarily subjective and are greatly affected by the personal viewpoint of the researcher (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). The interpretivist paradigm research is conducted within the reality of those being studied, not in a contrived environment such as a laboratory (Ulz, 2023).

Critical realism is a philosophical perspective that has been applied in various disciplines, including social sciences. It has influenced the methodological approach in research. Critical realism emerged as a response to both the positivism and interpretivism paradigms. It aims to address some of the limitations associated with these paradigms (Cox, & Partelow, 2020). Critical realism suggests that there is a reality that exists independent of individual perceptions. The understanding of this reality is mediated by perceptions and experiences (Sturgiss & Clark, 2019).

Postmodernism encompasses a wide range of fields, including philosophy, literature, art, architecture, sociology, and cultural studies, among others (Sabouri, 2018). It is characterised by scepticism towards grand narratives, a rejection of absolute truth, and a recognition of the plurality of perspectives (Hariharasudan, Pandeeswari, & Hassan, 2022). Postmodernism challenges the idea of overarching, universal narratives that claim to explain the entirety of human experience (Mitta, 2020:655). It emphasises the existence of multiple competing narratives and perspectives (Farrell & Furman, 2019). Postmodernism recognises that reality is multifaceted, and different individuals or groups might experience and interpret it in distinct ways (Sabouri, 2018). Pragmatism is a philosophical approach that emphasises the practical consequences and usefulness of ideas, theories, and actions. It provides a framework that focuses on the practicality and effectiveness of research methods, theories, and findings (Vibha & Walsh, 2019). Postmodernism suggests that the value of knowledge is determined by its practical application and the positive outcomes it produces (Kelly & Cordeiro, 2020).

This study adopted an exploratory-descriptive design, which combines exploratory and descriptive research designs. Exploratory research is an approach designed to study a new or emerging phenomenon that has not been widely researched. It is adopted in groundbreaking studies that other researchers have not conducted in-depth (Creamer, 2018). This research design is suitable because it is flexible and enables the researcher to study an emerging issue. The study findings would contribute new insights into school governance in South Africa. Descriptive research describes a phenomenon and provides an outline of its characteristics. It enables the researcher to describe events, processes, individuals or objects (Creswell, 2015). The descriptive research design enabled this research to describe the existing school governance systems. It also enabled the researcher to analyse the role players.

4.4 Research methodology

Research methodology is the systematic procedure adopted by researchers in order to solve a research problem (Taherdoost, 2022). It provides a framework for how data is collected, analysed, and interpreted. The research methodology maps out the processes, approaches, techniques, research procedures, and instruments employed in a study. There are several approaches to research methodology, namely, quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. Quantitative research is focused on collecting numerical data and analysing it statistically (Sreekumar, 2023). Researchers use structured data collection methods, vis; surveys, experiments, and observations to measure and quantify phenomena (Adedoyin, 2020).

Qualitative research is concerned with understanding the depth and nuances of human experiences and behaviours (Bhandari, 2023). It involves collecting non-numerical data such as interviews, focus groups, and observations. Qualitative research use methods like thematic analysis or content analysis to uncover themes, patterns, and meanings (Chinyere & Eze, 2023). Qualitative research is exploratory and is often used to generate hypotheses or theories (Haradhan, 2020).

Mixed-methods research combines both the quantitative and qualitative approaches (Schoonenboom & Johnson, 2017). Researchers collect and analyse both numerical and non-numerical data to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research question (Nassaji, 2020). For the purpose of this study, a mixed method was adopted. The mixed methodology was adopted on the basis that it provided structured methods and is a replicable and objective method suitable to the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A mixed research approach was utilised on the basis that it provided generalisable, measurable, and statistically analysable data. This leads to robust and actionable insights that could inform policy and practice (Jelena & Jelena, 2024).

4.5 Population and target sample

In order to find those who might answer the questions related to recognising the difficulties in the basic education sector by putting up a sustainable policy framework for academic performance, the correct population needed to be chosen for this study.

The population of the study comprises 150 individuals. In accordance with Burns and Grove (2005), the researcher carefully considered elements in the population to select subjects with information to develop a sustainable governance framework. Following that the population of this study comprised diverse individuals involved in basic education in the Eastern Cape Province. This study included people with specialised expertise in academic performance difficulties and those with in-depth knowledge of the political, social, and economic dynamics of South Africa. The population comprised DBE officials, school principals, teachers, parents, SGB members, academia, and learners. The goal was to obtain rich and in-depth information about the research problem. Given the size of the population, it was impossible for the researcher to collect data from all the elements of the population. The researcher had to select a sample (Struwig & Stead, 2001). Sampling enabled the researcher to investigate a portion of the population (Spatz & Kardas, 2008).

Terre'Blanche, Durrheim, and Painter (2007) discussed sampling as involving choosing the participants who represent the population. Purposive sampling was used to select those individuals with knowledge, expert views, or experiences with challenges facing schools in the Eastern Cape Province. The researcher also ensured that the sample was balanced in terms of demographics. An inclusion criteria was developed around these characteristics because they impacted the quality of data collected from the participants. The researcher used the purposive sampling technique to select the study sample. Purposive sampling is a non-probability method which allows the researcher to use discretion when selecting a sample. It is used in qualitative research because it enables the researcher to select individuals with the required knowledge (Burns & Grove, 2005). Creswell and Poth (2021) defined purposive sampling as referring to the process of choosing participants based on their knowledge and understanding of the research problem. The sample size comprised 150 individuals. This sample size was appropriate because it enabled the researcher to recruit a sufficient number of individuals with various insights about the challenges facing public schools in the Eastern Cape Province. Hennik and Kaiser (2022) argue that qualitative researchers should be concerned about selecting a rich sample with the required information instead of focusing on the sample size.

The DBE officials were selected because they are involved in implementing educational policies in the province. Those individuals were mandated to use public resources to ensure that the government policies are implemented in schools. They also play an oversight role. Their knowledge and experience with challenges in the education sector were crucial. School principals and teachers are part of the administrative authority of the school. They cooperate with government officials to ensure that schools function well and learning objectives are met. Parents, learners, and SGB members are important stakeholders. Parents and learners consume the services provided by schools. They provided essential insights into the quality of services they receive. Academics do in-depth investigations about challenges in this sector. They have insights into how countries in similar situations resolved their challenges. Academics were important in providing advice and recommendations about how to solve the challenges facing schools in the province.

Purposive sampling allowed the researcher to identify individuals with knowledge and insights into the research problem and include them in the study. The researcher was also guided by inclusion and exclusion criteria. This is important because it ensures that sampling is unbiased.

4.6 Data collection methods

The study used the semi-structured interviews and survey questionnaires to collect data. Based on the distribution of the participants, the semi-structured interviews and questionnaires were employed strategically to effectively gather data from each group.

4.6.1 Semi-structured interviews

The semi-structured interviews enabled the researcher to engage interviewees and gather deep insights into school governance in the Eastern Cape Province. This data collection method was used to collect data from officials, principals, and the SGB members because of their deep involvement in school governance. The semi-structured interviews enabled the researcher to probe these individuals and gather in-depth data.

For example, the Department of Education officials hold higher positions and provide in-depth insight into policy frameworks and systemic challenges. The semi-structured interviews allowed for the use of probing questions and detailed discussions to extract comprehensive information. School principals are key decision-makers in schools. Principals offer valuable perspectives on operational challenges and policy implementation. The semi-structured interviews enabled probing into specific issues relevant to their roles. The SGB members are involved in the governance of schools. They provided insights into community perspectives, resource allocation, and stakeholder engagement. The semi-structured interviews facilitated the exploration of their roles and decision-making processes.

4.6.2 Questionnaires

Questionnaires are quick and easy to use. They could also be used to collect data from large samples. The researcher used questionnaires to collect data from teachers, parents, learners, and academics. These elements of the population were many, making it challenging to engage them through interviews. For example, there were 35 teachers in the study sample. It was efficient to administer questionnaires and gather data about the experiences, challenges, and suggestions for improvement from teachers. Questionnaires were used to gather opinions and feedback from parents about their involvement in the education of their learners, perceptions of school performance, and suggestions for policy improvements. Questionnaires were also used to collect data about the academic experiences of learners, challenges faced, and suggestions for enhancing their learning environment. Academics had diverse perspectives on educational policies, research findings, and theoretical frameworks. Questionnaires could efficiently gather their opinions and insights on these issues.

Using the semi-structured interviews with the DBE Officials, school principals, and the SGB members allowed for detailed discussions and deeper insights into policy frameworks and systemic issues. Questionnaires were more suitable for larger groups like teachers, parents, learners, and academic members. They enabled efficient data collection processes while gathering diverse perspectives. Interviews enabled the researcher to collect in-depth data by allowing him to have deep conversations with

the participants. The researcher asked additional questions (probing) when the participants provided unclear or hanging responses (De Vos et al., 2005).

4.6.3 Document analysis

This research also used document analysis to collect data. This complemented the data obtained from the semi-structured interviews and survey questionnaires. As stated by De Vos et al. (2005), the documents considered were these,

- **Educational policies and guidelines**: These constituted the National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) issued by the DBE, Education White Papers, and provincial education policies.
- **Government reports and publications**: Annual reports from the DBE, National Education Evaluation and Development Unit (NEEDU) reports, and parliamentary committee reports on education made up this category.
- **Academic research papers and articles**: Studies on education quality, teacher training, and student performance in South Africa published in reputable academic journals were surveyed.
- **School performance reports**: Annual performance reports from schools, district offices, and provincial education departments, including data on academic achievement, dropout rates, and teacher-student ratios formed part of this collection.
- **Curricula frameworks and standards**: Documents outlining curriculum objectives, learning outcomes, and assessment criteria issued by education authorities were studied.
- **Minutes of meetings**: Records of meetings between education stakeholders, such as meetings of the Council of Education Ministers (CEM) or the provincial education department forums, provided critical information here.
- **Educational legislation and regulations**: Laws and regulations governing basic education in South Africa, including the SASA and regulations pertaining to school governance and accountability were accessed.

It should be acknowledged that prioritisation of documents from credible sources such as the DBE, academic institutions, and reputable research organisations like the HSRC or the CDE were paramount in the study. The verification of the authenticity and reliability of documents by checking the credentials of authors, publishers, and issuing bodies was done in the study. Once the documents were selected, a systematic approach to document analysis was employed. This included techniques such as content analysis, thematic coding, and narrative synthesis. More so, the development of a coding scheme to categorise and analyse key themes, policy recommendations, and challenges identified in the documents was considered. The qualitative data analysis software ATLAS facilitated coding, and the thematic analysis of the selected documents was prioritised. Thereafter, the generation of the findings and insights from the document analysis to inform the development of the policy framework and recommendations for improving academic performance in South African basic education was implemented. It was important to ensure that the documents were authentic and valid. The researcher authenticated the validity of the documents.

4.7 The data collection process

Data collection involved several activities and processes conducted by the researcher to generate empirical data from the stakeholders outlined in the previous sections. The ultimate function of these processes was to ensure that the researcher analyses accurate data about the governance challenges facing schools in the Eastern Cape Province. The data collection steps discussed below were followed by the researcher.

4.7.1 Preparation

Before the face-to-face recruitment, the researcher prepared the necessary materials, including questionnaires, cover letters, and flyers. These materials clearly explained the purpose of the study, the requirements of the participants, and the consent process. The researcher trained two assistants who handled the face-to-face recruitment exercise. The training focused on ethical considerations, how to present

the study, how to approach the potential participants, and how to handle any questions or concerns raised by the potential recruiters.

4.7.2 Approach and introduction

Face-to-face recruitment was conducted in locations where learners were likely to be found such as schools, common areas, learner lounges, and classrooms where they congregated. Fieldworkers/assistants approached learners and introduced themselves. They explained that they were conducting a research and would like to invite learners to participate in it. The introduction included a brief overview of the purpose and significance of the study.

4.7.3 Informed consent

The cover letters, both in hard and soft copies, outlined the purpose of the study, voluntary participation, expected commitment time, and potential risks or benefits. The letter also included contact information for any follow-up questions. Learners were asked if they were willing to participate. Those who expressed their willingness to participate were given a questionnaire to respond to. Those who were not interested were excluded from participating.

4.7.4 Distribution and collection

Learners who agreed to participate received a questionnaire. Depending on the design of the study, this was in paper form. The fieldworkers collected completed questionnaires. For digital questionnaires, the fieldworkers assisted with the submission process. Since the study required constant follow-ups, the fieldworkers collected contact details from the participants who agreed to be contacted later. Fieldworkers thanked the participants for their time and contribution to the study. They ensured that the participants were left with a clear understanding of what would happen next, including how their data would be used.

4.7.5 Documentation and recording

Fieldworkers kept records of the number of learners they approached, the number of questionnaires distributed, and the number of completed responses collected. The data collected was securely stored and processed according to the ethical guidelines. This was to maintain the confidentiality of the participants as well as the integrity of the research.

4.7.6 Measuring instrument

The study collected data using the semi-structured interviews and questionnaires. These two were designed to suit the data collection criteria. Cassim (2017) clarified that data could be measured and classified into nominal (different) categories. The measuring instrument was developed based on literature and self-developed items.

4.8 Data Analysis

The process of data analysis involved inspecting, cleaning, transforming, and interpreting data to discover valuable insights, draw conclusions, and support decision-making (Taherdoost, 2020). It was aimed at transforming the scattered data into a format that was easier to understand, more readable, conclusive, and supportive of the decision-making process (Ashirwadam, 2014). In this study, the data analysis procedure followed the thematic data analysis technique. This study employed the thematic method of data analysis. This is a qualitative approach to data analysis. Information gathered from the participants and other sources was reorganised, and key features were identified. Throughout the data analysis process, the researcher referred to the research questions as a guide for identifying themes. In addition to aiding in theme identification, the research questions facilitated the examination and interpretation of the identified themes. That helped to determine how the generated themes could be used to address the main research question. The relationships among the various themes were described and analysed in accordance with the perspective of Creswell (2009). Themes were extracted from the collected data and

presented in a coherent manner. Insights from human capital development, institutional theory, and morphogenetic theory provided valuable guidance in the data analysis. Welman and Kruger (2001) emphasised that qualitative data analysis is a cyclical, fluid, and ongoing process that spans the stages of data collection and continues through data entry and presentation. Based on the above, the research theories and questions served as essential tools throughout the data analysis process.

The process of data analysis consists of several steps, including determining data requirements, collecting data, exploring those data, and using them to find patterns and insights. It is important to ensure the accurate and appropriate analysis of data to maintain data integrity. In this study with a sample of 150, a factor loading threshold of 0.50 was set. This was more conservative than the minimum 0.30 recommended for larger samples. The higher threshold ensured that only variables with strong correlations to the latent factors were retained. That enhanced the clarity, integrity, and reliability of the factor structure. That approach, supported by Gottems, Carvalho, Guilhem, and Pires (2018) ensured that the data analysis focused on the most meaningful relationships, providing a more interpretable and robust factor model.

4.9 Reliability and validity of the measuring instrument

Reliability refers to the stability or consistency of a measuring instrument (Souza, Alexandre, & Guirardello, 2017). It is a measure of how dependable an observation is when repeated. In the context of internal consistency, it was evident that all sub-parts of the instrument measured the same characteristics (Clark & Watson (2019). Reliability is related to the absence of a measurement error or the degree of consistency and stability of the scores obtained through successive measurements (Manterola, Grande, Otzen, García, Salazar, & Quiroz, 2018). A reliable measurement is one that produces consistent results when repeated, indicating that the method or instrument used is dependable (Petty, Briñol, Loersch, & McCaslin, 2009). Reliability was essential for ensuring the consistency and stability of measurements. It could be assessed through various methods, such as test-retest reliability and internal consistency (Souza *et al*., 2017). Clark and Watson (2019) said that validity is the degree to which a measuring instrument accurately measures the behaviour or quality

it is designed to measure. In other words, how accurately the measuring instrument measures variables. Clark and Watson (2019) provided an overview of the types of research validity. These are content, construct, and face. The validity of the semi-structured interview guide and questionnaire was tested to determine the extent to which a group of variables represents the construct to be measured (Souza *et al*., 2017).

Gottems et al. (2018) provided that a minimal loading of 0.5 or above is often seen as suggestive of a significant link between the item and the underlying construct when evaluating the validity of factor loadings. Content validity for the measuring instrument was validated by conducting a pilot study before distributing the structured interview guide and questionnaire to the participants. To eliminate researcher bias, data were collected through semi-structured interviews and survey questionnaires. These were administered to the participants in schools and the basic education offices in the Eastern Cape Province. The findings were analysed afterwards. Validity and reliability were performed on the measuring instruments. The validity of the measuring instrument is determined by whether or not it measures the behaviour or quality that the tool is designed to assess (Surucu & Maslakci, 2020).

On the other hand, face validity was done on the basis of providing clear and direct questions related to school governance challenges (Taherdoost, 2021). Validity was also ensured by making use of valid and reliable items sourced from previous research on this topic. In the study, items were not only developed from literature but also obtained from previous studies. This was followed by the second step, the pilot testing where the developed items were distributed to a sample of ten prospective participants. The research instrument was refined based on the feedback generated. Step three involved data collection, followed by data analysis. Each item was examined based on the total relationships generated to retain the best-performing items (Kyriazos & Stalikas).

4.10 Ethical considerations

Ethical approval was sought from the Research Ethics Committee at North West University. Permission to conduct this research in high schools was applied for at the

DBE in Fort Beaufort. That permission was not sought before obtaining ethics clearance from the Institutional Ethics Committee of the university. Consent to conduct research was obtained from the schools of the participants and from the learners themselves. Learners who participated here were in Grades 11 and 12. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary. Individuals are informed to withdraw at any time without facing any penalties. All raw data, interviews, questionnaires, and consent forms were securely stored by the supervisor in the icloud and protected by passwords, as per the ethics committee requirements. Throughout the data collection process, strict confidentiality and anonymity measures were enforced. Participants were assured that no personal information was required for the study. A coding system was implemented to ensure the highest level of protection for all the participants. Compliance with the Protection of Personal Information Act 2013 (POPIA) was maintained. That ensured that no personally identifiable information was collected from the participants.

4.11 Summary

The chapter explained how the researcher collected data from the research participants. The data were collected from a sample that included various stakeholders involved in basic education in the Eastern Cape Province. These included teachers, parents, government officials, and learners. The researcher selected this sample because it had individuals with extensive experience in education and school governance in the province. The chapter indicated that a qualitative research approach was adopted. This was because the researcher collected non-numeric data through open-ended questions using semi-structured interviews. The chapter illustrated how these data collection techniques produced rich and qualitative data that were later analysed using thematic data analysis. That approach enabled the researcher to categorise data into themes and categories. The next chapter discusses the results and findings.

CHAPTER 5

DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTING FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed this study's research techniques. This chapter analyses data and presents findings. Additionally, it outlines the reasons and methods for involving teachers in the decision-making processes of SGBs within these schools. To ensure a sound presentation of findings, the chapter comprises several sections. The first section presents the participants' demographic data and the second section presents findings about the challenges facing Basic Education schools in the Eastern Cape.

5.2 Background of participants

The sample of the study had 25 school principals, 35 teachers, 20 parents, 15 SGB members, 20 academic members, 15 learners, and 20 DBE officials. The participants were selected from schools in the Eastern Cape Province, universities, and district DBE offices in Fort Beaufort, Alice, King Williams Town, Bisho, and East London. These individuals were selected because they are involved in basic education in the Eastern Cape Province. All the principals in the study started their careers as teachers and were later promoted to leadership positions after obtaining bachelor's degrees.

5.2.1 Profile of participants

Table 1: Questionnaire response rates.

Participants' Categories	Number sent	Number returned	Per cent
Learners	15	15	100%
Teachers	35	33	94.29%
Parents	20	19	95%
Academia Members	20	15	75%
Department of DBE officials	20	20	100%
SGB members	15	15	100%
Principals	25	23	92%

As shown in Table 5.1, the high response rates across various stakeholder groups indicate strong engagement and interest in improving basic education. This suggests that stakeholders recognised the importance of this research and were willing to contribute to its improvement. The diverse response rates ensured representation from,

1. Learners (100%): Learner perspectives on educational experiences.
2. Teachers (94.29%) and Principals (92%): Teacher insights into school operations.
3. Parents (95%): Guardian concerns and expectations.
4. DBE officials (100%): Views of policymakers about governance.
5. SGB members (100%): School-level governance perspectives.

This representation supports the validity of the findings towards the development of a comprehensive governance framework. The responses from teachers and principals provided operational insights. Parents and learners offered user-centred perspectives. The DBE officials and SGB members provided governance expertise. Such inputs informed the development of a governance framework to address educational quality, resource management, stakeholder collaboration, and policy implementation. The members of the academia had a moderate response rate. This meant that the

research focused on theoretical aspects rather than practical governance. This limited availability due to conflicting priorities. Their inputs remain crucial for informing theoretical frameworks and providing research-based best practices.

Apart from the above, the response rate could have been determined and influenced by the unique challenges of the Eastern Cape Province, such as rural-urban disparities and social and economic factors. These factors were considered when analysing responses. The high response rates demonstrate the stakeholder commitment to improving basic education in the Eastern Cape Province. The diverse perspectives ensured a well-rounded governance framework that addresses operational, user-centred, and policy aspects. The moderate response rate from the academic members underscores the importance of integrating theoretical insights. As such, the analysis provided a solid foundation for developing an effective governance framework that would enhance basic education performance in the Eastern Cape Province.

Apart from the above, Figure 5.1 shows that 48.5% of the participants were females and 51.5% were males. This shows that men occupy the most senior positions in the Eastern Cape Provincial DBE. As shown in the study, males seem to dominate senior positions, yet all over the world, gender bias seems to favour females in occupying senior positions. While the study shows that most of the principals and teachers were males, it must be acknowledged that the DBE has made giant strides in addressing gender gaps in education. This is in terms of employment as more females are employed, yet still more needs to be done in the area of leadership.

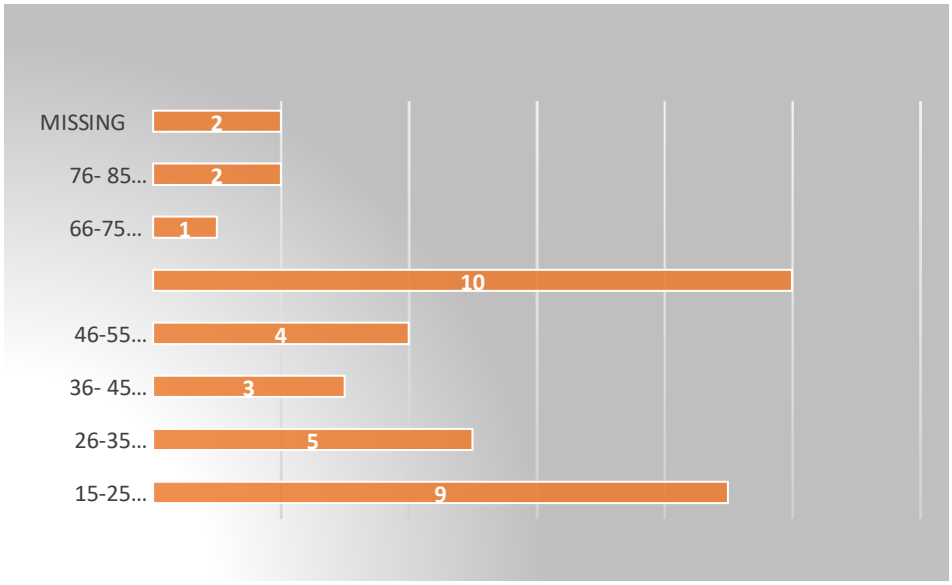

Figure 2: The age range of participants.

Figure 5.2 shows the age profile of the participants where 92% are aged above 31 years, and 8% are below 30 years of age. This indicates that there are a few young teachers in the Eastern Cape Province. Some participants indicated their desire to further their education. While this is not clear as to the motivation behind it, the researcher assumed that this could be explained in terms of the shortage of jobs, especially in the basic education sector. More teachers who want further qualifications might give them an advantage in the job industry. The unemployment rate in South Africa is around 33.5 % (Statistics South Africa, 2024). One might claim that government measures in South Africa shortly after democratisation in 1994 modernised the educational system. This was followed by the SASA promulgations that led to the establishment of the SGBs. Using the demographic data, the researcher believes that senior teachers and school principals who participated in the study were the most qualified individuals to supply the data required to address the main research questions. This is because of their educational backgrounds, teaching, and administrative experiences.

5.3 Role of SGBs in increasing school effectiveness

The researcher asked the participants about the role of the SGBs in increasing the effectiveness of schools. The questions were as follows.

- How do SGBs improve the academic performance of learners in schools?
- What are the causes of disparities among SGBs?
- How can the DBE increase the effectiveness of SGBs?
- What strategies can increase the effectiveness of school governance and resource management to improve learner performance in historically disadvantaged schools?
- Why should SGBs adopt effective policies to ensure good school governance?

The next sub-sections analyse the responses to the questions above.

5.3.1 How do SGBs improve the academic performance of learners in schools?

Based on the findings, it is clear that most participants defined what the SBGs were, even though with some, there seemed to be a mix-up about the roles of the SGBs and the SMTs. For example, 80% stated that the SGBs regulate and keep an eye on instruction and learning processes. About 4% said that the SGBs are committees of parents and teachers that handle school-level policies. Meanwhile, 16% of the participants were unaware of the mission of the SGBs. This indicates that many participants could define and highlight the functions of the SGBs. That being the case, participants do not fully understand their functions. The participant views to this effect appear below.

Participant 1 stated that,

> *It is a legal body comprising teachers, parents, learners, and non-teaching staff who collaborate to develop the school. This includes the performance of learners as well.*

Participant 10 explained the SGB as,

> *SGBs were created under the SASA to ensure that schools function effectively. A Code of Conduct guides them. By performing their duties they ensure that issues such as learner performance are improved.*

Participant 31 said of the SGBs,

> *SGBs bring together various stakeholders to work towards better schools in South Africa.*

Another participant said that an SGB is a school governing body. She further stated that school governing bodies are parent representative committees that ensure school governance and school management to deliver fair, balanced, and equal education in a safe environment with optimum resources.

The participants provided different views about the SGBs. Of importance in their responses is the fact that they all understand what the SGB were established for. Their support varies. The data show that the SGBs improve how teaching is conducted in schools. This indicates that participants concur that the SGBs are involved in formulating and implementing school policies. The findings are consistent with the literature reviewed herein. For example, in Section 2.7.1.1, Khanyile and Mpuangnan (2024) stated that the SGBs ensure that the policies of the school align with the DBE policies. Improving the performance of learners is at the core of the Eastern Cape DBE. The SGBs ensure that the performance of learners is improved by aligning the policies of schools with those of the DBE. In addition, these findings are consistent with the institutional theory reviewed in section 2.11. The institutional theory suggests that institutions are not static structures. Instead, they are dynamic and comprise various individual actors that partner to accomplish specific goals (Bjarnegard & Zetterberg, 2016).

5.3.2 SGB impact on schools

The majority of the participants (94%) believe in the positive impact of the SGBs on the academic life of learners. Only 6% responded otherwise. These argued that had it

not been for the DBE's interference in some issues on how schools are run, schools would be performing better. The participants indicated that while the SGBs are vital, especially in how a school is governed, there are issues that lie out of their mandate. This is in the context of Peter Morkel, where most principals indicated was ineffective in addressing some of the challenges the schools face. In this perspective, principals cannot do anything about it without the approval of the DBE. Regarding the academic life of the learners, the participants stated that the SGBs are important because they support learners in many ways. The researcher sought clarity on how the SGBs impact the academic life of their learners. Responses to this probing follow below.

Participant 18 responded thus,

> *The SGBs, as part of the school governance system, have the best interests of learners at heart. They are always mindful of their well-being to preserving the reputation of the school. This aspect creates a good learning environment.*

Participant 9 stated that,

> *Our learners are safe and protected under SGBs watch because they are instrumental in addressing their challenges and grievances.*

Participant 19 believes that,

> *All structures and individuals involved in school governance should always elevate the interests of learners.*

On the contrary, one participant said this about the SGB,

> *The SGBs have and have not had a positive effect, depending on how a situation affects those involved.*

The researcher asked the participants if they were pleased with the establishment of SGBs.

Participants 10, 9, and 11 indicated that they were pleased with the establishment of the SBGs. They further stated that their establishment shows that the schools are committed to providing education to all learners regardless of their background.

The researcher asked them about the benefits of having an SGB.

Participant 45 claimed that,

> *An SBG guides the conduct of learners and teachers.*

Participant 22 pointed out that,

> *Exposing teachers to the correct structures is vital to their personal development and effective school governance.*

Participant 7 said that the SBGs should be up-to-date with what happens in schools. Participant 33 reasoned that the SBGs have a positive impact on schools because they ensure that more learners access education.

The responses of the participants indicate the levels of understanding about the impact of SGBs on schools. Given their understanding, the responses of the participants affirm this literature reviewed herein (section 2.7.1, subsection a), which indicates that the main impact of the SGBs is to provide an additional layer of oversight in the administration and governace of schools. They ensure a participatory approach to managing schools in the Eastern Cape Province (Mohapi et al., 2021; Brian & Shumane, 2018; Modisaotsile, 2012).

5.3.3 How can the DBE increase the effectiveness of SGBs?

Most participants (87%) believe they effectively promote and ensure excellence among learners. A few (13%) disagreed, citing significant ineffectiveness since the Peter Morkel model in most schools has had detrimental effects on learner performance. At one of the schools, the principal noted that,

> *The Peter Morkel affects us because our school cannot make decisions outside of the DBE. We have a challenge of the learner-teacher ratio, which has proved fatal for the number of learners each teacher had to contend with in class.*

The findings indicate that the participants misunderstood the question. The literature reviewed in the second chapter suggests that the DBE can increase the effectiveness of the SGBs through training and support (Matlou et al., 2024).

The researcher asked if the SBGs were effective. Participant 12 believes that the SGBs are effective because they assist school managers in many ways. These include finance and policy direction.

Participant 22 stated that,

> *SGBs are very effective since schools cannot properly function without them.*

Participant 3 added that,

> *The ffectiveness of the SGBs depends on their composition. That is, when they have skilled people, they contribute a lot to school planning and policies.*

Some felt that the SGBs are,

> *Ineffective since most SGBs do not understand the role they play in the well-being of the school community and that they duplicate the roles of principals.*

Similarly, another participant said,

> *In my view, the SGBs are very effective in regulating the teaching and learning processes and harmonising the community culture and the school activities.*

Another participant had doubts,

> *Effective to some degree, as the gap between the rich and poor in South Africa is large. The structures of government, especially programmes provided by government, try to bridge this gap.*

The findings indicate that participants believe that the SGBs promote school

development. This unites these perceptions, although opinions on how well the SGBs perform their role in fostering excellence vary. Only two-thirds of the participants believe that the SGBs genuinely support excellence at the schools where they operate, suggesting that the results are not very apparent. These findings are consistent with the literature review. Section 2.7.1 indicates that the SGBs have significantly improved school governance by ensuring more stakeholders are involved. There are still challenges, especially in the Eastern Cape Province, where political interference and poor support from the provincial government hinder the effectiveness of the SGBs (Koti et al., 2018).

5.4 The establishment of SGBs

Less than half of the participants (44%) were happy with the establishment of the SGBs, 28% were not, and 28% were unsure. The majority of the participants were unsure or undecided, indicating that they were primarily unsatisfied with the establishment of the SBGs. Perhaps because they do not feel their impact. Some participants stated that the SGBs are not visible in schools. These findings are in line with the differential association theory which states that some individuals could oppose conventional norms in social situations (Haralambos & Holborn, 2012). The findings also illustrate an unsupportive environment and the failure of other participants to appreciate the importance of the SGBs.

The researcher asked the participants to give examples of the challenges associated with the establishment of the SGBs.

Participant 64 explained that,

> *They assist the principals in performing their duties.*

Participant 24 claimed that,

> *There is a lot of favouritism.*

For participant 14, there is,

> *Too much nepotism and a lack of transparency in the process.*

Participant 10 explained that,

> *The SGBs are punctuated by a low volunteer rate,the SGB is not always representative of school demographics, logistical problems, and legal framework too. Also, the elected parents are unable to attend the SGBs due to logistics.*

The participants did not outline the establishment of the SGBs as set out in the SASA. The Act states that the SGBs are established to govern schools. They are a governance structure within schools (Khanyile & Mpuangnan, 2024). This is consistent with the morphogenetic approach of this study as discussed in Section 2.12. It suggests that systems undergo changes to match the growing needs or address emerging problems. The government set up a system to establish the SGBs and include them in school administration to address governance challenges that face schools such as a top-down governance approach (Modisaotsile, 2012). The challenges highlighted in the findings were also noted in the second chapter.

5.4.1 Willingness to be trained to manage SGBs

Participants knew about the training needs of the SGBs. About 50% of the participants acknowledged the desire to be trained to manage the SGBs, 33.3% were unwilling, and 11.1% were undecided. It is noteworthy that the participants prefer not to be trained. It is generally believed that training motivates individuals to participate in SGB affairs. The literature shows that most individuals expect remuneration for any extra activities outside regular working hours. Another participant said that their views depend on the school environment because individuals with negative views negatively impact the effectiveness of the SGBs. These findings are supported literature in Section 2.7.1. Literature states that one of the DBE's duties to the SGBs is to provide them with training. Unlike teachers and principals who are skilled professionals, some SGB members are not skilled. They require training to provide them with skills and knowledge that enable them to contribute towards effective school governance (Matlou et al., 2024).

5.4.2 The role of the DBE in increasing the effectiveness of SGBs

Participants were asked if they believed the government could increase the effectiveness of the performance of the SGBs. More than half of the participants (55.6%) agreed, 19.4% disagreed, and 8.3% believed the government support would be ineffective. Since more participants believed in the government support, other options should exist. This view is supported by the systems theory, which assumes that multiple players should complement societal institutions. The researcher asked if the support increases their effectiveness.

One participant noted that,

> *The allocation of funds by the department of education to schools is acknowledged but it comes as a 'drop of blood in an ocean' in my view.*

This supports documentary data, which indicates that the SGB budgets are inadequate. One participant said that the DBE does not support the SGBs' operations. Another participant said,

> *Relevant guiding policies and Acts have been promulgated to support the various SGB initiatives.*

Another participant said,

> *SGBs continue to suffer because of other operational constraints.*

When asked if the DBE respects the SGBs, another participant believed that it did, adding that there is a need to iron out some other sticky issues. Participants believe that the DBE supports SGBs, and that the said support increases their effectiveness.

The findings show that the participants understood the question. The literature reviewed in section 2.7.1. suggests that the DBE could increase the effectiveness of the SGBs by supporting their initiatives (Matlou et al., 2024).

5.4.3 Multi-stakeholder engagements to support SGBs

Most participants knew that several stakeholders support the SGBs. They identified those who support the SGBs and how that support is provided. Results indicate that principals could support the SGBs. That is, 38.8% of the participants agreed with this view. Results show that parents also support the SGBs. Their support enables them to fulfil their roles. About 27.8% of the participants agreed with this view. Of the participants, 16.7% agreed that everyone should support the SGBs, 5.6% said it is the responsibility of teachers, and 2.8% said learners are responsible for supporting the SGBs. The results show that the support of the SGBs is a collective effort. This is in line with the functionalist theory, which assumes that society consists of interdependent systems operating harmoniously (Haralambos & Holborn, 2012).

5.4.4 Strategies for solving SGB challenges

The researcher asked the participants to propose solutions to the SGB problems.

In response, participant 10 illustrated that,

> *There is a need to make the establishment of the SGBs to be more permanent and well known to communities. SGBs should use prior successes to prove that they work effectively. The SGBs should work together in unity to deal with drugs and have health facilities in schools.*

Another participant observed that,

> *There is a great need to increase the awareness of the importance of functional the SGBs. There should be fewer parent-teacher meetings, but more SGBs and meetings with learners to capacitate stakeholders.*

Some participants knew how to solve the SBG problems. The researcher asked participants about strategies to help the SGBs. Participants 20 and 11 said that they would introduce school watchers to keep an eye on absconding learners and delinquents. Participant 11 called for more annual meetings. Participant 2 said that they should invest in robust financial systems and receive more training.

5.5.5 Legislation supporting the establishment of SGBs

Roughly 33.3% of the participants stated that laws and policies support the establishment of the SGBs, 55.6% prophesied ignorance of how the SGBs came into being, and 11.1% were unsure of the idea. The researcher asked the participants to list the laws and policies that support the SGBs. Participant 34 mentioned the SASA. Participants 13 and 4 identified the National Educator Policy Act (NEPA) and the Basic Education Schools Act. The researcher asked them to choose the functions of the SBG between policy formulation and implementation. Participant 6 chose policy formulation and Participant 27 stuck with policy implementation. This literature review, in sections 2.7.1, 3.2.3, and 3.1.5, highlighted that the SASA was the foundation for the establishment of the SGBs. In all this, some of the views of the participants were inaccurate.

5.6 Summary of the questionnaire findings

The results indicate that there are several chances to improve the efficiency of the SGBs as evidenced by the responses of the participants. The results also suggest that the DBE is crucial in overseeing the long-term viability and efficient operation of the SGBs. The SGBs should be given the authority to implement the tactics that would improve the efficient operations of schools. In general, participants reported that the lack of parental involvement, their poor educational attainment and skills levels, inadequate finance, and the lack of compensation by the SGB members limited the efficacy of the SGBs. The questionnaire results show that the above elements, as well as unfavourable opinions and attitudes, impact the degree of SGB efficacy. Such attitudes negatively impact the overall effectiveness of the SGBs performance. Data collected using interviews is presented in the next section.

5.7 Qualitative data presentation

The findings are the views and responses of principals from both urban and rural areas. Principals from urban areas are coded as UP1, UP2…while those from rural areas are code as RP1, RP2…

5.7.1 Encountered governance challenges

UP1 indicated that they lack clear communication from the education authorities. Policy changes are often communicated late, making it difficult to effectively implement them. This confusion affects teachers and impacts learner education. UP2 stated that their major challenge is resource allocation. They have a high learner enrolment but insufficient funding for materials and staff. These issues have led to overcrowded classrooms and poor quality of education. UP3 noted the high turnover rate among their teachers due to better opportunities elsewhere. The high staff turnover disrupts learning and affects the academic performance of their learners. UP4 mentioned that there is a lack of community engagement in school governance. The lack thereof results in a decline in learner motivation and accountability. This impacts academic success.

On the other hand, rural principals provided their views regarding that idea. RP1 indicated that,

> *In our rural setting, one significant challenge is the distance learners travel to and from school. Many drop out due to transport issues, which affects the overall attendance and academic performance.*

RP2 cited inadequate infrastructure and poorly equipped classrooms that hampered effective teaching and learning. RP3 believed that limited access to technology was a significant barrier to governance. To him, without proper tools and resources, learners struggle to keep up with the curricula, particularly in Science and Mathematics. RP4 identified the lack of professional development opportunities for teachers. The lack of professional development opportunities resulted in the use of outdated skills that diluted the quality of instruction. UP5 named the bureaucratic red tape as a challenge that slows down decision-making processes. The repercussions of that are the hindrance of the ability of the principals to quickly respond to academic challenges as they arise. RP5 said that they were faced with governance issues regarding local educational policies that do not consider the unique needs of rural schools, leading to misaligned resources and support. UP6 commented thus,

> *Parental involvement is often minimal in our school due to work commitments. This disengagement has led to the lack of support for learners at home thereby affecting their academic performance*.

RP6 stated that cultural attitudes towards education could be a barrier because some families prioritise labour over schooling. The mentality hinders learner attendance and performance. UP7 claimed that they are often caught in the middle of conflicting policies between local and national governance, and that creates confusion about standards to prioritize. RP7 added that funding for rural schools is lower compared to that of urban areas. That disparity affects the ability of rural schools to provide quality education to learners. That negatively impacts learner performance.

The responses from the principals reveal a complex web of governance challenges that hinder academic performance in the basic education sector. These views are in line with those reflected in the literature reviewed in this study. One prevalent issue is the lack of clear communication from educational authorities, which many principals highlighted as a barrier to effective policy implementation. When policies are communicated late or ambiguously, it creates confusion among teachers, making it difficult for schools to adapt promptly. This communication gap could lead to a disconnect between policy objectives and actual practices, resulting in inconsistent academic outcomes. Section 2.9.10 of Chapter 2 outlines the importance of communication among stakeholders. Poor communication results in unclear instructions and that hampers the implementation of policies. Similarly, in section 2.9.11, Waardenburg et al. (2019) identified the lack of clear communication as a significant challenge.

Resource allocation emerged as another critical concern, particularly in the context of disparities between urban and rural schools. This is reflected in the literature review chapter. Sections 1.9 and 2.7.1 highlight the role of the SGBs in allocating resources to schools. Urban principals reported overcrowded classrooms and insufficient materials, while their rural counterparts pointed out inadequate infrastructure and limited access to technology. These resource disparities exacerbate inequities in education delivery and quality. Urban schools face challenges due to high learner enrollment without corresponding funding, whereas rural schools struggle with basic

facilities that hinder effective teaching (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2023; Brian & Shumane, 2018; Kota et al., 2018). Addressing these disparities requires a re-evaluation of funding mechanisms and the establishment of policies that ensure equitable distribution of resources. That should take into account the unique challenges of different school contexts. Matlou et al. (2012) urged the DBE to ensure that schools are supported. This includes providing funding and other resources required to implement policies. The literature review also raised the lack of leadership, accountability, and competence in the provincial government as problematic to governance, contributing to the lack of support for schools (Lombo & Subban, 2024; Chirowamhangu, 2022; Kota et al., 2018).

Teacher stability also emerged as a significant factor that impacts academic performance. High teacher turnover rates in urban areas disrupt the learning environment, while rural schools often lack access to professional development opportunities. This instability affects the quality of instruction and learner experiences. Ensuring teacher retention through competitive salaries, benefits, and robust professional development programmes is essential for fostering a stable and effective teaching workforce. Tailored training initiatives could empower teachers to enhance their teaching practices in rural areas, where teachers might feel isolated from development opportunities. Section 2.7.1.b identified these issues. The Eastern Cape Province experiences high teacher turnover, resulting in schools where there are fewer teachers to adequately teach a growing number of learners (Mohammed, 2024). This is also evidenced by the province having the lowest teacher-to-learner ratio in the country (Kota et al., 2018).

Community engagement and parental involvement were frequently mentioned as crucial elements that affect learner performance. Many principals noted that low levels of parental engagement, particularly in urban schools where work commitments often take precedence, could diminish learner motivation and accountability. Building strong relationships between schools and their communities is vital for creating a supportive educational environment. Schools could benefit from initiatives that promote flexible engagement opportunities for parents. Doing so enables them to actively participate in school governance and activities.

Cultural attitudes, social, and economic factors also play a significant role in educational challenges, particularly in rural settings. Some principals pointed out that in their communities, immediate labour is often prioritised over education, leading to learner dropout rates and poor attendance. To address these cultural barriers, schools should engage in outreach efforts that raise awareness about the value of education. Collaborating with local leaders and community influencers could help shift perceptions, encouraging families to prioritise the education of their children.

Lastly, several principals expressed concerns regarding policy misalignment with local needs. They noted that educational policies often overlook the specific rural schools challenges, leading to misaligned resources and support. Governance frameworks should be adaptable to local contexts. Regular consultations with school leaders and stakeholders could ensure that policies reflect the realities of the schools they aim to serve. This ultimately fosters a more responsive and effective educational system.

The analysis of the responses of the principals highlights the intricate challenges that schools face in achieving academic excellence. A multifaceted approach is necessary to address these issues, focusing on improving communication, resource allocation, teacher support, community engagement, and policy alignment. By fostering an inclusive governance framework that considers the diverse needs of urban and rural schools, stakeholders could work collaboratively to enhance educational outcomes. Doing that would create a sustainable and equitable education system for all learners.

5.8 Implementation of governance structures

5.8.1 Group 1: Collaborative governance structures

Eight principals from urban schools emphasised the importance of collaboration in their governance structures. They implemented systems that fostered teamwork among teachers, parents, and the community.

Principal A noted that,

We established a school leadership team that includes teachers, parents, and community members. This group meets monthly to analyse academic performance data and develop action plans. Their insights have directly led to targeted interventions, significantly improving our the test scores of our learners.

Principal B narrated his views thus,

By creating a transparent data management system, we track learner performance metrics and share that information with all stakeholders. This transparency has fostered a sense of accountability and engagement within the community, positively impacting our academic outcomes.

Principal C explained that,

We adopted a mentorship programme pairing struggling learners with fast learners. This initiative not only supports academic achievement but also strengthens learner relationships within the school.

5.8.2 Group 2: Professional development focus

Five principals from both urban and rural schools illustrated the significance of professional development for teachers as a governance strategy. Principal D pointed out that,

We have established partnerships with local colleges to provide ongoing professional development. This support has equipped our teachers with modern instructional techniques, directly improving classroom performance.

Principal E asserted that,

Regular professional learning communities allow teachers to collaboratively analyse performance data. This has cultivated a culture of

shared responsibility for learner outcomes, leading to enhanced academic results.

Principal F claimed that,

> *I implemented a feedback system where teachers could observe each other's classes. This peer observation fosters continuous improvement and has raised our teaching quality*.

5.8.3 Group 3: Community and parental engagement

Six principals emphasised the role of community and parental involvement in improving academic performance through structured governance. Principal G said that,

> *We launched a parent-teacher association that actively involves parents in school governance. This connection has improved learner behavior and academic achievement*.

Principal H indicated that,

> *In our rural school, we formed a community advisory board that meets quarterly. The input from local leaders and parents has helped us align our educational strategies with community needs, which has increased learner attendance*.

Principal I highlighted that,

> *We conduct community meetings regularly to gather feedback on school policies. This inclusive approach has allowed us to adjust our strategies based on the needs of our learners and parents, leading to better academic outcomes*.

5.8.4 Group 4: Tailored support programmes

Six principals implemented tailored support programmes to address specific challenges faced by their learners. Principal J postulated that,

We have established a 'catch-up' programme for learners who academically lag behind. Providing additional tutoring has helped bridge the academic gap and allowed learners to reach their potential.

Principal K provided this narrative,

Recognising the need for flexibility, we developed a scheduling system that accommodates learners with work commitments, particularly in our rural context. This adjustment has led to improved attendance and performance.

Principal L commented thus,

To enhance our school climate, we implemented a school-wide positive behaviour support system. By rewarding good behaviour, we have seen improvements in learner engagement and academic performance.

5.8.5 Group 5: Leadership development and distributed leadership

Five principals stressed the importance of leadership development and shared governance structures in enhancing academic performance. Principal M said that,

We adopted a distributed leadership model where teachers take on leadership roles within their departments. This empowerment has encouraged innovative teaching strategies and improved learner education.

Principal N explained that,

Our school leadership team includes a diverse group of stakeholders. By having various voices in decision-making, we ensure that our strategies are well-rounded and effective.

Principal O noted that,

I believe in empowering my teachers. By involving them in curriculum development, we have created a more relevant and engaging curriculum that resonates with learners, leading to better performance.

The responses from the 25 principals illustrate a comprehensive approach to governance in the basic education sector. This highlights various strategies designed to enhance academic performance. These strategies clearly show the importance of collaboration, professional development, community engagement, tailored support, and leadership empowerment in creating a conducive learning environment.

5.8.6 Analysing key themes

The researcher identified key themes from the data provided by the participants. These themes are discussed below.

5.8.6.1 Collaborative Governance

A predominant theme among the responses was the emphasis on collaborative governance structures. Many principals established leadership teams that included not only the teachers but also parents and community members. This inclusive approach fosters a sense of shared responsibility for learner outcomes. It allows for diverse perspectives in decision-making. By involving various stakeholders, those principals have created an environment where everyone is invested in the academic success of learners. That leads to targeted interventions that effectively address specific challenges. This view was apparent in the literature reviewed. For example, sections 2.7, 2.9.10, 2.9.11, and 2.9.12 show collaborative governance as inclusive of various players in school governance. That allows for the interests of diverse groups to be represented (Mohapi et al., 2021; Waardenburg et al., 2019; Maile, 2002).

5.8.6.2 Professional development and continuous improvement

Another significant theme was the focus on professional development for teachers. Principals emphasised the establishment of partnerships with local colleges and regular professional learning communities as essential strategies. These initiatives enabled teachers to acquire new instructional techniques and collaboratively analyse learner performance data. The commitment to continuous improvement not only enhances teaching quality but also contributes to a culture of accountability. Once that

is assured teachers become empowered to strive for excellence in their classrooms. The literature reviewed in sections 2.1.10, 3.11, and 3.12 emphasises the importance of ensuring professional development among teachers. Professional development enables teachers to fulfil their obligations and contribute towards learner performance (Willis, 2010). In particular, the human development approach adopted in this study underpins this importance because it equips teachers with skills. The theory posits that human development is pivotal in increasing the economic output of a country because skilled people are competent and effective (Ross, 2023; Bell, 2020; Ogujiuba, 2013; Marimuthu et al., 2009). On a micro-level, this also applies to teachers in the Eastern Cape Province. Their competency and expertise rely on their skills, and hence, the DBE should ensure continuous training programmes (Ndungane et al., 2024).

5.8.6.3 Community and parental engagement

The importance of community and parental involvement emerged as a vital sub-theme. Several principals implemented structures such as parent-teacher associations and community advisory boards to facilitate family communication and collaboration. This engagement is crucial for nurturing a supportive educational environment. It encourages parents to actively participate in the education of their children. The feedback from parents and community leaders allows schools to align their strategies with local needs. In reality, that enhances learner attendance and academic performance. This sub-theme is consistent with the institutional theory discussed in Section 2.11. That theory claims that societies are made up of institutions with various stakeholders. Stakeholder involvement and participation are crucial because they ensure that all stakeholders are represented (O'Brien & Rickne, 2016). This aligns with the research problem of the study. Stakeholder involvement is key to solving governance challenges in schools.

5.8.6.4 Tailored support programmes

The implementation of tailored support programmes for learners was another key sub-theme. Several principals recognised the diverse needs of their learners. They then

established initiatives such as catch-up programmes and flexible scheduling to accommodate those needs. By addressing barriers to learning, such as attendance issues related to work commitments, those schools created pathways for learners to succeed academically. This flexibility demonstrates an understanding of the unique challenges faced by urban and rural learners and highlights the importance of adaptability in governance. The literature in section 2.7.1.6 indicates that the DBE is responsible for providing resources to address these challenges. Most schools in the province do not have adequate resources to find the programmes. The provincial government should assist in such cases (Matlou et al., 2024; Brian & Shumane, 2018).

5.8.6.5 Leadership development and empowerment

Lastly, the responses indicated a strong focus on leadership development and distributed leadership models. Principals emphasised the need to empower teachers by involving them in governance decisions. By promoting a sense of ownership among teachers, those principals encourage innovative teaching strategies. They also promote a collaborative culture within the school. This empowerment is essential for building a resilient and responsive educational environment where all members are invested in the success of their learners. Section 2.7.1.4 highlighted the importance of a sense of ownership among stakeholders. When stakeholders regard an asset as theirs, they are likely to work towards developing it to ensure that it meets the expected standards (Brian & Shumane, 2018). This is important in the Eastern Cape, where the politicisation of schools has stripped them of accountability and competent leadership.

The governance structures implemented by the principals reflect a holistic approach to improving academic performance. By emphasising collaboration, professional development, community engagement, tailored support, and leadership empowerment, those school leaders demonstrate a commitment to creating effective learning environments. The diverse strategies employed not only address the specific challenges their schools face but also nurture a culture of continuous improvement and accountability. These findings provide valuable insights for stakeholders looking to develop sustainable governance frameworks in the basic education sector. That

would guarantee that the needs of all learners are met and that academic performance continues to improve.

5.9 Effective strategies addressing governance challenges

The researcher posed questions to principals about strategies for addressing school governance challenges. The findings are reported below.

5.9.1 Group 1: Data-driven decision-making

Six principals emphasised the importance of using data to inform decision-making and address governance challenges. UP1 claimed that,

> *We implemented a learner performance tracking system that monitors academic progress in real time. This data allows us to identify struggling learners early and provide targeted interventions, which has led to significant improvement in test scores*.

UP2 explained that,

> *Data analysis is at the heart of our decision-making process. We use school performance data to identify gaps and allocate resources effectively. For example, we noticed a drop in Mathematics scores. We then focused our teacher training and resources to improving Mathematics instruction*.

UP3 clarified their situation thus,

> *Our school began using data dashboards to track learner attendance, Grades, and behavioral patterns. We boosted learner engagement and performance by addressing issues picked from the data such as absenteeism*.

5.9.2 Group 2: Strengthening community engagement

Five principals found that improving community and parental engagement helped overcome governance challenges to augment academic outcomes. In response to this idea, RP1 narrated that,

> *We have worked to integrate parents into the school decision-making process through regular 'community days' and parent-teacher workshops. Their involvement has led to greater accountability among our learners, and we have also seen a reduction in absenteeism*.

UP5 pointed out that,

> *Establishing a community advisory board gave us the platform to listen to the needs and concerns of our community. This has helped us tailor our curricula and school activities to align with community values, leading to better learner engagement*.

RP2 gave her view thus,

> *We started a home-school communication programme, sending regular updates to parent about the progress of our learners using text messages. This initiative increased parental involvement, which in turn positively affected academic performance*.

5.9.3 Group 3: Enhancing teacher professional development

Six principals acknowledged the impact of the ongoing teacher training and development on both the governance and academic outcomes. UP6 reported that,

> *We developed a professional development programme that focused on collaborative learning techniques. That program equipped teachers with innovative teaching methods that led to improved learner performance, especially in subjects like Sciences and Mathematics*.

RP3 illustrated that,

By partnering with nearby universities, we were able to offer our teachers continuous training in the latest educational strategies. This initiative directly contributed to better classroom management and academic outcomes.

UP7 reasoned that:

We conduct regular workshops on differentiated instruction, which has allowed our teachers to address the varying learning needs of learners effectively. Due to that our learner performance has steadily improved.

5.9.4 Group 4: Governance reforms and accountability structures

Five principals focused on reforms to governance structures and establishing accountability systems to improve outcomes. To that effect, UP8 said that,

We introduced a school improvement committee that included teachers, parents, and local leaders. That committee annually reviews our academic performance and holds us accountable to set targets. Our governance reform has helped us to maintain our focus on continuous improvement.

RP4 explained that,

We adopted a transparent governance model where decisions on resource allocation and policy changes are openly discussed with staff and parents. This has built trust and ensures that all stakeholders are invested in our academic goals.

UP9 gave the following,

One effective strategy we implemented was the teacher evaluation system based on classroom observations and learner outcomes. By holding teachers accountable, we have seen significant improvements in teaching quality and learner results.

5.9.5 Group 5: Curriculum innovation and customisation

Three principals identified curriculum adjustments as key strategies in overcoming governance challenges. RP5 asserted that,

> *We customised the curricula to focus on practical and community-relevant skills. For instance, we introduced agricultural science for learners from the farming communities. That increased learner interests and attendance, leading to better academic outcomes*.

UP10 stated that,

> *We reviewed our curricula and made adjustments to better align them with real-life contexts of the learners. This has resulted in more engagement and higher performance, particularly in subjects where learners previously struggled to excel.*

RP5 narrated that,

> *To address the specific needs of our rural learners, we incorporated experiential learning opportunities like field trips and hands-on projects. Those initiatives made learning more meaningful and improved overall academic performance*.

5.9.6 Analysis

5.9.6.1 Theme 1: Data-driven decision-making

The first major theme to emerge from the responses is the use of data-driven decision-making. Six principals emphasised that by leveraging data, they were able to intervene early and allocate resources more effectively. This strategy allowed principals to identify areas where learners struggled. They address those issues with targeted interventions. The use of real-time data tracking systems, dashboards for monitoring attendance, and analysis of performance metrics helped those schools to improve academic outcomes.

Data-driven governance guarantees that decisions taken are based on measurable performance indicators. That leads to more informed resource allocation. For instance, when Mathematics scores dropped, principals responded by allocating more resources to teacher training in that area. That demonstrated a proactive governance model that was adapted based on evidence. Sections 2.8.2 and 2.8.3 discussed the importance of data-driven decision-making. This enables institutions to rely on available data to make decisions. It is crucial because the process reduces the incidence of wrong decisions or developing strategies that are not effective in addressing the identified challenges (Kota et al., 2018). This shows that literature is in line with the views of the principals.

5.9.6.2 Theme 2: Strengthening community engagement

Another key theme was the importance of community and parental engagement in overcoming governance challenges. Five principals opined that building stronger relationships with the community leads to better outcomes. Community advisory boards and regular parent-teacher workshops were cited as successful strategies for aligning school governance with the needs and values of the community. This involvement increased accountability among learners, as parents were more engaged in the education of their children. Governance frameworks that prioritise open communication with stakeholders ensure that schools are more responsive to the needs of their communities. The outcome here was to improve academic performance. An analysis of the practices adapted to the Eastern Cape Province situation in Section 2.9.9 emphasised parental and community engagement. Important interventions in school governance position schools as public value assets that are communally owned by various stakeholders. This lends those schools valuable support and resources that are critical to their development. The World Bank (2018) emphasised the importance of this. Similarly, sections 2.7.1 and 2.8.2 outline how strengthening community engagement is done in the Eastern Cape Province to improve the state of schools.

5.9.6.3 Theme 3: Enhancing teacher professional development

A third theme is the critical role of continuous teacher professional development. Six principals found that ongoing training and development opportunities for teachers led to significant improvements in academic outcomes. Schools that offered professional development programmes on collaborative learning techniques or differentiated instruction saw a direct positive impact on teaching quality and learner performance.

By investing in teacher training, schools created a learning culture that improved both governance and academic outcomes. This theme underscores the importance of capacity-building within governance frameworks. When teachers are empowered with new skills, the quality of education rises, benefiting both the learners and the overall school environment. Section 2.2 outlines the strategies implemented to ensure the professional development of teachers since it was noted that the performance of learners relies on the availability of trained and competent teachers (Kallaway, 2002). Modikoa et al. (2023) noted that despite the existing challenges in training teachers, it is crucial for professional development programmes to be offered to ensure that teachers have the required skills.

5.9.6.4 Theme 4: Governance reforms and accountability structures

Five principals reported that reforming governance structures and establishing clear accountability systems improved school outcomes. The introduction of school improvement committees and transparent decision-making processes involving various stakeholders allowed for better governance oversight. By holding both management and teachers accountable through performance reviews and evaluation systems, those schools were able to drive continuous improvements in teaching quality and academic results.

Transparent governance models built trust among stakeholders and promoted a collaborative environment where everyone was invested in the academic goals of the school. Accountability mechanisms such as teacher evaluations tied to learner outcomes certified that governance was focused on delivering measurable improvements. This study reveals that reforming the basic education governance system in the mid-1990s was vital because it included several other stakeholders in

school governance. The data from the participants suggest improvement to this system. Kota et al. (2018) noted poor accountability in schools in the Eastern Cape Province. This is consistent with the views of the participants about improving transparency and accountability through governance reforms.

5.9.6.5 Theme 5: Curricula innovation and customisation

Finally, curricula innovation and customisation emerged as another important theme. Three principals found that tailoring the curricula to better align with the lives of learners and community needs was crucial to overcoming governance challenges. In rural schools, for example, introducing practical subjects like agricultural science increased learner engagement and attendance, resulting in better performance. Curriculum adjustments to incorporate real-world experiential learning opportunities helped to make education more relevant to learners. This theme suggests that flexible governance frameworks that allow for curriculum adjustments could improve academic outcomes by making education more meaningful and engaging for learners.

Section 2.7.5 dealt with the curriculum challenges in the Eastern Cape Province. For example, implementing the curricula is mad difficult by several challenges. Those challenges are unclear guidelines and a lack of skilled personnel. In addition, challenges that include the lack of resources (furniture and books) and high labour turnover negatively affect curricula implementation. This indicates the limits of curriculum reforms. That is, the reforms would fail to accomplish the intended goals without the necessary resources. This significantly impacts the academic performance of learners because an effective curriculum is crucial for learning (Graduate School of Development Policy & Practice, 2017).

5.10 Reviewing successful governance systems in other education districts

5.10.1 Group 1: Collaborative leadership models

Five principals pointed to the education districts that have successfully implemented collaborative leadership models involving various stakeholders in decision-making processes. UP11 admitted that,

> *In the neighbouring district, schools have adopted a 'shared governance' model where teachers, parents, and learners are part of the decision-making committees. This approach not only enhances transparency but also ensures that every stakeholder is valued, leading to the effective implementation of school policies*.

RP8 reiterated that,

> *One school we partnered with encouraged peer leadership among teachers. Senior teachers mentor new staff members. Decisions on curricula changes are collaboratively made. This promoted a strong sense of ownership and accountability among all staff members*.

UP12 observed that,

> *I have seen schools in the Western Cape Province using learner councils as part of their governance structure. That allows learners to have a voice in school management. This practice not only promotes leadership skills among learners but also improves their engagement with school policies*.

5.10.2 Group 2: Strong community-school partnerships

Another group of five principals observed that schools with strong community-school partnerships in rural areas often thrive. RP9 stated that,

> *I have seen rural schools establish successful partnerships with local businesses and community organisations. For instance, one school*

worked with a local farm to provide agricultural training, which benefited both the learners and the community.

UP13 averred that,

> *In other districts, I observed schools partnering with NGOs to address challenges like school dropouts. Those organisations provide after-school mentorship programmes and sometimes financial aid to learners. That is a great model that could work well in the Eastern Cape Province as well*.

RP10 stated that,

> *In a nearby province, I saw a school integrate community members into their school boards, especially elders with strong ties to the local culture. This increased accountability and helped the school to align its curricula with community expectations*.

5.10.3 Group 3: Data-driven accountability structures

Six principals referred to the role of data-driven systems in governance they saw in other districts. Here, schools successfully tracked progress and held stakeholders accountable. UP14 admitted that,

> *In the Free State, there is a district that uses performance data to hold schools accountable. Schools are required to report key quarterly metrics such as attendance and test results. This system pushed schools to improve their academic standards*.

RP11 reported that,

> *A model from the Gauteng Province I admired was their digital data management system that tracked learner and teacher performances. That system allowed principals and district officials to pick challenges early and then allocate resources accordingly*.

UP15 added that,

We observed a school in the KwaZulu-Natal Province using real-time data analytics to monitor learner progress. When performance dipped, that school urgently intervened by providing targeted support like tutoring or additional teacher training. The results were impressive.

5.10.4 Group 4: Distributed leadership and decentralisation

Four principals cited examples of schools that succeeded by decentralising decision-making processes, empowering staff, and local leaders to take charge. UP16 illustrated his views thus,

A successful practice I saw in Johannesburg involves decentralising leadership so that departmental heads were responsible for certain academic goals. That system became a game-changer as the department heads became empowered to make key decisions. That also accelerated the pace of reforms.

RP12 pointed out that,

In one rural school, the district allowed the school leadership team to make decisions about resource allocation. That decentralisation aspect resulted in a more efficient and context-specific use of funds to directly benefit learners.

UP17 provided the following,

I observed a system in Durban where principals were given more autonomy to adapt district policies to their specific school contexts. This decentralised governance system improved school operations. The one-size-fits-all policies from the district often failed to account for the unique challenges schools faced.

5.10.5 Group 5: Teacher-led governance initiatives

Five principals observed governance structures that involved teachers playing a significant role in the school decision-making processes. RP13 noted that,

> *I visited a school where teachers were empowered to lead professional development initiatives. The formed committees to discuss teaching practices. That helped to improve both the teacher morale and learner outcomes.*

UP18 mused that,

> *A model I saw in Pretoria had teachers take ownership of extra-curricular programmes, from budgeting to planning. This teacher-led approach allowed the principal to focus on academic improvements and governance issues*.

RP14 recollected that,

> *A school I visited allowed teachers to rotate leadership roles such as heading curricula planning committees. The distributed leadership model increased collaboration among staff and led to innovative teaching methods*.

5.10.6 Analysis

Several themes such as collaborative leadership, community-school partnerships, data-driven accountability and teacher-led governance were identified from the data.

5.10.6.1 Theme 1: Collaborative leadership models

One clear theme from the responses is the success of collaborative leadership models observed by five principals. In schools where decision-making is shared among teachers, parents, and learners, there is a higher sense of ownership and accountability. Collaborative leadership fosters transparency and inclusiveness. That leads to more effective policy implementation. This model empowers various

stakeholders, ensuring that their voices are heard and considered in the governance process. Such models could greatly benefit schools in the Eastern Cape Province by improving stakeholder engagement and support. That is especially true in under-resourced schools where shared responsibility could lead to more sustainable changes.

Section 2.7 indicates that the SASA introduced a collaborative and participatory model of school governance in South Africa. This came at a time when school governance was left to inspectors and principals with little involvement by other stakeholders (Modisaotsile, 2012). The literature highlights that collaborative leadership involves several stakeholders in school governance. This model distributes decision-making powers among several individuals and groups, making governance a collective activity (Hallinger & Heck, 2010).

5.10.6.2 Theme 2: Strong community-school partnership

Another important theme is the strength of community-school partnerships. Five principals mentioned observing schools that benefited from engaging local businesses, NGOs, and community leaders. Such partnerships provided additional resources, vocational training opportunities, and mentorship programmes that extend learning beyond the classroom. These relationships also provided a sense of shared responsibility for learner success. In the Eastern Cape Province, where many schools face resource shortages, this model could help bridge gaps by leveraging community expertise and support. Aligning school governance with community values and needs would likely improve learner outcomes and enhance school accountability.

Section 2.7.1.4 of this study outlines positioning the community as a structure in school governance. That enables schools to form strong community-school partnerships (Brian & Shumane, 2018). This increases the quality of leadership and decision-making since the school captures views from a broad base of stakeholders. It also fosters community support since the school could take advantage of the skills and

expertise of community members. Literature reviewed is consistent with the views of the participants.

5.10.6.3 Theme 3: Data-driven accountability structures

Six principals highlighted the success of data-driven accountability systems in other districts. Schools could make informed decisions and adjust strategies by using data to track performance metrics such as attendance, test scores, and learner engagement. Data-driven governance also allows for real-time monitoring, which is essential for early intervention when problems arise. This structure ensures that governance is results-oriented and provides clear benchmarks for success. Schools in the Eastern Cape Province could benefit from adopting similar systems. These would help them to identify issues early, allocate resources more efficiently, and ensure that policies directly impact learner performance.

5.10.6.4 Theme 4: Distributed leadership and decentralisation

Four principals pointed out that decentralising leadership by giving more autonomy to individual departments or school leaders was an effective governance strategy they had ever seen. When decisions are made at the local level, schools could respond more quickly to specific challenges, such as resource shortages or curriculum gaps. The empowerment of departmental heads or school leaders leads to the fast implementation of reforms and fosters a greater sense of responsibility. A decentralised governance model in the Eastern Cape Province could help schools tailor solutions to their unique needs. That would improve efficiency and ensure that governance structures are responsive to on-the-ground realities. Distributed leadership conforms to the literature reviewed in sections 2.7.1.2, 2.7.1.4 and 2.8. That review dealt with the participatory school governance model that positions stakeholders such as the community, parents, teachers, and learners as instruments of enhancing accountability and transparency (Brian & Shumane, 2018; Kota et al., 2018). This shows that leadership and decision-making powers are distributed, resulting in diverse stakeholders making essential decisions. Therefore, the views provided by the participants dovetail with what was reviewed in the literature chapter.

5.10.6.5 Theme 5: Teacher-led governance initiatives

The final theme revolves around teacher-led governance initiatives. Five principals noted the success of models where teachers play a central role in governance. They lead professional development programmes and manage extra-curricular activities. Teacher involvement improves morale and creates a collaborative school culture where teachers are empowered to contribute to decision-making processes. This involvement could lead to innovative teaching practices and improved academic outcomes. In the Eastern Cape Province, encouraging teachers to take leadership roles could help distribute the governance load. That would foster a more inclusive decision-making environment and enhance school performance.

The literature reviewed in Section 2.7.1.2 shows that post-1994 teachers have a leading role in school governance compared to before the introduction of SASA (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2022). This is key because teachers are at the forefront of implementing educational policies in South Africa. Teachers quickly observe the successes and failures of policies. In other words, the participants' views are consistent with the school governance model introduced by the SASA.

5.11 State of basic education in the Eastern Cape Province

5.11.1 Group 1: Resource constraints and infrastructure challenges

Seven principals identified resource shortages, inadequate infrastructure, and a lack of learning materials as key contributors to the current state of basic education in the Eastern Cape Province. RP15 ruminated that,

> *One of the biggest issues is the lack of basic infrastructure. Many schools in rural areas do not have proper classrooms or facilities, which directly impacts the learning environment. When learners learn in dilapidated buildings or overcrowded classrooms, it is difficult to focus on academic performance*.

UP19 explained that,

The shortage of textbooks and teaching materials is another major problem. In our school, we often have to share textbooks among multiple learners, and that affects the learning process. This lack of resources makes it hard for both learners and teachers to keep up with the curricula.

RP16 admitted that:

There is a critical shortage of teachers in many rural schools. We often have one teacher managing multiple Grades or subjects, and that compromises the quality of education.

5.11.2 Group 2: Social and economic factors

Six principals noted the social and economic challenges faced by families in the province that greatly affect the ability of learners to perform well in class. UP20 provided these as,

Many of our learners are from low-income families where poverty is a daily struggle. Poverty leads to absenteeism as some learners have to work to support their families. Doing so negatively impacts their education.

RP17 explained that,

Hunger is a big issue. Many learners come to school hungry. It becomes hard for them to concentrate in class with empty stomachs. Compounded the problem is the fact that some rural areas do not have school feeding scheme programmes.

RP18 pronounced that,

The social environment in many of our communities is not conducive to learning. Issues like unemployment, substance abuse, and teenage pregnancies are prevalent. These social ills spill over to schools. Learners face a lot of distractions out of the classroom.

5.11.3 Group 3: Governance and leadership deficiencies

Five principals pointed to governance and leadership issues at both the school and provincial levels as contributing factors to the current state of basic education in the Eastern Cape Province. UP21 cogitated that,

> *There is a lack of consistent leadership at the provincial level. Frequent changes in education policies and officials mean that there is no continuity. Schools struggle to implement long-term plans as a result. We often receive conflicting directives*.

RP18 complained that,

> *Corruption and mismanagement within the provincial education department have resulted in funds meant for schools not being properly allocated. This means many of our essential needs, like teacher salaries or building repairs, are unmet*.

UP22 asserted that,

> *In my experience, school leadership is not always adequately trained in governance and management. Some principals come from teaching backgrounds with no formal training in administration, which leads to inefficiencies in how schools are run*.

5.11.4 Group 4: Teacher morale and professional development

Four principals cited low teacher morale and limited opportunities for professional development as factors that affect the quality of education in the Eastern Cape Province. RP19 lamented low morale thus,

> *The morale among teachers is low because of poor working conditions and inadequate pay. Many teachers feel overworked and underappreciated. That directly impact their motivation in the classroom*.

UP22 said the following about this idea,

There is a serious lack of professional development opportunities for teachers. Most of our teachers have not received updated training in years. Because of that those teachers use outdated teaching methods. Without continuous development, it is hard to improve teaching standards.

RP20 responded thus,

Many teachers face burnout because they teach overcrowded classes, manage multiple subjects, and sometimes do administrative duties in understaffed schools. This affects the quality of education they can provide to learners.

5.11.5 Group 5: Curricula and language barriers

Three principals gave curricula-related challenges and language barriers as contributing factors to bad governance in their district. RP21 reported that,

The national curricula are not always well-suited to the realities of rural schools. Many of the concepts are disconnected from the daily lives of learners in rural areas. That makes it hard for them to effectively engage with the learning material in class.

UP23 made a point that,

In many cases, the language of instruction poses a challenge. Learners often come from homes where English is not spoken at all. Those learners struggle to grasp concepts when taught in a language they are not fluent in.

RP22 explained that,

The curriculum is too rigid and does not allow for much flexibility. We need a curriculum that can be adapted to different contexts, especially in rural schools where the needs of learners might differ from those in urban settings.

5.11.6 Analysis

5.11.6.1 Theme 1: Resource constraints and infrastructure challenges

The most frequently mentioned factors contributing to the current state of basic education are the severe resource constraints and inadequate infrastructure in schools. Seven principals pointed out the direct link between the learning environment and academic performance. They added dilapidated buildings, overcrowded classrooms, and a lack of basic learning materials as seriously hampering educational outcomes. In rural areas, the shortage of teachers further escalates the problem, with one teacher often tasked with managing multiple Grades or subjects. This theme calls for the need for substantial investments in infrastructure, teacher recruitment, and the provision of learning materials. Addressing these structural challenges would provide a more conducive environment for learning. This is especially realistic in under-resourced rural schools. This view partly responds to the research problem of this study. The research problem is stated thus: Several governance challenges in the Eastern Cape Province, such as the abuse of resources, poor accountability and corruption, create problems for schools, resulting in the poor academic performance of learners. Brian and Shumane (2018) and Kota et al. (2018) stated that the problems also lead to resource constraints in schools since they are abused or misappropriated.

5.11.6.2 Theme 2: Socioeconomic factors and poverty

Six principals identified the impact of social and economic issues such as poverty, hunger, and the need for learners to work or care for family members. Those issues contributed to high absenteeism and low academic performance. In rural and urban settings alike, learners from low-income families face multiple challenges that make it difficult for them to focus on their education. Hunger, in particular, was flagged as a critical barrier to learner concentration and engagement in teaching and learning.

This theme suggests that improving the basic education system in the Eastern Cape Province requires addressing those broader social and economic challenges. Those would be potentially addressed through expanded feeding schemes, social support programmes, and the greater integration of schools with community services. By

alleviating some of these external pressures, schools might see improvements in learner attendance and focus.

The responses gathered from the principals align with the literature reviewed in this study. Broader social and economic issues in the Eastern Cape Province also impact school governance. Section 1.2 revealed that the Eastern Cape Province is regarded as the poorest province in the country (Van Dyk & White, 2019). This results in most schools in the province being “no fee” schools that rely on government support and donations. This lowers the quality of teaching and learning since such schools struggle with resources, and their communities cannot help them.

5.11.6.3 Theme 3: Governance and leadership deficiencies

Governance and leadership deficiencies were cited by five principals as major factors impacting the current state of education in the Eastern Cape Province. At both the provincial and school levels, inconsistent leadership, mismanagement, and a lack of training for principals led to inefficiencies and poor resource allocation. Corruption within the provincial education department also contributed to funds not being properly used, leaving schools without the resources they need to function effectively.

This theme indicates the need for stronger transparent governance structures, better training for school leaders, and reforms at the provincial level to ensure that education policies are consistent and effectively implemented. Addressing governance issues would not only improve resource management but also help schools to successfully execute their long-term plans.

The views of the principals align with the literature reviewed in this study. For example, Section 1.3 indicates that poor leadership is responsible for the poor state of teaching and learning in the province (Kota et al., 2018). Public sector leadership is important because it affects how resources are managed and how policies are implemented. Since the Eastern Cape Provincial DBE leadership is politicised and involved in factional contests, that affects school governance and performance. In addition, the negative impact of trade unions and their corrupt tendencies in the appointment of principals in the province is a significant challenge (Brian & Shumane, 2018).

5.11.6.4 Theme 4: Teacher morale and professional development

Four principals pointed to low teacher morale and the lack of professional development opportunities as key factors. Many teachers are overworked, underpaid, and face burnout, negatively impacting education quality. Without continuous professional development, teachers are not equipped with the latest teaching strategies and methodologies, leading to outdated practices in the classroom.

Improving teacher morale through better working conditions, fair remuneration, and opportunities for professional growth could uplift the quality of instruction. This theme shows the importance of investing in teachers as a critical component of governance reforms in the education system.

5.11.6.5 Theme 5: Curriculum and language barriers

Lastly, three principals raised concerns about curricula-related challenges and language barriers. The current national curricula were described as too rigid and not always relevant to the realities of rural learners. Language barriers, particularly when English is used as the medium of instruction in communities where it is not commonly spoken, were also mentioned as impediments to learner understanding and engagement. This theme suggests that more flexible and context-appropriate curricula and language support programmes could help bridge these gaps. Adapting the curricula that reflect the local context, especially in rural areas, would make learning more meaningful and accessible to learners. The literature reviewed in Section 2.2 points out that Curriculum 2005 was introduced to address the challenges of the old curricula. Implementing that new curriculum has had limited success due to governance challenges in provinces such as the Eastern Cape. The views of the principals reflect this reality.

5.12 Assessing the effectiveness of governance frameworks in the Eastern Cape Province

5.12.1 Group 1: Lack of accountability and oversight

Six principals assessed the current governance frameworks as largely ineffective due to the absence of accountability mechanisms and oversight. UP24 agreed thus,

> *In my opinion, the governance structures lack proper accountability. Policies are made but there is no follow-up to ensure that they are implemented correctly. It is often left to individual schools to do so. This leads to uneven enforcement*.

RP23 explained that,

> *There is very little oversight from the provincial department. We do not receive regular inspections or evaluations, so schools that struggle are often left on their own to figure issues out. There is no framework in place that supports continuous improvement*.

UP25 pointed out that,

> *We have governance frameworks but the challenge is the nonexistence of follow-through. Decisions are made but no one is held accountable when targets are not met. This means that even well-intentioned policies fall short in practice*.

5.12.2 Group 2: Bureaucratic inefficiency and slow decision-making

Five principals expressed concerns that the governance frameworks are bogged down by bureaucracy and slow decision-making processes, which limits their effectiveness.

RP24 noted that,

> *The bureaucratic nature of the education department makes it difficult for schools to respond quickly to issues. For example, if we need additional resources, it takes months, sometimes years, for the district office to process our requests. This delays any meaningful progress*.

UP1 stated that,

> *The frameworks in place often involve too many layers of approval before anything gets done. By the time we get permission to implement a new policy or access funds, the situation on the ground will have worsened*.

RP25 claimed that,

> *Decisions made at the provincial level are very slow to reach schools. We are often forced to wait for approval for simple issues like hiring a new teacher or purchasing supplies. The delay in decision-making interferes with our ability to address issues expeditiously*.

5.12.3 Group 3: Top-down approach

Five principals were critical of the top-down approach within governance frameworks. They believed that it does not account for the specific needs of individual schools, particularly those in rural areas. RP1 reasoned that,

> *The governance structures are too centralised. Most decisions are made at the provincial level, and they do not always take into account the unique challenges faced by rural schools like ours. This top-down approach leads to policies that are out of touch with what we need*.

UP2 summed up their situation thus,

> *The one-size-fits-all policies that come from the provincial department do not work well for all schools. We need more flexibility in how we implement governance frameworks so we can adapt them to our specific context*.

RP2:

> *Rural schools face very different challenges than urban schools, yet the governance policies do not reflect that. We are often left trying to*

implement policies that are not relevant to our situation, which undermines their effectiveness.

5.12.4 Group 4: Positive steps but inconsistent implementation

Five principals acknowledged that while there are positive elements within the governance frameworks, the main issue is the inconsistent implementation across schools and districts. UP3 opined that,

> *There are some good policies in place, particularly around resource allocation and school governance. However, these are not implemented consistently across schools. Some schools benefit more than others. That creates disparities in outcomes*.

RP3 acknowledged that,

> *The governance framework around teacher recruitment has improved but the issue is that some schools, particularly rural ones, are still understaffed. The framework is there but the follow-through is inconsistent*.

UP4 narrated that,

> *We have seen positive changes like more focus on school leadership and management. But, it really depends on the school. If the principal is proactive, the governance framework could work well. In other cases, it is less effective because the support structures are absent*.

5.12.5 Group 5: Inadequate training for school leadership

Four principals pointed to the lack of training for school leaders as a key factor that limits the effectiveness of governance frameworks. RP4 claimed that,

> *One of the major weaknesses is that school leaders, including principals, are not adequately trained in governance. We are often promoted from*

teaching roles without receiving formal training in management. That limits our ability to effectively navigate these frameworks.

UP5 added that,

> *There is a gap in the training provided to school leadership. Many of us do not have the governance background needed to fully understand and implement policies. That makes it difficult to effectively run schools*.

RP5 said that,

> *School leaders need more professional development when it comes to governance. Without the necessary skills, even the best governance frameworks would not be effective. We need more support in this area*.

5.12.6 Analysis

5.12.6.1 Theme 1: Lack of accountability and oversight

A critical issue raised by six principals is the lack of accountability and oversight within the current governance frameworks. Principals described the system where policies are developed but not effectively monitored, resulting in uneven implementation across schools. Without a robust mechanism to hold stakeholders accountable or to track progress, even well-designed governance frameworks fall short of achieving their intended outcomes. This reveals the need for stronger accountability structures that regularly assess school performance to make certain that governance policies are implemented as intended.

The theme suggests the importance of external oversight, possibly through more frequent inspections or audits from the provincial education department. That would safeguard schools' alignment with governance expectations. Strengthening oversight mechanisms could improve the overall effectiveness of governance structures in the Eastern Cape education sector. The views of the principals were similar to the perspectives of scholarly works reviewed in the study. While Brian and Shumane (2018), in Section 2.7.1.4, said that SASA positions stakeholders such as the community and teachers as instruments of accountability, there is poor accountability in the Eastern Cape Province mainly because of poor leadership.

5.12.6.2 Theme 2: Bureaucratic inefficiency and slow decision-making

The second major theme is about the bureaucratic inefficiencies that affect the responsiveness of governance frameworks. The slow pace of decision-making at the provincial level was cited as the major obstacle. This was in terms of accessing resources or approving key decisions. This bureaucratic delay often resulted in missed opportunities to address critical issues in real time. That delay stalls the improvements and frustrates school leadership. Addressing this theme would require streamlining decision-making processes within the governance frameworks. By reducing the number of bureaucratic hurdles and speeding up approval times for resource allocation or policy implementation, schools would be better positioned to respond quickly to their needs. Decentralising certain decisions to the district or school level might help alleviate those delays.

5.12.6.3 Theme 3: Top-down approach

Another key theme is the top-down approach of the current governance frameworks. Here, five principals criticised it for being too centralised and disconnected from the realities on the ground. Principals, particularly those in rural areas, noted that governance policies are often formulated at the provincial level without adequate input from the schools themselves. This results in one-size-fits-all policies that fail to address the unique challenges faced by individual schools, especially those in rural or under-resourced areas. The literature reviewed herein suggests that the SASA transformed school governance by replacing the top-down approach with collaborative governance (Modisaotsile, 2012). This is not reflected in the views of the principals because they stated that the top-down approach was prevalent.

The findings suggest a need for a more flexible and context-sensitive approach to governance, where schools are given greater autonomy to adapt frameworks to their specific needs. By incorporating feedback from school leaders and tailoring policies to different contexts, the governance system could become more effective and relevant.

5.12.6.4 Theme 4: Positive steps but inconsistent implementation

While many principals acknowledged positive elements within the current governance frameworks, five-pointed to inconsistent implementation as the key issue; even where good policies exist, such as those around resource allocation, teacher recruitment, or school leadership, their effectiveness varies widely among schools. Some schools benefit significantly from those frameworks, while others are left behind due to the lack of consistent support or monitoring. This theme means that the governance system needs to ensure that all schools, regardless of location or resources, receive equal support in implementing policies. Strengthening the consistency of policy execution, perhaps through more robust monitoring and resource distribution, would help close the gap between schools and reduce disparities in outcomes. The views shared by the principals are consistent with the reviewed literature. For example, sections 2.1, 2.2, 2.6, 2.7.2, 2.8.1, and 2.9.6 deal with the challenges of implementing education policies, legislation, and programmes. This shows that the challenges associated with implementing policies could affect the implementation of the sustainable governance framework.

5.12.6.5 Theme 5: Inadequate training for school leadership

Four principals highlighted the inadequacy of training for school leaders as a major barrier to effective governance. Principals often rise from teaching positions with little formal training in school management or governance, leaving them ill-equipped to navigate complex governance frameworks. This lack of training compromises the ability of the leadership to effectively implement policies or manage school resources. This is largely so in rural areas where external support is often limited. Improving professional development opportunities for school leaders, particularly in governance and management skills, would enhance the effectiveness of governance frameworks. Investing in leadership training could help principals to better understand and apply governance policies. That would lead to efficient school management and improved academic outcomes.

The human capital theory reviewed in this study in Section 2.10.1 identifies the importance of training, which provides individuals with the skills and knowledge to do

certain activities efficiently (Marimuthu et al., 2009). This view is reflected in the responses of the principals. The principals also outlined the poor leadership training opportunities. This challenge was also reflected in Section 3.7.

5.13 Collaboration with other stakeholders

5.13.1 Group 1: Collaborative decision-making with teachers

Seven principals emphasised the importance of engaging teachers in decision-making to address governance challenges and improve academic performance. UP6 explained that,

> *Teachers are on the front lines of education. I make it a point to involve them in key decisions related to governance. We hold regular staff meetings where governance issues are discussed. Their input is crucial for effectively implementing any new policies*.

RP6 noted that,

> *In a rural setting, teachers often have a deep understanding of the challenges we face. By working closely with them, I get insights that help tailor governance structures to fit the school needs. Particularly when it comes to resource management and curricula adjustments*.

UP7 claimed that,

> *We have a collaborative approach where teachers are involved in the formation of governance strategies. This ensures that their voices are heard, and that they feel a sense of ownership of the changes we implement, which ultimately improves academic performance*.

5.13.2 Group 2: Engaging parents and the community

Six principals provided the role of involving parents and the broader community in addressing governance challenges. This concerned encouraging accountability and supporting learner education. RP7 explained that,

In a rural school like ours, the community is deeply invested in the success of the school. We hold regular parent-teacher meetings and involve parents in discussions about governance issues. Those issues are critical to academic performance.

UP8 reiterated that,

Parents are key stakeholders, and I work hard to build a partnership with them. We have a school governing body that includes parent representatives. That means that the inputs of parents are part of the decision-making process. This has been helpful in improving learner discipline and engagement.

RP8 indicated that,

We hold community meetings where governance challenges such as infrastructure issues and lack of resources are discussed. Engaging the local community helps us to obtain donations or volunteer help. That makes parents accountable for the attendance and academic progress of their children.

5.13.3 Group 3: Collaborating with local education authorities

Five principals emphasised their efforts to collaborate closely with local education authorities to secure the resources and policy support necessary to overcome governance challenges. UP9 pointed out that,

We regularly engage with the district education office to address governance issues. For example, we collaborate on teacher recruitment and infrastructure improvements. These directly impact academic performance. Building strong relationships with local authorities has been key to securing additional resources.

RP9 submitted that,

One of the biggest governance challenges we face is the lack of funding for basic needs. I collaborate closely with the education department to

ensure that our concerns are heard and addressed. They have been instrumental in securing grants and additional teachers for our school.

UP10 indicated that,

I maintain open communication with the local education authorities to ensure that the governance issues of our school are addressed. Whether it is infrastructure development or curriculum changes, working closely with the district authorities helps us to effectively navigate the bureaucratic processes.

5.13.4 Group 4: Collaborative culture

Four principals spoke about creating a culture of collaboration that brings together teachers, parents, and local authorities to collectively address governance challenges. UP11 presented that,

Our strategy is to build a collaborative culture where all stakeholders, including teachers, parents, and district officials, work together. We have established committees for specific governance challenges, such as teacher training or learner discipline, which include representatives from each group.

RP10 asserted that,

We have set up a governance task force that includes teachers, parents, and local education officials. This allows us to tackle issues like learner absenteeism and underperformance as a collective, rather than individually. The collaborative effort has significantly improved our school governance.

UP12 reasoned that,

We hold stakeholder forums at the start of each term where teachers, parents, and education authorities meet to discuss any governance challenges we face. This approach creates a sense of shared responsibility, which leads to more effective and sustainable solutions.

5.13.5 Group 5: External partnerships

Three principals highlighted the role of building partnerships with external organisations that include NGOs and local businesses to address governance challenges and provide additional support for academic improvement.

UP13 avowed that,

> *To overcome governance challenges, particularly around funding and resources, we collaborate with local businesses and NGOs. These external partners help us to fill the gaps in areas where the provincial government might be slow to act. Areas like providing learning materials or funding extracurricular programme*.

RP11 affirmed that,

> *In rural areas, we rely heavily on partnerships with NGOs that focus on education. Those NGOs help us to address governance challenges like teacher shortages and the need for better infrastructure. Such partnerships played big roles in boosting learner performance*.

UP14 averred that,

> *We partner with external organisations to help us to improve our governance structure, particularly around accountability and transparency. Those organisations bring expertise and resources that complement our work with parents and teachers, helping us to drive academic performance*.

5.13.6 Analysis

5.13.6.1 Theme 1: Collaborative decision-making with teachers

The first major theme that emerged in this respect is the active collaboration between principals and teachers in governance decision-making. Seven principals emphasised that teachers were key implementers of education policy. They were crucial partners in developing governance strategies that address the specific challenges schools face. By involving teachers in governance discussions, principals ensured that they gained

practical insights from those who work directly with learners. That made governance frameworks more responsive and effective to the needs of the school.

This collaboration strengthens a shared sense of responsibility, which not only improves the alignment of governance decisions with classroom realities but also boosts teacher morale. Teachers who felt that their opinions were valued and that they had a role to play in governance tended to be more invested in implementing changes, thereby improving academic performance. These perspectives are consistent with the literature reviewed in this study. For example, in Section 2.7.12, Bantwini and Moorosi (2022) declared that the post-SASA dispensation elevated teachers to being key stakeholders involved in school governance. As a result, close collaboration between principals and teachers is key for collaborative decision-making. Principals and teachers collaborate through structures such as SGBs or working relationships at schools. This reflects the importance of teachers and how they participate in collaborative decision-making in schools.

5.13.6.2 Theme 2: Engaging parents and the community

The second theme stressed the importance of involving parents and the local community in governance processes. Six principals discussed how engaging parents helped to tackle key governance challenges like learner attendance, discipline, and accountability. In rural settings, principals found that the community was deeply invested in the success of their schools, making community engagement an effective strategy for governance reform.

This theme suggests that successful governance structures are not confined within the school but extend into the broader community. By involving parents and local stakeholders in governance decisions, schools build a greater sense of shared responsibility for learner outcomes. Such community involvement is key for addressing issues like learner absenteeism, discipline, and resource shortages.

Sections 2.5.1, 2.8.1, and 2.9.9 show the role of parents in school governance. Section 2.7.1 narrates the negative impact of excluding parents from school governance. The literature points to the important role of parents in modern schools. The literature

reviewed is consistent with the responses of the principals. Both sets of information reveal that principals engage parents in school governance issues.

5.13.6.3 Theme 3: Collaborating with local education authorities

A third theme centres on the collaboration between principals and local education authorities. Five principals discussed the importance of building strong relationships with district or provincial education offices to navigate bureaucratic processes and secure much-needed resources. This collaboration is important in tackling governance challenges related to teacher shortages, infrastructure development, and curricula adjustments.

The ability to effectively collaborate with local authorities is a critical factor in overcoming governance bottlenecks that impede school performance. When principals open lines of communication with the education department, they are better positioned to advocate for the necessary support, whether financial, human resources, or policy reforms. This collaboration enhances the ability of the school to improve governance structures and academic performance. Van der Merwe (2012) discussed the importance of the DBE in uplifting education standards among rural schools. This is reflected in the responses of the interviewees that emphasise the importance of collaborating with local education authorities.

5.13.6.4 Theme 4: Collaborative culture among stakeholders

Four principals emphasised the importance of deepening a collaborative culture that brings together teachers, parents, and local authorities to collectively address governance challenges. This holistic approach ensures that stakeholders have a voice in the decision-making process. That enhances the likelihood of finding sustainable solutions to governance issues.

This theme reflects the idea that governance challenges are complex and multifaceted. They require inputs from various stakeholders to effectively address. By creating structures such as governance task forces or stakeholder forums, schools could comprehensively tackle issues like absenteeism, teacher development, or

learner discipline. This collaboration creates a shared sense of ownership over the success of the school, leading to more effective governance and better academic outcomes. Section 2.9.10 states that a collaborative culture benefits all the stakeholders because it allows the governance system to benefit from diverse views. This is important because stakeholders have varying needs and plans (Waardenburg et al., 2019). Enhancing collaborative culture ensures that diverse views are taken into account when dealing with governance issues. Therefore, the views of the principals are consistent with the literature reviewed in chapter two.

5.13.6.5 Theme 5: External partnerships

The final theme focuses on the role of external partnerships in addressing governance challenges. Three principals explained how collaboration with NGOs, local businesses, and other external organisations provides additional resources and expertise that complement internal governance efforts. These partnerships help to fill gaps where local education authorities might be slow to act, particularly in terms of funding, infrastructure, and teacher support.

This theme shows the potential for external partnerships to play a significant role in school governance. By bringing in external expertise and resources, schools could strengthen their governance structures. They implement changes that directly impact academic performance. These partnerships are particularly valuable in rural and under-resourced schools, where external support could make a substantial difference in overcoming governance challenges.

The governance model discussed in Section 2.7 champions incorporating multiple stakeholders that consist of internal and external role players into school governance. This provides a basis for principals to build external partnerships with NGOs, business people, interest groups, and community-based organisations. These partnerships are important in attracting support for the schools. The principal views match the notion of partnerships and collaboration, as discussed in chapter two.

5.14 Findings from interviews with learners

The researcher explored the views of learners about the quality of education they receive from their schools. Questions related to this idea were posed to learners from urban schools (UL), learners from rural schools (RL), and those from semi-urban schools (SUL). Learners were asked to rate the quality of education provided by their schools from 1 to 5.

5.14.1 Group 1: High ratings

Seven learners were asked to rate the quality of education provided by their schools. Learners in this group rated their schools positively. They emphasised the strong teaching staff and resources as contributing factors to the quality of education they receive so far. UL1 claimed that,

> *I would give it a 5. Teachers are dedicated and are always willing to help us. They provide engaging lessons. We have access to good resources like libraries and technology*.

SUL1 proclaimed that,

> *I give it a 4. Most of the teachers are very knowledgeable. The school offers extra classes, which helps us to understand our subjects better even though at times the workload overwhelms*.

UL2 averred that,

> *I rate it a 5 because we have great facilities and teachers who genuinely care about our success. The environment is conducive to learning*.

5.14.2 Group 3: Average ratings

Five learners provided average ratings, noting both strengths and weaknesses in their educational experiences. RL1 pointed out that,

I would rate it a 3. There are good teachers, but sometimes the resources are lacking. This is acutely so with practical subjects. We could use more lab equipment.

RL2 affirmed that,

I give it a 3. The teaching is good but we struggle with internet connectivity and access to online materials. That affects our learning experience.

SUL2 avowed that,

I would say a 3. While we have great teachers, I think more could be done to address learner needs and improve communication at school.

5.14.3 Group 3: Low ratings

Three learners rated their educational experiences poorly, citing various challenges that hindered their learning.

RL3 said that,

I rate it a 2. There are not enough resources, and sometimes classes become disorganised. We do not have access to the necessary materials, which makes learning difficult.

UL3 declared that,

I give it a 1. Teachers seem overwhelmed, and there is a lack of support for learners who struggle. I often feel lost in my studies.

RL3 acknowledged that,

I would rate it with a 1. School authorities do not seem to prioritise our needs. I think if more attention was paid to learner feedback, learning could improve.

5.14.4 Analysis

5.14.4.1 Theme 1: Teacher support and resources

The responses from the seven learners who rated their schools positively highlight the importance of dedicated teaching staff and adequate resources in providing quality education. Learners emphasised the engagement and support from their teachers, which played a crucial role in enhancing their learning experience. The strong rating of 4 or 5 suggests that, in these cases, effective governance structures have successfully facilitated the provision of necessary resources and a conducive learning environment.

The data collected from urban and semi-urban learners resonates with the literature reviewed in this study. In section 2.7.1.4, Kota et al. (2018) noted the severe divide between rural and urban schools. Urban schools were judged as better-resourced than their rural counterparts. This explains the significantly strong teacher support and resources outlined by the interviewed learners. There is consistency between the views outlined in the literature review and those provided by learners about the quality of education in their schools. Section 5.1.2 also emphasised that. This does not indicate, however, that urban schools are spared from school governance challenges or poor learner performance.

5.14.4.2 Theme 2: Mixed experiences

The five learners who rated their schools with a 3 illustrate a more nuanced view, recognising strengths in teaching while also pointing out significant shortcomings in resources and infrastructure. Learners mentioned the lack of materials in practical subjects. The lack thereof suggests that while the governance framework might be functional, it requires targeted improvements to fully meet the needs of learners. The mixed feedback indicates that while some aspects of education are strong, there is still work to be done to enhance overall quality. The perspectives of learners suggest that while their teachers are committed to teaching, their efforts are clouded by poor resources and infrastructure. The data aligns with the literature reviewed in Chapter Two, sections 2.1, 2.2, 2.7.1, 2.7.2, 2.7.3, 2.8, and 2.9. That review revealed that poor resources and infrastructure impact the performance of learners and the quality of

education (Mhlekude, 2020; Chawula, 2021; Koti et al., 2018; Breakfast, 2015). This is particularly severe in the Eastern Cape Province (Ndungane et al., 2024).

5.14.4.3 Theme 3: Resource and support deficiencies

The three learners who rated their education poorly mentioned critical issues regarding resources and organisational support. Their experiences reflect significant gaps in the governance framework as inadequate resources and lack of communication severely impacted their academic performance. Low ratings suggest that without addressing these fundamental issues, learners might continue to struggle, further exacerbating disparities in educational quality across different regions.

Sections 5.14.4.2 and 5.14.4.3 painted a somewhat promising picture of the quality of education in the Eastern Cape schools but the data are by no means the norm. The literature reviewed in this study indicates substantial poor learner performance, weak governance, a lack of accountability, poor funding and several other challenges impacting basic education (see sections 2.1; 2.7.7, 2.8, & 2.9). The data are consistent with the perspectives of learners who ranked the education provided by their schools low in quality.

5.15 Quality of school infrastructure

Learners expressed various views regarding the quality of the infrastructure in their schools.

5.15.1 Group 1: Positive views

Six learners expressed satisfaction with the infrastructure in their schools, noting how that infrastructure supports their learning.

UL4 indicated that,

I believe that our school has good infrastructure. We have modern classrooms, a well-stocked library, and computer laboratory. These structures helps us with our studies.

SUL3 confirmed that,

I think the infrastructure is adequate. Our classrooms are comfortable, and we have access to the internet, which is essential for our research and projects.

UL5 declared that,

Definitely! The facilities, like science laboratories and study rooms, allow us to engage in practical learning, which I find very beneficial for understanding my subjects better.

5.15.2 Group 2: Mixed responses

Five learners showed mixed feelings about the infrastructure in their schools, recognising some strengths while identifying significant gaps.

RL4 stressed that,

I would say it is a mixed bag. While we have decent classrooms, the lack of proper laboratories and limited resources for practical subjects is a problem.

RL5 indicated that,

It is not bad but we really need more technology in our classrooms. We have outdated computers, which makes it hard to keep up with online learning materials.

SUL4 affirmed that,

The infrastructure supports basic needs but improvements are needed. Our sports facilities are limited, and more extra-curricular activities could benefit our learning experience.

5.15.3 Group 3: Negative responses

Four learners expressed dissatisfaction with the infrastructure of their schools, citing various challenges.

RL6 bemoaned thus,

> *No, I do not think the infrastructure supports my learning needs. Many classrooms are overcrowded, and we often do not have access to basic supplies like textbooks*.

UL1 reasoned in this way,

> *I would say no. There are issues with poor maintenance, and sometimes the classrooms are not conducive to studying. That affects our ability to focus and learn*.

RL1 responded thus,

> *I feel like the infrastructure is lacking. We do not have enough resources for hands-on learning. Sometimes we have to share the equipment, which is not ideal for learning*.

5.15.4 Analysis

5.15.4.1 Theme 1: Positive Feedback on infrastructure

Six learners who reported positively about their school infrastructure indicated that effective governance and investment in educational facilities have resulted in environments conducive to learning. Their comments about modern classrooms and well-equipped laboratories suggest that when schools prioritise infrastructure development, that enhances the overall educational experience. This reflects well on the governance frameworks in these urban schools where resources are effectively allocated. The findings are similar to those reported in Section 15.14.4.1. This indicates that the data from learners reflect the issues identified during the literature review. For example, Kota et al. (2018), in section 2.7.1.4, picked the divide between rural and urban schools. Urban schools have more access to funding and resources

than rural schools. That dichotomy results in distinct learning experiences for learners from different schools. This is reflected in the views of learners as well, given that literature indicates poor resources and infrastructure in the Eastern Cape. Learners from urban and semi-urban schools reported good facilities and access to resources. This explains why they have positive feedback. The data are consistent with the literature reviewed herein. These findings do not invalidate the challenges other urban and rural schools face.

5.15.4.2 Theme 2: Infrastructure gaps

The five learners who provided mixed responses illustrate a critical perspective on infrastructure adequacy. Their responses point to the necessity for targeted improvements, particularly in rural settings where resources are scarce. Issues such as outdated technology and inadequate facilities for practical subjects indicate that while some infrastructure supports learning, it is not uniform across all schools. This suggests the need for governance structures to prioritise equity in resource distribution, particularly in underfunded schools.

5.15.4.3 Theme 3: Insufficient infrastructure

The negative responses from four learners emphasise significant challenges related to infrastructure. Their experiences reveal that inadequate facilities, overcrowded classrooms, and a lack of essential learning materials severely affect academic performance. This shows a critical area for intervention, suggesting that policymakers and school leaders should address these infrastructural deficiencies to create a supportive learning environment. The disparities noted by these learners further underscore the importance of equitable resource allocation across different regions and school types. The views of learners are in line with the thesis of this study, which posits that several challenges in the administration and governance of schools impact the performance of learners. The literature reviewed in sections 1.2, 1.3 and 2.7 identifies these challenges as well. Lombo and Subban (2024), Chirowamhangu (2022), Kota et al. (2018), and Modisaotsile (2012) discuss how these challenges are

eminent in the Eastern Cape Province. This shows that the views of the learners are consistent with the current knowledge and trends.

5.16 The challenges of accessing essential learning resources

The researcher asked learner participants questions about the challenges of accessing essential learning materials such as textbooks, laboratory equipment, and computers**.**

5.16.1 Group 1: Challenges faced

Five learners reported not having faced significant challenges in accessing essential resources.

UL7 admitted thus,

> *No, we have a good supply of textbooks and access to computers. The school makes sure that we have what we need for our studies*.

SUL5 explained that,

> *I have not had any major issues. We have a decent library and laboratory equipment available for practical lessons. These help us with our assignments and projects*.

UL2 reiterated that,

> *I feel fortunate because our school provides us with the necessary resources. We could borrow textbooks if needed, and the computer laboratory is usually available for us to use*.

5.16.2 Group 2: Challenges faced

Six learners indicated that while they generally had access to resources, there were notable challenges that impacted their learning.

RL8 said that,

There are times when textbooks are in short supply. We often share them. That makes studying difficult, especially when we have assignments to complete.

RL2 declared that,

We have some laboratory equipment but it is outdated. Sometimes we cannot perform experiments because we do not have the right tools or materials.

SUL1 felt that,

While we have computers, they are often slow and not well-maintained. It frustrates when we need to do research for projects.

5.16.3 Group 3: Significant challenges

Four learners reported significant challenges in accessing essential resources, which hindered their academic performance.

RL3 asserted that,

Yes, we struggle a lot. There are not enough textbooks for everyone, and sometimes I have to rely on my classmates for materials.

UL3 claimed that,

I experience challenges with accessing computers. The computer laboratory is often full. I sometimes cannot get the time I need to work on my projects.

RL4 responded thus,

There is a real lack of laboratory equipment. We hardly ever get to do practical experiments. This frustrates because it is an important part of learning science.

5.16.4 Analysis

5.16.4.1 Theme 1: Resource availability

Five learners who reported no significant challenges reflect positively on the availability of essential resources in their schools. Their experiences suggest that effective governance, resource allocation, and school management play crucial roles in ensuring that learners have what they need for their academic success. The accessibility of textbooks and well-maintained computer laboratories indicates that in some schools, there is a strong commitment to supporting learner education through adequate resource provision.

The findings indicate that urban and semi-urban learners do not face significant challenges in accessing essential learning materials like textbooks, laboratory equipment, and computers. This could be attributed to the divide between urban and rural schools in the Eastern Cape Province. This was discussed in the literature review section 2.7.1.4. Urban schools are generally better-resourced because they enrol learners from middle-income earners, who could pay fees, giving the school income to pay for goods and services (Kota et al., 2018). The researcher notes a consistency between the literature reviewed herein and the views of the learners. The data are crucial for the proposed sustainable governance framework because it acknowledges the divide between rural and urban schools. That divide impacts access to resources.

5.16.4.2 Theme 2: Inequities prevalent

Six learners who reported some challenges point to inconsistencies in resource availability. Sharing textbooks and outdated laboratory equipment are notable issues that could block individual learning experiences in practical subjects. These challenges reflect the complexities of governance structures in different contexts. Here, resource disparities could create inequities among learners. This provides the need for schools to address these gaps in rural areas where resources might be limited.

5.16.4.3 Theme 3: Challenges and critical needs

Four learners who faced significant challenges noted serious concerns regarding access to essential resources. Their feedback illustrates that inadequate textbooks, unreliable computer access, and insufficient laboratory equipment greatly impact academic performance and learner engagement. This indicates a pressing need for targeted interventions and investments in resource provision in schools that struggle with these issues. It also points to the importance of governance frameworks that prioritise equity and address the specific needs of under-resourced schools.

Themes 2 and 3 findings are in line with the literature reviewed in this study. Previous studies on the challenges facing basic education in South Africa suggest that a lack of access to essential learning materials like textbooks, laboratory equipment, and computers negatively interferes with the academic performance of learners (National Parliament, 2018; Breakfast, 2015). Schools in the Eastern Cape Province have not been spared from these challenges that affect the performance of the learners (Eric, 2021; Thomas, 2020; Mutodi & Ngirande, 2014).

5.17 Poor governance on learner academic performance

Learners from urban, semi-urban, and rural schools expressed their views on the impact of poor school governance on their academic performance.

5.17.1 Group 1: No impact

Five learners felt poor governance or mismanagement had not significantly impacted their academic performance.

UL1 explained that,

> *I do not think so. Our school administration works hard to keep the school running smoothly. I focus on my studies without worrying about governance issues.*

SUL1 noted that,

I believe the administration is doing its best. While there might be minor issues, they have not affected my learning and that of my classmates.

UL2 affirmed that,

I think the school is generally well-managed. I have not noticed governance issues affecting our grades or motivation. Teachers are dedicated, and that makes a difference.

5.17.2 Group 2: Some Impact

Six learners acknowledged that poor governance or mismanagement had some impact on their academic performance.

RL1 stated that,

I think there are some issues. Sometimes decisions are made that do not consider learner needs, which could affect our learning environment and motivation.

RL2 posited that,

There are times when the administration seems overwhelmed, and it shows. This could lead to confusion and a lack of direction, making it harder for us to stay focused on our studies.

SUL2 claimed that,

I see how mismanagement could affect issues like discipline and resource allocation. When those are not handled well, that creates an environment where it becomes hard to study.

5.17.3 Group 3: Significant Impact

Four learners reported that poor governance or mismanagement significantly affected their academic performance.

RL3 agreed thus,

Absolutely. I think poor governance has a big impact. When decisions are made without learner input, it could lead to the shortage of resources and support for our education.

UL3 summed the idea thus,

I have seen how mismanagement creates issues like overcrowded classrooms and material material shortages. This directly affects our ability to learn and perform well academically.

RL4 emphasised that,

Yes, poor governance has hurt our school. There are no clear policies on discipline and resource distribution. The dearth of these makes it hard to maintain focus and motivation for schoolwork.

5.17.4 Analysis

5.17.4.1 Theme 1: Effective governance in schools

Five learners reported that there was no impact from poor governance. They indicated that their schools operate effectively with supportive leadership that focuses on their academic performance. Their experiences suggest that when school administration prioritises governance and management, it could lead to a stable learning environment that allows learners to academically thrive. This reflects the importance of strong governance structures that positively contribute to learner outcomes.

The findings are inconsistent with this thesis and the literature reviewed. Sources reviewed in the study argue that poor governance impacts learners' academic performance. For example, the ECSECC (2023), Ngumbela et al. (2020), Brian and Shumane (2018), and Kota et al. (2018) argue that poor governance, which reveals itself through maladministration, corruption, and poor accountability, impacts the delivery of education, resulting in learner poor academic performance. Given such knowledge, the researcher suspects that learner participants might have misunderstood this question and hence such responses.

5.17.4.2 Theme 2: Need for improvement

Six learners acknowledged the impact from governance or mismanagement. Their acknowledgement illustrates a more nuanced perspective. The responses from those learners point to areas where governance could improve, particularly in terms of decision-making and resource allocation. This mixed perception suggests that even in relatively well-functioning schools, there are opportunities for enhancement that could further support academic performance. Dealing with these governance gaps could help create a more conducive learning environment.

5.17.4.3 Theme 3: Governance challenges

Four learners reported a huge impact of poor governance or mismanagement. This means that challenges that exist in their schools have detrimental effects on their academic performance. The insights of the four learners suggest that when governance structures are weak or when decision-making processes are not transparent and inclusive, learners suffer from inadequate resources and support. This emphasises the need for school administrations to actively engage with learners and other stakeholders. Such an engagement would usher in a governance framework that prioritises academic success. That would then help to address the specific challenges faced by the school community.

The findings in themes 2 and 3 align with the current knowledge on poor governance in public schools. Generally, research data demonstrates that poor school governance affects the performance of learners. It impacts how resources are managed, personnel are deployed, and accountability is ensured. In other words, sound governance is a system for ensuring that available resources are used to meet intended objectives to satisfy the needs of stakeholders (United Nations, 2023; World Bank, 2022; Zhao & Wang, 2020; Kota et al., 2018).

5.18 Quality education challenges facing learners

Learners provided their views about the challenges they face regarding access to quality education in the Eastern Cape Province. The data collected provide insights into the quality of education that is provided in that province.

5.18.1 Group 1: Infrastructure and resources

Five learners revealed the infrastructure and resource inadequacies as major challenges that affect the quality of education and access thereof.

RL1 reiterated that,

> *One of the biggest challenges is the lack of proper infrastructure. Some classrooms are overcrowded. We also do not have enough textbooks or materials to use in class. The shortages of these key resources makes learning difficult*.

RL2 declared thus,

> *I agree. The buildings need repairs, and there are not enough resources like computers and science equipment. The non-existence of these limits our ability to learn effectively, especially in practical subjects*.

SUL1 provided that,

> *Access to basic learning materials is a major issue. When resources are scarce, their scarcity directly affects our understanding of subjects taught. It frustrates to learn without proper resources.*

5.18.2 Group 2: Social and economic factors

Six learners pointed to the social and economic factors as barriers to education quality and access.

UL1 illustrated that,

> *Many learners come from low-income families. Their economic status affects their ability to focus on education. Some of us have to work after*

school to help our families to survive. This negatively affect my study time.

RL3 indicated that,

Poverty is a huge challenge. Some of my friends cannot afford to buy uniforms or school supplies. That makes them feel excluded and less motivated to attend school.

SUL2 had this to say,

Transportation could also be an issue. Some learners travel long distances to get to and from school. Travelling long distances is exhausting. Exhausted learners cannot concentrate in class.

5.18.3 Group 3: Quality of teaching

Four learners expressed their concerns regarding the quality of teaching and learning provided in their schools. The poor teaching and learning process has an impact on the education provided to learners.

UL2 thought that,

The quality of teaching varies. Some teachers are great and others do not have the motivation or resources to teach effectively. This makes a difference in how we learn.

RL4 pointed out that,

There are times when we do not have qualified teachers for certain subjects in rural areas. This gap in quality affects our understanding and performance in those subjects.

SUL3 explained that,

Teaching methods used are sometimes outdated. I feel that we need more interactive and engaging lessons to really grasp the subjects we are study.

5.18.4 Analysis

5.18.4.1 Theme 1: Resource challenges and quality of education

Five learners illustrated infrastructure and resource inadequacies as critical challenges in the provision of quality education in Eastern Cape schools. Poor physical conditions, overcrowded classrooms, and insufficient learning materials create barriers to effective learning. This theme is reflective of the need for targeted investments in educational infrastructure. Such investments ensure that learners have access to quality education. If these issues are properly addressed, they could enhance the quality of education and learner outcomes.

These findings reflect the issues raised during the literature review in chapter two. For example, Bantwini and Moorosi (2022) state that poor infrastructure and inadequate resources prohibit good academic performance by learners. This is because learning is an activity that requires resources and infrastructure. For example, a standard modern school requires competent teachers, classroom blocks, material resources and funding to acquire laboratory equipment and sporting equipment. Without these resources and infrastructure, learning outcomes cannot be achieved. The data collected from learners dovetail with the already existing knowledge about school governance, as reviewed in this study.

5.18.4.2 Theme 2: Social and economic factors, access, and participation

Six learners identified the social and economic factors as affecting their access to and participation in quality education. Their observations illustrate how external circumstances could disturb the learner's access and participation in quality education. The effects of poverty, transport challenges, and the need for learners to balance work and school create barriers that limit their educational opportunities. This theme emphasises the importance of comprehensive support systems that address the social

and economic disparities. These would ensure that all learners have equitable access to quality education if addressed.

Section 2.7.1 dealt with the challenges specific to the Eastern Cape Province, such as poverty, poor nutrition, and the lack of access to resources required for learning. These impact the academic performance of learners. Similarly, Kosie (2022) argues that high drop-out rates are associated with learners from poor backgrounds. Modikoa et al. (2023) state that addressing the social and economic factors impacting learner academic performance is essential. In other words, the literature discussed in this study points out that social and economic factors could impede learner access to and participation in quality education. This means that strategies to improve learner academic performance and its associated high drop-out rate should consider these social and economic challenges.

5.18.4.3 Theme 3: Teaching and academic success

Four learners expressed their concerns about the teaching quality in their schools. Their concerns represent an essential component of educational ineffectiveness. Variations in teaching quality, coupled with the shortage of qualified teachers in certain subjects adversely affect learner educational experiences and outcomes. The theme points to the need for the professional development of teachers. Strategic recruitment practices should be employed in order to ensure that all learners receive high-quality instruction at school. Enhancing teaching quality is vital for improving academic performance. It also guarantees that students are well-prepared for future challenges.

Teaching is the cornerstone of learner performance in class (Zindi & Sibanda, 2023). Competent and skilled teachers are needed to improve the academic performance of learners Section 2.7.1.2 identified teachers as essential stakeholders in basic education. Teachers are responsible for teaching learners to prepare them for examinations. This view is in line with the data collected from the learners because it underpins the fact that the quality of teaching determines learners' academic success.

5.19 Teacher-learner interaction and engagement

5.19.1 Group 1: High level engagement

Five learners felt that the teacher-learner interaction and engagement at their school were positive and effective.

UL1 admitted that,

> *The teachers in our school are very approachable. If we have questions, they always take their time to explain, even outside of class time. Our teachers genuinely care about our success*.

RL1 explained that,

> *In my school, teachers are really involved in our education. They regularly check on us to ask if we face problems with our studies. Teachers also offer extra lessons to help*.

UL2 asserted that,

> *The interaction with our teacher is excellent. Teachers encourage our participation in class. They are always ready to help with our homework in case we have difficulties. We have a comfortable learning environment*.

5.19.2 Group 2: Moderate level interaction and engagement

Six learners described their teacher-learner interaction as generally good but pointed out areas where engagement could be improved.

SUL1 submitted that,

> *The teachers do try to engage with us. At times our teacher are too busy to give us one-on-one attention. This is the area I believe that they could do more to improve*.

RL2 noted that,

Our engagement with teachers is okay but it could be improved that is done regularly. Sometimes our teachers seem overworked. They do not always have the time to go in-depth on certain topics or provide extra help.

UL3 stated that,

Most teachers are approachable but there are a few who do not interact much with us unless it is during class time. Teachers should be more active in mentoring us as well as checking our work on a regular basis.

5.19.3 Group 3: Low level interaction and engagement

Four learners reported that the level of teacher-learner interaction and engagement in their schools was very low. Low levels of engagement negatively impacted their learning experience.

RL3 confirmed that,

There is not much interaction between learners and teachers outside of the classroom. If we need extra help, we have to figure it out on our own. They just teach and leave.

SUL2 acknowledged that,

Some teachers do not engage with us much at school. If we do not understand something, it is hard to get additional support from teachers. This frustrates me a lot but there is nothing I could do. Mathematics is problematic to me and I feel I need a lot of help with that subject.

RL4 explained thus,

The teachers are too focused on finishing the syllabi. There is very little interaction between them and us. Teachers do not ask if we follow what they teach us or not.

5.19.4 Analysis

5.19.4.1 Theme 1: Engagement and interaction

Five learners who reported high levels of teacher-learner engagement reflect a positive aspect of school culture in teaching and learning. In these schools, teachers are approachable and actively involved in the academic progress of their learners. That strengthens the supportive and motivating environment in class. That kind of engagement is crucial for the academic success of learners. Here, learners are encouraged to learn by asking questions and seeking assistance when needed. These responses are reflective of the importance of teachers not only delivering content but also building relationships that encourage learning.

5.19.4.2 Theme 2: Moderate interaction and engagement

Six learners described moderate engagement. Their inputs suggest that while the teacher-learner interactions are generally positive, they are sometimes limited by factors such as heavy workload. Teachers might struggle to offer individualised support, particularly outside of class. That leaves learners feeling as if they are not wanted in class. The theme indicates the need for better teacher support. Supportive teachers allow for more personalised learner engagement.

5.19.4.3 Theme 3: Low level engagement

Four learners reported low levels of teacher-learner interaction and engagement in their schools. They raised concerns about the effectiveness of their learning environments. The inadequate communication and support from teachers could lead to learners feeling disconnected and unsupported in their studies. This theme shows the need for interventions to improve teacher-learner relationships, possibly through teacher training on engagement strategies or systems that ensure that learners have access to academic assistance outside of regular class time. It is essential that these challenges be dealt with decisively to create an inclusive and supportive educational atmosphere that promotes learner success.

The findings are congruent with the literature reviewed. Interaction is the bedrock of the institutional theory discussed in this study in Section 2.11. That theory stipulates that institutions comprise various stakeholders and players who generate more value for their objectives by collaborating and interacting (Heikkila & Andersson, 2018; O'Brien & Rickne, 2016; Lee & Ku (2007). This approach allows each stakeholder to deploy its competencies to accomplish set goals. The theory denotes that stakeholders in institutions and communities rely on each other to accomplish mutual goals. In school governance, the institutional theory posits that cooperation, engagement, and collaboration are key to achieving educational objectives such as improving the academic performance of learners.

In this vein, teacher-learner interactions are crucial because they produce insights into the quality of education provided to learners. When learners interact with teachers, the former can gauge their performance levels, and the latter can provide feedback. Therefore, these interactions are valuable as a method of assessing learning outcomes. Sections 2.7.1.2 and 2.7.1.3 identify teachers and learners as key elements of school governance. Modisaotsile (2012) said that close interaction and engagement are cornerstones of the participatory governance approach introduced by the SASA. Data collected from the learner participants resonate with the existing knowledge about school governance.

5.20 Parental involvement and engagement

5.20.1 Group 1: High parental involvement

Four learners expressed satisfaction with the level of parental involvement in their school activities. They noted active engagement by parents in school initiatives.

UL1 averred that,

> *My parents and others are very involved in our school. They attend school meetings, help with fundraising events, and are always updated about our progress. The school and parents work well together*.

SUL1 confirmed that,

Parents at my school are quite involved. They come to events and make sure that they communicate with our teachers. This helps a lot because it shows that parents care about what is going on our school.

UL2 maintained that,

The parental involvement is strong here. Parents are always present for important meetings. They also help in various school activities. That makes a difference because we feel supported.

5.20.2 Group 2: Mixed parental involvement

Five learners indicated that while some parents are actively involved, many others are not, leading to a mixed level of engagement in school activities.

RL1 mentioned that,

Some parents are really involved while others are not. Only a few of them come to meetings or show interest in what goes on at school. I think the school could do more to get everyone involved.

UL3 provided the following,

In my school, it is a mixture of both. Some parents are really active and others do not seem to care. Or they do not have time to get involved. It affects how connected to the school learners feel they are.

SUL2 professed that,

There is some involvement. I would not say that involvement is enough. Parents come to meetings when there is a problem. But, for regular activities or events, not many of them show up.

5.20.3 Group 3: Low Parental involvement

Six learners were dissatisfied with the level of parental involvement, noting a lack of engagement from parents in school activities.

RL2 avowed that,

> *There is hardly any involvement from parents at our school. They do not come to meetings or events. That feels like they are disconnected from what happens here. It frustrates us because we need their support*.

RL3 indicated that,

> *Parents at my school are not really involved. They do not attend school meetings. When the school tries to reach out, only a few of them positively respond. Learners are on their own most of the time*.

UL4 added that,

> *It is disappointing. A lot of parents do not engage with the school at all. It affects us because it feels like they do not care about what happens at our school or how we learn*.

5.20.4 Analysis

5.20.4.1 Theme 1: High parental involvement and engagement

Four learners reported high parental involvement in their school. That points to how active parent engagement positively affects the school community. Those learners saw the participation of their parents in school activities as supportive of their education. Parents engage and interact with schools through meetings, events, and communication with teachers. These forms of engagement and interaction contribute to a supportive learning environment. They not only strengthen the relationship between the school and the community but also reinforce the learner appreciation of what their parents do in their education.

5.20.4.2 Theme 2: Mixed involvement and engagement

The responses from five learners who noted a mix of active and inactive parents reveal that parental engagement varies in certain schools. While some parents are deeply involved, others lack the time, resources, or motivation to fully participate in school

activities. This uneven engagement might create gaps in learner support. It could also lead to a feeling of disconnection among learners whose parents are less involved. Schools might need to consider how they encourage greater parental involvement in matters concerning the education of their children. They could do so by offering more flexible engagement opportunities or communicating the importance of participation more effectively.

5.20.4.3 Theme 3: Low parental involvement and engagement

Six learners who expressed dissatisfaction with low parental involvement point to the critical issue. That issue is that the minimal parental engagement could leave learners feeling unsupported and isolated in their education. This problem appears to be more pronounced in rural areas like Alice and Fort Beaufort. These rural areas have geographic or economic challenges that limit the ability of parents to engage with the school. The absence of parental participation in school activities and decision-making processes could negatively impact both the school culture and learner performance. This theme suggests a need for strategies to involve parents more actively. Strategies such as improving communication channels, offering parent education programmes, or creating initiatives that facilitate easier participation for those with limited availability.

The literature reviewed in this study raised the importance of the involvement and engagement of key stakeholders, as outlined in Section 2.7.1. These help to improve school governance and achieve specific objectives. Data collected from the learner participants converges with that obtained from the reviewed literature. Involvement and engagement are key prescripts of the institutional theory (see Section 2.11). According to the participatory approach introduced by the SASA, involvement enables parents to participate in school governance affairs. The institutional theory suggests that various stakeholders within institutions or communities could accomplish their objectives by being involved in the affairs of their institutions (Heikkila & Andersson, 2018; O'Brien & Rickne, 2016; Lee & Ku (2007). These engagements enable the institution to benefit from diverse competencies. This view applies to school governance, where various stakeholders, such as learners, teachers, SGB members, principals, and the community, cooperate as they work together to achieve educational objectives. Parental involvement and engagement are vital since parents are key

stakeholders (Modisaotsile, 2012). The views of learners dovetail with the tenets of the theories and literature reviewed herein.

5.15 Towards a sustainable governance framework for improved academic performance

As stated in section 1.2, the primary goal of this study is to develop a sustainable governance framework for improved academic performance for schools in the Eastern Cape Province. The empirical findings presented in the sections above depict the school challenges in the province. The insights and recommendations of experts and practitioners in the education sector are also emphasised here. To develop the framework, the researcher incorporated these findings into the research problem of the study as well as the objectives outlined in Chapter 1. This is crucial since a framework comprises empirical findings, theories, and the said objectives (Havenga, Poggenpoel, & Myburgh, 2014). This enabled the researcher to develop a framework that addresses the research problem. Practical recommendations for policymakers in the provincial government are also provided. Figure 5.2 outlines the primary building blocks the researcher considered in developing the stated framework.

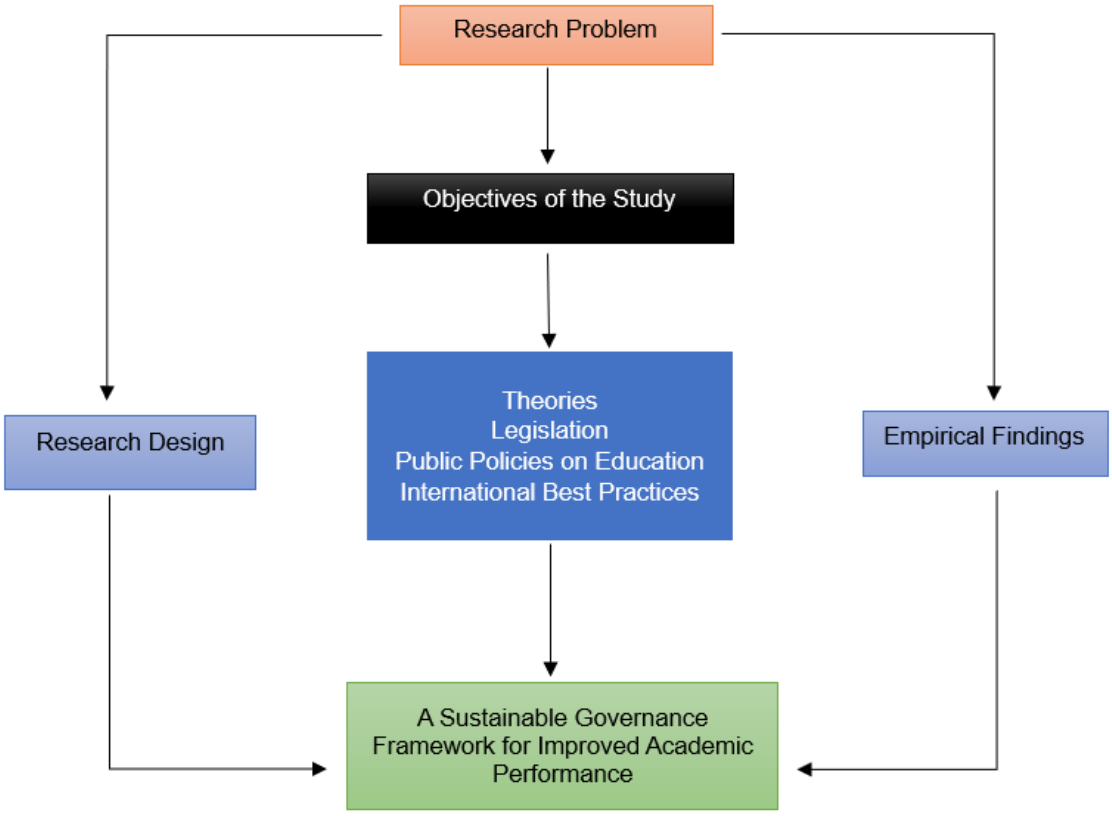

Figure 5.1: Key components used to develop the framework.

Source: Formulated by the researcher.

5.15 Summary

This chapter presented the findings generated from data collected from the research participants. The findings presented in this chapter were analysed to answer the research questions. The findings were presented to solve the research problem. Data were organised into themes based on the specific research questions. The data were collected from the participants using semi-structured interviews and questionnaires. Primary data were also collected from government policy documents. Secondary data were collected from secondary sources in the form of a literature review. Data were analysed using the thematic data analysis. Thematic data analysis was used to analyse qualitative data. Analysed data were put into themes. The findings are important to the study because they are instrumental in addressing the research problem and answering the research questions. Since thematic data analysis was used to analyse

the findings, the researcher identified themes and sub-themes from the participant responses. The findings indicate that the SGBs are vital in the governance and administration of schools in the Eastern Cape Province. Despite their importance, several challenges impact their performance and contribution to the academic performance of learners. Data analysis is important because it provides the researcher with empirical data to develop a sustainable governance framework. In the next chapter, the researcher concludes and summarises the findings and develops a framework, as pointed out in the first chapter.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS: A SUSTAINABLE GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK FOR IMPROVED ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

6.1 Introduction

This is the final chapter of the study. The chapter presents the outcomes of the analysed data in the preceding chapter. The chapter also outlines the reasons for developing a framework or model in Public Management and Administration. The researcher reflects on the steps and procedures to construct models and frameworks. Furthermore, this chapter discusses the main contribution of the study. This is a sustainable governance framework developed to increase the academic performance of learners. The framework outlines key recommendations for policymakers, SGBs, teachers, parents, and principals. The researcher concludes that all the key stakeholders have an important role to play in school governance. This chapter also suggests areas for future research.

6.2 An overview of the objectives and research questions of the study

In Chapter 1, the researcher outlined the research objectives and their attendant questions to solve the research problem and develop a sustainable governance framework to improve the academic performance of learners.

The research objectives are:

- To investigate the challenges hindering basic education and the academic performance of learners in the Eastern Cape Province.
- To explore the governance structures created to improve the academic performance of learners in the Eastern Cape Province.
- To investigate the state of basic education in the Eastern Cape Province.
- To develop a governance framework for improving the performance of basic education in the Eastern Cape Province.

The following research questions were developed to accomplish the research objectives and solve the research problem.

- What governance challenges hinder basic education and the performance of learners in the Eastern Cape Province?
- What governance structures were created to improve the academic performance of learners in the Eastern Cape Province?
- What is the state of basic education in the Eastern Cape Province?
- What are the elements of a governance framework for improving the performance of basic education in the Eastern Cape Province?

6.3 Summary of the research findings

This section summarises the research findings based on the research objectives of the study. This illustrates how the researcher accomplished these objectives.

6.3.1 Research objective one

The first research objective investigated the challenges that prohibit basic education and the academic performance of learners in the Eastern Cape Province. The literature reviewed in Chapter Two indicated that several challenges block the academic performance of learners in the Eastern Cape Province. Those hindrances range from institutional, governance, and resource challenges. For example, schools in the province suffer from poor infrastructure such as classroom blocks and sanitation. These challenges are worsened by poor training opportunities for teachers and SGB members, resulting in a lack of skills among key stakeholders. The literature reviewed indicated that schools in the province suffer from poor funding. The Eastern Cape Province is regarded as one of the poorest provinces in the country. Its poor state impacts basic education because households cannot afford fees, resulting in many no-fee schools. These are resource-constrained schools that struggle to support effective teaching and learning due to the shortage of essential resources. The literature reviewed also indicated that poor leadership and misgovernance in the

provincial government exacerbate the challenges faced by schools. That is because it results in poor funding, corruption, poor accountability, and weak oversight.

The data collected from learners, principals, and SGB members reflect these problems as well. For example, principals noted high drop-out rates due to poor infrastructure and long walking distances to and from schools. This suggests that there are few schools in the province, particularly in rural areas. The SGB members pointed out the non-existence of support, poor accountability, and poor leadership from the authorities. Those short-comings result in no training and support for the administrative challenges in schools. Learners indicated that their schools are poorly equipped and teachers are overwhelmed by large numbers of learners in their classrooms.

6.3.2 Research Objective Two

The second research objective explored the governance structures created to improve the academic performance of learners. This study adopted the institutional theory as one of the theories used to analyse the research problem. The institutional theory, empirical data, and existing research on school governance in the Eastern Cape Province provided insights into the governance structures created to govern and administer schools. The institutional approach to organisations and systems regards schools as a collaboration between various structures and stakeholders. Based on this theory, the researcher identified several structures involved in school governance. Those include the SGBs, parents, principals, teachers, learners, and government officials. The literature reviewed in the study suggested that the SASA deliberately invited those structures to participate in school governance. The Act was promulgated in the post-apartheid era to address the discriminatory, top-down, and non-inclusive approach to governing schools and policy formulation.

Data collected from the participants reflect similar insights as raised above. The interviewees emphasised that schools were governed by several stakeholders working together in the SGB structure. The SGB is a platform comprising various stakeholders involved in basic education. For example, community members, learners, principals, teachers, and parents are represented in the SGB. The SGB

function as the school governing entity. The data collected from the reviewed literature enabled the researcher to achieve the second research bjective.

6.3.3 Research Objective Three

The third research objective investigated the state of basic education in the Eastern Cape Province. The researcher relied on government data, existing knowledge about basic education reviewed in the literature, and data collected from the participants to accomplish his research objectives. The literature reviewed provided the dire state of basic education in that province. Researchers outlined the correlation between the performance of schools in the province and structural issues such as poor accountability, political interference, and weak leadership by the bureaucracy and political systems. These challenges impact basic education because the province has an administrative and oversight responsibility to schools. Government data indicated high school drop-out, falling matric pass rates, and high labour turnover in rural provincial schools, particularly in rural areas. These insights indicated that schools in the province struggle to accomplish their learning outcomes.

Data collected from the participants reflected similar views as well. Principals acknowledged the dire state of some schools in the Eastern Cape Provice. For example, schools struggle to acquire the resources and equipment required to effectively function. Similarly, principals pointed out that the KwaZulu Natal and Western Cape Provinces are better positioned because they have access to resources and other essential requirements.

6.3.4 Research Objective Four

The fourth research objective aimed to develop a governance framework for improving the performance of basic education in the Eastern Cape Province. This is the major academic contribution of this study to the Public Administration and Management discipline. Section 6.4 outlines how the researcher developed the framework and its contributions to governance issues in the Eastern Cape Province and elsewhere.

6.4 Reasons for developing a framework/model in contemporary public management research

Cameron and McLaverty (2008) critique weak knowledge development and public administration failures of the researchers to conduct impactful research in the public sector. The authors argued that contemporary research should be practice-oriented and geared to solve public sector challenges. Contemporary research is required to produce new knowledge and contribute to a better understanding of issues and challenges (Maritz, 2019). In public management research, this orientates the discipline towards developing practical solutions for challenges replete in the public sector. It also recommends how public resources could be utilised to meet the needs and aspirations of citizens (Maritz, 2019). Van der Waldt (2013) asserts that the primary objective of public management research is to develop interventions and techniques implemented in the civil service to manage resources efficiently. This converges with the developmental state vision espoused in post-apartheid public social and economic policies (Ukwandu, 2019). Researchers such as Raadschelders (2020) and Wessels (2004) emphasise that contemporary research should equip students with the skills, expertise, and knowledge required to manage public sector institutions and fulfil the goals and objectives of public administration in South Africa. Since public sector institutions and the civil service should manage public resources to meet the needs of the citizens and maintain a functional state governance machinery, the role of public management research is vital.

Phago (2012) assumed that higher education scholarship in South Africa is expected to impart and build competencies of individuals who enter professional fields. This is crucial for national development because it enhances the competencies of professionals. Regarding public administration, Phago (2012) stated that students in this discipline must be critical thinkers who question existing frameworks and theories. In addition, they should produce knowledge and expand existing insights by developing solutions to challenges impacting the efficient delivery of public services. Similarly, Maritz (2019) argues that public management scholarship should conceive solutions for existing challenges. This study presents the framework as an intervention strategy or solution for the challenges facing the DBE in the Eastern Cape Province. The researcher argues that this academic contribution supports the goals of public

management research in South Africa, as outlined by Phago (2012). The next section outlines the processes involved in developing the framework of the study.

6.4.1 The key academic contribution of the study: A framework

The key academic contribution of this study is its resultant framework. The framework is developed to address the challenges outlined in the study research problem in section 1.2. The literature reviewed in Chapter 2 provided the researcher with a theoretical understanding of the challenges and views of researchers that could be adopted in proposing solutions for the challenges facing the DBE. Moreso, the empirical findings were key in outlining the current situation in schools in the Eastern Cape Province. The researcher used these insights and knowledge to develop the Sustainable Governance Framework for Improved Academic Performance.

6.4.2 Developing a sustainable governance framework for improved academic performance

The fundamental purpose of post-graduate research and scholarship is to create new knowledge to improve the execution of tasks and activities in various professions and fields. Researchers are responsible for generating new ways of thinking, solving problems and viewing social and professional challenges. Conducting research, testing hypotheses, formulating theories, and doing experiments provide researchers with the platform to fulfil this responsibility (Shikalepo, 2023). In this context, empirical findings should result in positive challenges to professions or the implementation of policies. In social science research, this is fundamental because it deals with complex and subjective phenomena such as social behaviour, human traits, and group interactions in natural environmental contexts. In addition, social science researchers approach research issues with different worldviews, thought patterns, and experiences, resulting in significant divergence in describing and explaining a phenomenon or interpreting data. This causes significant conceptual confusion (Van der Waldt, 2020). This is in the context of an expectation for researchers to explain or outline their research findings in a manner that is easy to understand. Shikalepo (2023)

asserts that developing a framework or a model enables researchers to illustrate the research aims and the contribution of the study to the body of knowledge.

A framework, which is presented using visual tools and aids such as diagrams and flowcharts, encapsulates theories and variables used and adopted in the study. It outlines how the outcomes of the study would impact a specific professional practice. A framework also highlights the primary constructs, relationships, and linkages characterising a phenomenon (Brady et al., 2020). Miles and Huberman (1994) stated that a framework represents a graphic or a narrative explaining the research problem and the relationships among the primary theories and concepts. It is used to guide the professional practice of practitioners (Fawcett, 1997). In other words, the framework underlines the contributions of the study. The framework is a visual depiction (diagram) of variables, constructs, and concepts related to specific phenomena in social science research (Brady et al., 2020). It enables the researcher to highlight the research problem of the study and depict its findings. The framework is related to a model because it outlines the academic contributions of the researcher or what needs to be done to address a research problem (Brady et al., 2020).

McTaggart (2021) states that developing a framework is a culmination of persistent engagement with the research problem, continuous interrogation of the research questions, and a reflection on the existing literature, theories, and models. This framework of reference promotes logical reasoning and the development of a practical framework. Figure 5.2 highlights how the framework of this study is a product of persistent reflection on the research problem, theories, and the literature reviewed in chapters two and three.

6.4.3 Steps taken in developing the framework

Researchers have different views on the steps or processes involved in developing a framework. Table 6.1 summarises the activities involved in developing the said framework.

Table 6.1: Steps taken in developing a framework.

Step	Activity	Objective
1	Reflect on the research problem/primary questions	Ensure that the framework answers the research questions
2	Review the current knowledge of the phenomenon	Generate existing knowledge
3	Scrutinise applicable theories and models	Reflect on existing scholarly views
4	Review concepts, constructs and variables	Identify main concepts, constructs and variables
5	Analyse empirical findings	Incorporate empirical data
6	Develop themes	Identify key themes
7	Map the relationships between themes	Outline relationships between themes
8	Create a framework	The study's academic contribution

6.4.4 Basic assumptions underlying the development of the framework

Developing a framework is influenced by the basic assumptions or the underlying beliefs of the researcher. Johnson, Adkins, and Chauvin (2020) assert that these prerequisites are fundamental because they are the basis of creating new knowledge and the motivation of the researcher to contribute knowledge to the professional field of practice. Figure 6.1 shows the basic assumptions underlying the development of the sustainable governance framework for improved academic performance.

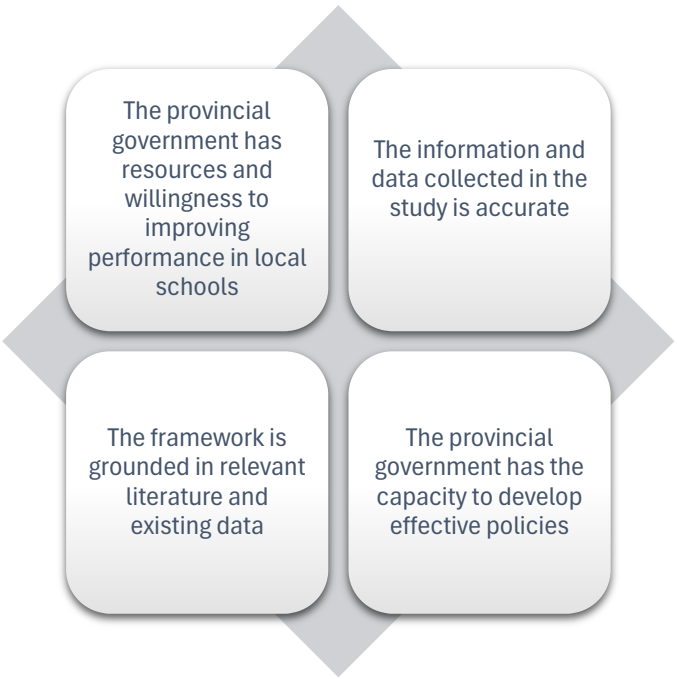

Figure 6.1: Assumptions underlying the development of the Sustainable Governance Framework for Improved Academic Performance

Source: Constructed by the researcher.

6.4.5 The proposed Sustainable Governance Framework for Improved Academic Performance

In light of the data generated by the research participants in order to solve the research problem and answer the research questions, the researcher proposed a Sustainable Governance Framework to improve the academic performance of learners. The framework reflects the public education multi-stakeholder terrain in the Eastern Cape Province. In developing the framework, the researcher considered the inputs of the public education systems in South Africa. It also used the processes, activities, and policies implemented in this sector. The framework is a product of empirical data, insights and views of the researcher, and existing knowledge obtained during the literature review. The following section describes the Sustainable Governance Framework for Improved Academic Performance.

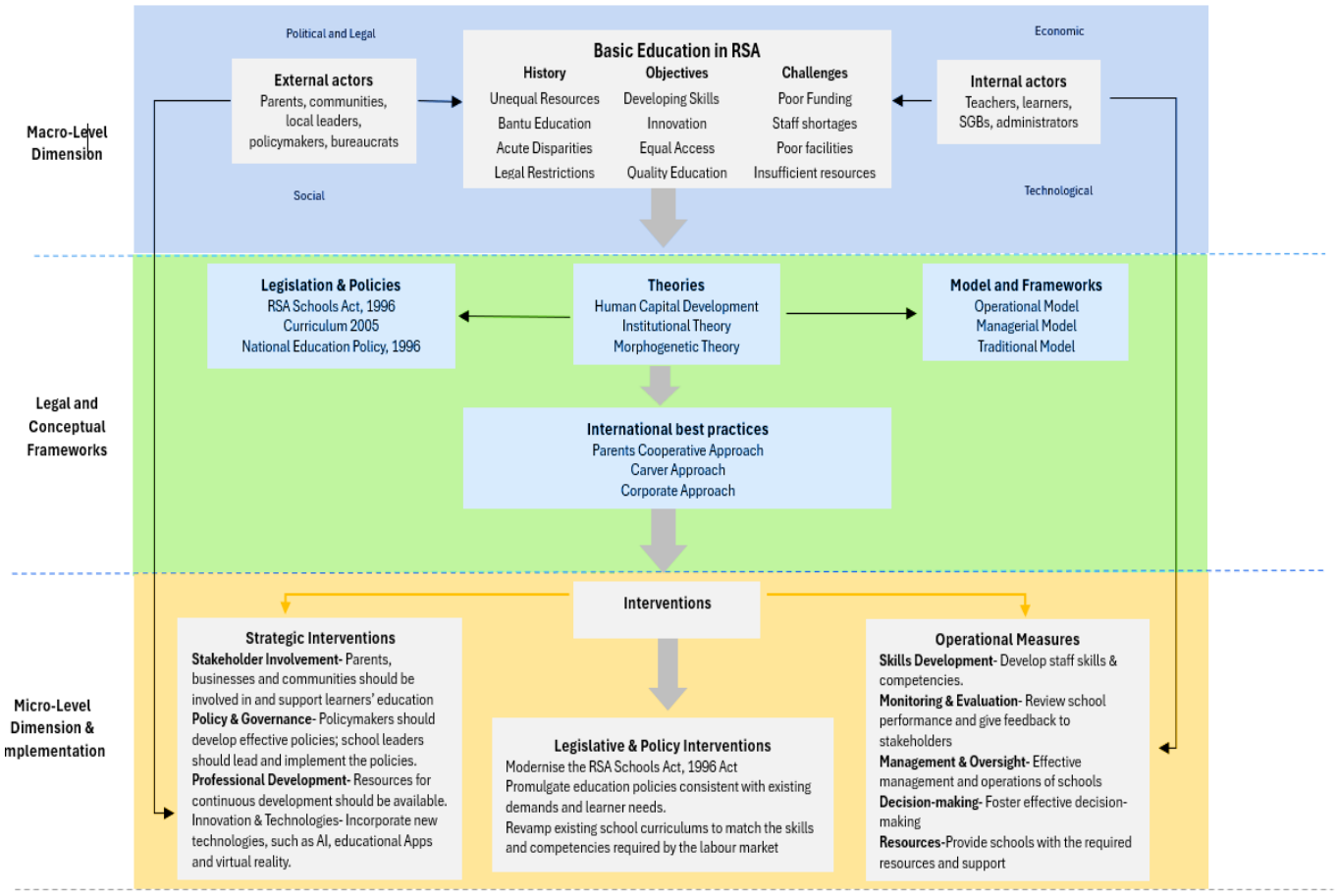

Figure 6.2: Proposed Sustainable Governance Framework for Improved Academic Performance.

Source: Created by the researcher.

Figure 6.2 shows the proposed Sustainable Governance Framework for Improved Academic Performance. The framework outlines the background of basic education in South Africa. It is undeniable that the post-apartheid government has made significant strides in broadening access to high-quality education across the country. Yet, the historically unequal access to, poor infrastructure, and racialised funding and support for education in South Africa continue to shape the performance of learners in the Eastern Cape Province. In this perspective, sound basic education policies should be promulgated to address the historical realities impacting learners and schools in that province. The framework also shows that basic education in the province is provided in a macro-environment impacted by social, economic, political, legal, and technological short-comings. The policy-makers and practitioners should understand

how these forces impact public education policies. After all, the objectives of basic education in South Africa include developing the skills of citizens, fostering innovation, and ensuring equal access to opportunities. Parents, teachers, policymakers, learners and the local leadership are crucial stakeholder role players in the education sector.

The Sustainable Governance Framework for Improved Academic Performance is a product of information and perspectives from existing models, theories, legislation, and policies. For example, the human capital development theory posits that skills development interventions address challenges in public sector institutions by equipping employees with skills and competencies required to fulfil their duties. The operational model posits that SGBs are crucial entities that should be involved in school administration and its operations. Finally, public education policies and legislation govern how schools regulate and implement policies to foster performance. International practices provide tried and tested lessons for policymakers and leaders in South Africa. Such insights could be used when developing governance framework for the Eastern Cape Province. The developed framework illustrates that the challenges facing basic education could be addressed through strategic interventions, legislative and policy interventions, as well as operational measures.

6.5 Recommendations

Given the findings of this study, the researcher makes the following recommendations based on the research problem and the study findings.

6.5.1 Regular training for SGB members

Although Section 5.4 outlined the functions and duties of SGBs, the interviews in Sections 5.4.1 and 5.4.2 revealed the skills needs and training, as well as development deficiencies. Several SGB members bemoaned their being ill-equipped to execute their school governance duties. They claimed unfamiliarity with specialised issues that pertain to school governance and management. Regular trainings would equip SGB members with skills to help them govern schools effectively. Training should include knowledge about the basic functioning of modern schools, legal prescripts of SASA,

and the constitutional prescripts on the right to basic education. Adult literacy and numeracy programmes would likely be implemented in schools run by informed SGBs. SGB members should understand how quality education could be used to uplift communities. This is important given the massive wealth inequalities in South Africa and the high poverty levels in the Eastern Cape Province. In a nutshell, SGB members should be oriented about their essential role in improving education. They should be aware of how their skills would contribute to individual and community development.

Training programmes should be tailored to the unique needs of SGB members. Each school should identify its training needs and design appropriate programmes with the help of the provincial government and education experts. The provincial government should provide resources for training. Intervening in this way would enable SGB members to actively contribute to effective school governance (accountability and oversight). Effective school governance transcend better outcomes for learners, especially in schools where performance is low.

6.5.2 Incorporate SGBs in school governance processes

This recommendation addresses the second research objective. The empirical data indicated that SGBs are not fully utilised in school governance as they are not incorporated into various internal processes. In some cases, the SGBs are inactive. This represents a missed opportunity for schools because SGBs could be deployed to ensure sound governance and efficient use of resources. The researcher recommends an extensive incorporation of SGBs in school governance processes. Establishing mandatory guidelines for schools to include them in their governance processes would surfice. Mandatory guidelines would open up schools for broad participation by various stakeholders. Broad participation could enhance accountability and improve learner performance. In cases where performance is poor, this intervention could bring poor performance to the attention of other stakeholders. Once other SGB members are aware of the school problem, intervention strategies would be devised to address it.

6.5.3 Increase participatory governance

The post-apartheid school governance model envisaged in the SASA hinges on broad participation in the administration and management of schools. School principals have authority and control over implementing public education policies. Participatory governance encourages buy-in from several stakeholders. This broadens viewpoints, increases accountability, and enables schools to invite public leaders (bureaucrats and politicians) into school governance. Participatory governance enablie public leaders to witness first-hand the dysfunctions in schools. In addition to the above, increasing participatory governance enables schools to attract resources from individuals in communities. Philanthropists, business people, and volunteers are likely to be attracted to helping schools run under participatory governance. This form of school governance is transparent. The third recommendation is provided in light of the challenges facing schools in the Eastern Cape as formulated in the first objective.

6.5.4 Regular teacher training

Zindi and Sibanda (2023) identified weaknesses in teacher training programmes in the Eastern Cape Province. Teaching requires competent and skilled teachers to deliver learning content that achieves school learning outcomes. Training workshops ensure teachers have up-to-date skills and competencies to increase learner academic performance. It also exposes them to new learning content. Since teaching and learning are conducted in dynamic environments, teachers should be aware of new knowledge trends. It is vital to continuously train teachers in science and computing, where knowledge evolves. If this recommendation is implemented in future, schools could increase their past rates. Better teaching techniques and new knowledge would be enhanced. This is in respect of the fact that empirical and secondary data point to poor performance among learners in the Eastern Cape Province.

6.5.5 Strengthening Eastern Cape government bureaucracy

Most researchers on learner performance, school governance, and bureaucratic administration in the Eastern Cape Province designate that school challenges are not

always internal. Some of the challenges result from bureaucratic weaknesses, abuse of authority, political interference, and weak oversight from the provincial government departments. Given this view, the researcher recommends strengthening the Eastern Cape government bureaucracy. Strengthening government bureaucracy would result in the efficient management of public resources, increased oversight, performance management, and professionalism at provincial level. A strong provincial government enables schools to seek support and direction from the provincial DBE. Increased oversight and penalties would eliminate corruption, political interference, and abuse of resources. Increase accountability across all levels of the provincial government bureaucracy would be another likely outcome.

6.5.6 Depoliticise the Eastern Cape government

A politicised and factional provincial government is incapable of addressing the mounting challenges affecting the Eastern Cape Province. The literature reviewed in this study revealed that solving the provincial government challenges would strengthen it. Strong provincial government oversees and provide policy direction, and ensures that schools in the province implement learning outcomes prescribed by government legislation and education policies. The national government positions basic education as a key element of social and economic development for millions of people. The provincial government should provide resources and steer schools towards this goal. This recommendation is provided in light of the external challenges facing schools. These challenges include inadequate resources and infrastructure, lack of teacher training opportunities, corruption, and poor accountability.

6.6 Suggestions for future research

Few studies about the role of SGBs in schools in South Africa exist. Research on school governance is lacking (Transparency International, 2016:18; UNDP, 2011:9). The researcher suggests extensive research on these subjects. Further research that incorporates good corporate governance principles is also suggested. Investigating

these issues would increase knowledge about school governance among stakeholders and provide solutions for SGBs challenges.

The researcher also recommends research on the impact of environmental factors such as social, political, and economic on school governance and administration. This study indicated that schools in historically disadvantaged areas have weak governance systems. Further research should establish the link between the performance of school governance systems and external environmental forces.

The researcher also recommends future research on the skills and competencies required for SGB members. The literature review illustrated that educated and skilled individuals make efficient and dependable SGB members. This assumption needs to be scientifically tested. The researcher also recommends studies exploring the role of policy-makers in school governance. This study highlighted the role of policy implementers. Since these stakeholders implement existing policies, research on the effects of new policies on school governance would be insightful.

6.7 Conclusion

The study investigated the challenges facing schools in the Eastern Cape Province. The sustainable governance framework to solve the research problem of poor learners' academic performance was developed. The researcher adopted a qualitative research methodology to collect non-numeric data about the challenges facing schools in the Eastern Cape Province. The idea behind the developed model was to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the current governance system. The data were analysed using thematic data analysis. The findings reveal significant school governance challenges, resulting in poor academic performance by learners. The study posits that poor governance directly impacts learners' academic performance. Information reviewed in the study suggests that poor governance causes resource constraints, poor accountability, corruption, and failure to respond to learner needs. This supports the study thesis. The researcher provided recommendations for policymakers, principals, teachers, and other stakeholders involved in basic education.

The study findings contribute to knowledge in the academic discipline of Public Administration and Management. They also contribute new insights and approaches to managing public resources, implementing education policies, and governing the Eastern Cape Province. Regarding academic contributions to Public Administration and Management, the findings unearthed the problems confronting schools in the Eastern Cape Province and provided some recommendations to address them. The study also developed a sustainable governance framework to streamline and guide how the recommendations could be implemented. The study also points to the crucial roles of SGBs in the school governance system. It recommends training and incorporating them into school governance processes.

The management of public resources and the implementation of education policies and governance in the Eastern Cape Province are in shambles. The study contributions provide a template for the education authorities to implement existing basic education policies and the objectives of the SASA as well as section 29 of the Constitution. The developed model provides guidelines for bureaucrats to implement policies that improve the state of education in the Eastern Cape Province. The feedback intervention ensures that stakeholders involved in basic education share experiences and perspectives, allowing for policy revisions and adjustments. Overall, this study contributes towards improved school governance and education policy implementation in the Eastern Cape Province. The findings are tailored to the Eastern Cape Province, but they can be applied to areas with similar circumstances.

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ANNEXURE A

Province of the
EASTERN CAPE
EDUCATION

OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT DIRECTOR: AMATHOLE WEST DISTRICT

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Dear Mr Mvunge

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Your request to conduct research entitled: **Development of a governance framework for improving the performance of basic education in the Eastern Cape province**, in the Amathole West Education District is hereby granted.

It would be greatly appreciated if you could kindly share all your findings upon completion of the research.

Yours for Quality Education.

P Futshane

23 November 2023

N.P. FUTSHANE
DISTRICT DIRECTOR

DATE

growth education

Customer care line: 086 063 8636
Website: www.ecdoe.gov.za

ANNEXURE B

Certificate

September 27, 2023

This is to certify that Mr. Nathunathi Mvunge has successfully completed the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Online Training Module for the Social Sciences and Humanities.

Macquarie University

ANNEXURE C

Interview Guide: Interview Questions for SGBs members

1. Can you provide insights into the specific governance challenges you have observed within the Eastern Cape Province's Basic Education sector?
2. From your perspective, how do you believe governance issues contribute to the academic performance challenges faced by schools in the Eastern Cape?
3. In your experience, what role do political interference and leadership instability play in impacting the governance and subsequently the performance of schools in the province?
4. How would you describe the relationship between the Department of Basic Education and School Governing Bodies in terms of governance and policy implementation?
5. Could you elaborate on any instances of poor governance or mismanagement you have encountered within the Basic Education sector in the Eastern Cape?
6. From your observations, what are some of the key factors hindering effective policy implementation in schools within the province?
7. In your opinion, what governance structures or mechanisms have been successful in improving academic performance in schools, if any?
8. How do you perceive the current state of basic education in the Eastern Cape Province, particularly in terms of infrastructure, resources, and overall quality of education?
9. What, in your view, are the most pressing challenges faced by School Governing Bodies in ensuring effective governance and performance improvement within schools?
10. How do you envision a sustainable governance framework contributing to the improvement of academic performance in the Eastern Cape's basic education sector?
11. What are your thoughts on the feasibility and practicality of implementing such a governance framework within the current educational landscape of the province?
12. Lastly, based on your experiences and insights, what recommendations would you propose to address the governance issues and improve academic performance in the Basic Education sector of the Eastern Cape Province?

Thank you

ANNEXURE D

PO Box 1174
Vanderbijlpark 1900, South Africa
E-mail: mvungenathi@gmail.com

Semi-structured interview questions for the Development of a Governance Framework for improving the performance of Basic Education in the Eastern Cape Province

Introduction

You are invited to participate in the study with the title outlined above being undertaken by myself, Nathunathi Mvunge (Student No. 43944647) as part of an academic degree of Doctoral in Public Management and Governance at the North-West University. The study will look at the state of basic education in the Eastern Cape and what challenges hinder academic performance. Parts of the research questions will focus on the governance structures that have been implemented for improved academic performance in the Basic Education Sector. The challenges that the schools in the Eastern Cape province are facing could be a result of poor policy implementation and poor governance by the Eastern Cape Department of Education.

Background to the research

The South African basic educational system continues to face significant challenges. The conditions in Eastern Cape schools is deteriorating and some have argued that Eastern Cape schools are in a 'worse state' than almost a decade ago (Sizani & Gontsana, 2022). The poor provision of basic infrastructure and things in schools is affecting the quality of education offered in Eastern Cape schools. Perhaps most notable are the poor grade 12 pass rates, particularly in Mathematics (DoBE, 2019). The challenges that the schools in the Eastern Cape province are facing could be a result of poor policy implementation and poor governance by the Eastern Cape Department of Education. Lack of standards, poor governance, and poor policy implementation leads to poor performance. This is what has been happening in the Eastern Cape. Education performance is defined through the specific policies and procedures of the education department (Eric, 2021). To improve governance and subsequently the performance of education systems it is critical to identify the weak points that contribute to poor performance and corruption.

Procedure

This study aims to recruit school principals, school teachers, and officials from the DoE to participate in the study. If you agree to participate voluntary in this study, you will be invited to complete a semi-structured interview where you will be able to share your experience, information and understanding of how the department and schools deal with issues of classroom academic performance and how their policies and programmes are influencing such. You are free to ask questions or concerns regarding the research to the researcher.

Risks or discomforts

There are minimal risks associated with participation in this interview. The process may sometimes become exhausting as you answer the questions. All information given by you will be held in strict confidence and will be used for the purpose of this study only. No personal identification will be possible when the information is used. The principal researcher (Nathunathi Mvunge) will consider and respect the participants throughout the study.

Benefits

There will be no direct benefit to you from participating in this study. Your participation will help the researchers in developing a governance framework for improving the performance of Basic Education.

Consent

You are free to decline to participate in this study or withdraw or stop participation at any time without any consequences or penalty. Your decision to participate or not to participate in this study will not have influence on both your present and future status in this community.

Participant's signature **Date**

Interview Guide
Instructions

1. The participant who volunteers to participate should please answer ALL the questions.
2. The principal researcher study will keep this page with your personal information separate and safe. The information will only be used when there is a need for a follow-up visit.

Activist Identification

1.1 Activist registration			
A	**Eastern Cape Department of Education (Academia who form part of the stakeholders in policy formulation and analysis in the country)**		
B	**Locality:**	Name/s of the participant providing the information to the researcher	
		Name of the School/ Department	
		Contact number (cell/tel)	
		Work address	

Please indicate the participant skills with languages (Good=1a; Not so good=1b; Poor=1c)													
Language		**1**			**2**			**3**			**4**		
		Speak			**Read**			**Write**			**Understand**		
A	English	1a	1b	1c	1a	1b	1c	1a	1b	1c	1a	1b	1c
B	IsiXhosa	1a	1b	1c	1a	1b	1c	1a	1b	1c	1a	1b	1c
C	Afrikaans	1a	1b	1c	1a	1b	1c	1a	1b	1c	1a	1b	1c

Result of visit (for recordkeeping on the completion of questionnaire by participant)		
	Visit 1	**Visit 2**
Date	dd / mm / yyyy	dd / mm / yyyy
Notes by the researcher		
Signature by the researcher		

Interview Questions:

1. As an academic involved in policy formulation and analysis, what do you perceive as the primary governance challenges impacting academic performance within the Basic Education Sector in the Eastern Cape Province?

2. How do you believe academia can contribute to identifying and addressing governance challenges hindering academic performance in the Eastern Cape's Basic Education Sector?
3. Can you discuss any research or studies you've conducted or been involved in that shed light on governance structures impacting academic performance in the Basic Education Sector?
4. From your perspective, what are the key governance structures that have been implemented successfully to improve academic performance in the Basic Education Sector, both within the Eastern Cape Province and elsewhere?
5. What gaps or shortcomings have you observed in the governance structures currently in place within the Basic Education Sector in the Eastern Cape Province, and how do you propose they be addressed?
6. How do you assess the overall state of basic education in the Eastern Cape Province, considering governance challenges and academic performance?
7. What role do you believe academia should play in influencing policy decisions and reforms aimed at improving governance frameworks for academic performance in the Eastern Cape's Basic Education Sector?
8. In your opinion, what criteria should be considered to ascertain the practicability and effectiveness of a sustainable governance framework for academic performance in the Eastern Cape's Basic Education Sector?
9. Based on your expertise, what specific recommendations would you offer to policymakers and education authorities to strengthen governance frameworks and support improved academic performance in the Eastern Cape Province?
10. How can academia collaborate more effectively with other stakeholders, such as government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and community groups, to inform policy development and implementation regarding governance frameworks for basic education in the Eastern Cape Province?

The End

Thank you for taking the time to complete this interview.

ANNEXURE E

PO Box 1174
Vanderbijlpark 1900, South Africa
E-mail: mvungenathi@gmail.com

Semi-structured interview questions for the Development of a Governance Framework for improving the performance of Basic Education in the Eastern Cape Province

Introduction

You are invited to participate in the study with the title outlined above being undertaken by myself, Nathunathi Mvunge (Student No. 43944647) as part of an academic degree of Doctoral in Public Management and Governance at the North-West University. The study will look at the state of basic education in the Eastern Cape and what challenges hinder academic performance. Parts of the research questions will focus on the governance structures that have been implemented for improved academic performance in the Basic Education Sector. The challenges that the schools in the Eastern Cape province are facing could be a result of poor policy implementation and poor governance by the Eastern Cape Department of Education.

Background to the research

The South African basic educational system continues to face significant challenges. The conditions in Eastern Cape schools is deteriorating and some have argued that Eastern Cape schools are in a 'worse state' than almost a decade ago (Sizani & Gontsana, 2022). The poor provision of basic infrastructure and things in schools is affecting the quality of education offered in Eastern Cape schools. Perhaps most notable are the poor grade 12 pass rates, particularly in Mathematics (DoBE, 2019). The challenges that the schools in the Eastern Cape province are facing could be a result of poor policy implementation and poor governance by the Eastern Cape Department of Education. Lack of standards, poor governance, and poor policy implementation leads to poor performance. This is what has been happening in the Eastern Cape. Education performance is defined through the specific policies and procedures of the education department (Eric, 2021). To improve governance and subsequently the performance of education systems it is critical to identify the weak points that contribute to poor performance and corruption.

Procedure

This study aims to recruit school principals, school teachers, and officials from the DoE to participate in the study. If you agree to participate voluntary in this study, you will be invited to complete a semi-structured interview where you will be able to share your experience, information and understanding of how the department and schools deal with issues of classroom academic performance and how their policies and programmes are influencing such. You are free to ask questions or concerns regarding the research to the researcher.

Risks or discomforts

There are minimal risks associated with participation in this interview. The process may sometimes become exhausting as you answer the questions. All information given by you will be held in strict confidence and will be used for the purpose of this study only. No personal identification will be possible when the information is used. The principal researcher (Nathunathi Mvunge) will consider and respect the participants throughout the study.

Benefits

There will be no direct benefit to you from participating in this study. Your participation will help the researchers in developing a governance framework for improving the performance of Basic Education.

Consent

You are free to decline to participate in this study or withdraw or stop participation at any time without any consequences or penalty. Your decision to participate or not to participate in this study will not have influence on both your present and future status in this community.

Participant's signature **Date**

Interview Guide
Instructions

3. The participant who volunteers to participate should please answer ALL the questions.
4. The principal researcher study will keep this page with your personal information separate and safe. The information will only be used when there is a need for a follow-up visit.

Activist Identification

1.1 Activist registration			
A	**Eastern Cape Department of Education (**Public Official)		
B	**Locality:**	Name/s of the participant providing the information to the researcher	
		Name of the School/ Department	
		Contact number (cell/tel)	
		Work address	

Please indicate the participant skills with languages (Good=1a; Not so good=1b; Poor=1c)													
Language		**1**			**2**			**3**			**4**		
		Speak			**Read**			**Write**			**Understand**		
A	English	1a	1b	1c	1a	1b	1c	1a	1b	1c	1a	1b	1c
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C	Afrikaans	1a	1b	1c	1a	1b	1c	1a	1b	1c	1a	1b	1c

Result of visit (for recordkeeping on the completion of questionnaire by participant)		
	Visit 1	**Visit 2**
Date	dd / mm / yyyy	dd / mm / yyyy
Notes by the researcher		
Signature by the researcher		

Interview Questions

Can you describe the current governance framework for basic education in the Eastern Cape province?
.....
.....
.....

Are there specific issues that, in your opinion, significantly hinder the effective delivery of education in the province?
…… …… …… …… …… …… …… …… …… …… …… ……

How are different stakeholders currently involved in the governance of basic education in the Eastern Cape?
…… …… …… …… …… …… …… ……

What strategies do you think could enhance collaboration and communication among stakeholders to improve education outcomes?
…… …… …… …… …… …… …… …… …… …… …… …… …… …… …… …… ……

How do existing government policies influence the governance of basic education in the Eastern Cape?
…… …… …… …… …… …… …… ……

Are there policy adjustments or enhancements you believe would better support the development of a governance framework?
…… …… …… …… …… …… …… …… …… …… …… …… …… …… ……

In terms of individuals and institutions involved in education governance, what capacity-building measures do you think are essential?
…… …… …… …… …… …… …… …… …… …… …… …… …… ……

Are there specific training programs or skills development initiatives that you would recommend?
…… …… …… …… …… …… …… ……

From your perspective, what potential barriers or challenges might be encountered in implementing a new governance framework for basic education?
…… …… …… …… …… …… …… …… …… …… …… …… …… …… …… ……

How can these barriers be addressed or mitigated?
…… …… …… …… …… …… …… …… …… …… …… …… …… …… …… …… ……

The End

Thank you for taking the time to complete this interview.

ANNEXURE F

PO Box 1174
Vanderbijlpark 1900, South Africa
E-mail: mvungenathi@gmail.com

Semi-structured interview questions for the Development of a Governance Framework for improving the performance of Basic Education in the Eastern Cape Province

Introduction

You are invited to participate in the study with the title outlined above being undertaken by myself, Nathunathi Mvunge (Student No. 43944647) as part of an academic degree of Doctoral in Public Management and Governance at the North-West University. The study will look at the state of basic education in the Eastern Cape and what challenges hinder academic performance. Parts of the research questions will focus on the governance structures that have been implemented for improved academic performance in the Basic Education Sector. The challenges that the schools in the Eastern Cape province are facing could be a result of poor policy implementation and poor governance by the Eastern Cape Department of Education.

Background to the research

The South African basic educational system continues to face significant challenges. The conditions in Eastern Cape schools is deteriorating and some have argued that Eastern Cape schools are in a 'worse state' than almost a decade ago (Sizani & Gontsana, 2022). The poor provision of basic infrastructure and things in schools is affecting the quality of education offered in Eastern Cape schools. Perhaps most notable are the poor grade 12 pass rates, particularly in Mathematics (DoBE, 2019). The challenges that the schools in the Eastern Cape province are facing could be a result of poor policy implementation and poor governance by the Eastern Cape Department of Education. Lack of standards, poor governance, and poor policy implementation leads to poor performance. This is what has been happening in the Eastern Cape. Education performance is defined through the specific policies and procedures of the education department (Eric, 2021). To improve governance and subsequently the performance of education systems it is critical to identify the weak points that contribute to poor performance and corruption.

Procedure

This study aims to recruit school principals, school teachers, and officials from the DoE to participate in the study. If you agree to participate voluntary in this study, you will be invited to complete a semi-structured interview where you will be able to share your experience, information and understanding of how the department and schools deal with issues of classroom academic performance and how their policies and programmes are influencing such. You are free to ask questions or concerns regarding the research to the researcher.

Risks or discomforts

There are minimal risks associated with participation in this interview. The process may sometimes become exhausting as you answer the questions. All information given by you will be held in strict confidence and will be used for the purpose of this study only. No personal identification will be possible when the information is used. The principal researcher (Nathunathi Mvunge) will consider and respect the participants throughout the study.

Benefits

There will be no direct benefit to you from participating in this study. Your participation will help the researchers in developing a governance framework for improving the performance of Basic Education.

Consent

You are free to decline to participate in this study or withdraw or stop participation at any time without any consequences or penalty. Your decision to participate or not to participate in this study will not have influence on both your present and future status in this community.

Participant's signature **Date**

Interview Guide
Instructions

5. The participant who volunteers to participate should please answer ALL the questions.
6. The principal researcher study will keep this page with your personal information separate and safe. The information will only be used when there is a need for a follow-up visit.

Activist Identification

1.1 Activist registration			
A	**Eastern Cape Department of Education (Principal)**		
B	**Locality:**	Name/s of the participant providing the information to the researcher	
		Name of the School/ Department	
		Contact number (cell/tel)	
		Work address	

Please indicate the participant skills with languages (Good=1a; Not so good=1b; Poor=1c)													
Language		**1**			**2**			**3**			**4**		
		Speak			**Read**			**Write**			**Understand**		
A	English	1a	1b	1c	1a	1b	1c	1a	1b	1c	1a	1b	1c
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C	Afrikaans	1a	1b	1c	1a	1b	1c	1a	1b	1c	1a	1b	1c

Result of visit (for recordkeeping on the completion of questionnaire by participant)		
	Visit 1	**Visit 2**
Date	dd / mm / yyyy	dd / mm / yyyy
Notes by the researcher		
Signature by the researcher		

Interview Questions:

1. Can you discuss any governance challenges you've encountered that have hindered academic performance within your school?
2. How have you implemented governance structures within your school to improve academic performance?
3. What specific initiatives or strategies have you found effective in addressing governance challenges and improving academic outcomes?
4. Can you provide examples of successful governance structures or practices you've observed in other schools or districts that could be applied to the context of the Eastern Cape Province?

5. In your opinion, what are the key factors contributing to the current state of basic education in the Eastern Cape Province?
6. How do you assess the effectiveness of governance frameworks currently in place within the basic education sector in the Eastern Cape Province?
7. What role do you believe school principals should play in advocating for and implementing changes to governance structures to enhance academic performance?
8. How do you collaborate with other stakeholders, such as teachers, parents, and local education authorities, to address governance challenges and improve academic outcomes?
9. What challenges do you foresee in implementing a sustainable governance framework for academic performance in the Eastern Cape's basic education sector, and how do you plan to overcome them?
10. Based on your experience and expertise, what recommendations would you make to policymakers and education authorities to strengthen governance frameworks and support improved academic performance in the Eastern Cape Province?

The End

Thank you for taking the time to complete this interview.

ANNEXURE G

Semi structured interview guide for learners

1. In a scale of 1 to 5, how would you rate the overall quality of education provided at your school?
    - 1: Very poor
    - 2: Poor
    - 3: Average
    - 4: Good
    - 5: Excellent
    - Please explain your rating in detail.
2. Do you feel that your school's infrastructure adequately supports your learning needs? Please elaborate.
    - 1: Strongly disagree
    - 2: Disagree
    - 3: Neutral
    - 4: Agree
    - 5: Strongly agree
    - Please explain your answer further.
3. Have you experienced any challenges with accessing essential resources such as textbooks, laboratory equipment, or computers at your school?
    - 1: Never
    - 2: Rarely
    - 3: Sometimes
    - 4: Often
    - 5: Always
    - If yes or sometimes, please describe the challenges you've faced.

4. How do you perceive the relationship between the school administration and the School Governing Body (SGB) in terms of ensuring effective governance and management?
    - 1: Very poor
    - 2: Poor
    - 3: Neutral
    - 4: Good
    - 5: Very good
    - Please provide more details about your perception.
5. Have you ever observed instances of political interference affecting the management or decision-making processes at your school?
    - 1: Never
    - 2: Rarely
    - 3: Sometimes
    - 4: Often
    - 5: Always
    - If yes or sometimes, please provide examples.
6. How satisfied are you with the level of leadership and management exhibited by the school administration?
    - 1: Very dissatisfied
    - 2: Dissatisfied
    - 3: Neutral
    - 4: Satisfied
    - 5: Very satisfied
    - Please explain your satisfaction level.
7. Do you believe that poor governance or mismanagement has had an impact on the academic performance of students at your school? Please explain.
    - 1: Strongly disagree

- 2: Disagree
- 3: Neutral
- 4: Agree
- 5: Strongly agree
- Please elaborate on your answer.

8. In your opinion, what are the most significant challenges facing learners in the Eastern Cape Province regarding education quality and access?
    - Please list your top three challenges and explain why you consider them significant.
9. How well do you think the Department of Basic Education addresses the needs of learners in the Eastern Cape Province?
    - 1: Very poorly
    - 2: Poorly
    - 3: Fairly
    - 4: Well
    - 5: Very well
    - Please provide reasons for your assessment.
10. Have you or your peers experienced any instances of corruption or maladministration within the school environment? Please share your experience.
    - Please describe any experiences you or your peers have had regarding corruption or maladministration.
11. Do you believe that implementing a sustainable governance framework could lead to improvements in academic performance at your school? Why or why not?
    - Please elaborate on your thoughts about the potential impact of a sustainable governance framework.
12. How informed do you feel about the policies and procedures governing your school's operations?

- 1: Very uninformed
- 2: Uninformed
- 3: Somewhat informed
- 4: Informed
- 5: Very informed
- Please explain your level of understanding.

13. What changes or improvements would you like to see in your school's governance and management practices to enhance academic performance?
    - Please provide specific suggestions or areas for improvement.
14. Overall, how satisfied are you with your educational experience at your school?
    - 1: Very dissatisfied
    - 2: Dissatisfied
    - 3: Neutral
    - 4: Satisfied
    - 5: Very satisfied
    - Please share any additional comments or feedback about your educational experience.
15. How would you describe the level of teacher-student interaction and engagement within your school?
    - 1: Very low
    - 2: Low
    - 3: Moderate
    - 4: High
    - 5: Very high
    - Please provide examples to support your rating.
16. Do you feel that there are adequate opportunities for student participation and involvement in decision-making processes within your school?
    - 1: Strongly disagree
    - 2: Disagree
    - 3: Neutral
    - 4: Agree
    - 5: Strongly agree
    - Please explain your answer.
17. How would you rate the support and availability of counselling or mental health services for students at your school?
    - 1: Very poor
    - 2: Poor
    - 3: Average

- 4: Good
- 5: Excellent
- Please elaborate on your rating.

18. Have you ever experienced or witnessed any form of discrimination or bullying within your school environment?
    - Yes
    - No
    - If yes, please describe the situation.
19. How effective do you think your school's disciplinary policies and practices are in maintaining a safe and conducive learning environment?
    - 1: Not effective at all
    - 2: Somewhat ineffective
    - 3: Neutral
    - 4: Somewhat effective
    - 5: Very effective
    - Please provide examples to support your assessment.
20. Are you satisfied with the level of parental involvement and engagement in school activities and initiatives?
    - 1: Very dissatisfied
    - 2: Dissatisfied
    - 3: Neutral
    - 4: Satisfied
    - 5: Very satisfied
    - Please explain your satisfaction level.
21. How would you describe the level of access to extracurricular activities and enrichment programs offered by your school?
    - 1: Very limited
    - 2: Limited
    - 3: Adequate
    - 4: Extensive
    - 5: Very extensive
    - Please provide examples to support your rating.
22. Do you believe that your school effectively promotes diversity, inclusivity, and cultural sensitivity among students and staff?
    - 1: Strongly disagree
    - 2: Disagree
    - 3: Neutral
    - 4: Agree
    - 5: Strongly agree
    - Please explain your answer.
23. How do you perceive the availability and accessibility of career guidance and counselling services at your school?
    - 1: Very inadequate
    - 2: Inadequate
    - 3: Neutral
    - 4: Adequate
    - 5: Very adequate
    - Please elaborate on your perception.
24. How satisfied are you with the opportunities for personal and academic development provided by your school?
    - 1: Very dissatisfied
    - 2: Dissatisfied
    - 3: Neutral
    - 4: Satisfied

- 5: Very satisfied
- Please explain your satisfaction level.

25. Do you believe that there is equitable access to educational opportunities and resources for all students regardless of their background or socio-economic status?
    - 1: Strongly disagree
    - 2: Disagree
    - 3: Neutral
    - 4: Agree
    - 5: Strongly agree
    - Please provide examples to support your opinion.

ANNEXURE H

PO Box 1174
Vanderbijlpark 1900, South Africa
E-mail: mvungenathi@gmail.com

Semi-structured interview questions for the Development of a Governance Framework for improving the performance of Basic Education in the Eastern Cape Province

Introduction

You are invited to participate in the study with the title outlined above being undertaken by myself, Nathunathi Mvunge (Student No. 43944647) as part of an academic degree of Doctoral in Public Management and Governance at the North-West University. The study will look at the state of basic education in the Eastern Cape and what challenges hinder academic performance. Parts of the research questions will focus on the governance structures that have been implemented for improved academic performance in the Basic Education Sector. The challenges that the schools in the Eastern Cape province are facing could be a result of poor policy implementation and poor governance by the Eastern Cape Department of Education.

Background to the research

The South African basic educational system continues to face significant challenges. The conditions in Eastern Cape schools is deteriorating and some have argued that Eastern Cape schools are in a 'worse state' than almost a decade ago (Sizani & Gontsana, 2022). The poor provision of basic infrastructure and things in schools is affecting the quality of education offered in Eastern Cape schools. Perhaps most notable are the poor grade 12 pass rates, particularly in Mathematics (DoBE, 2019). The challenges that the schools in the Eastern Cape province are facing could be a result of poor policy implementation and poor governance by the Eastern Cape Department of Education. Lack of standards, poor governance, and poor policy implementation leads to poor performance. This is what has been happening in the Eastern Cape. Education performance is defined through the specific policies and procedures of the education department (Eric, 2021). To improve governance and subsequently the performance of education systems it is critical to identify the weak points that contribute to poor performance and corruption.

Procedure

This study aims to recruit school principals, school teachers, and officials from the DoE to participate in the study. If you agree to participate voluntary in this study, you will be invited to complete a semi-structured interview where you will be able to share your experience, information and understanding of how the department and schools deal with issues of classroom academic performance and how their policies and programmes are influencing such. You are free to ask questions or concerns regarding the research to the researcher.

Risks or discomforts

There are minimal risks associated with participation in this interview. The process may sometimes become exhausting as you answer the questions. All information given by you will be held in strict confidence and will be used for the purpose of this study only. No personal identification will be possible when the information is used. The principal researcher (Nathunathi Mvunge) will consider and respect the participants throughout the study.

Benefits

There will be no direct benefit to you from participating in this study. Your participation will help the researchers in developing a governance framework for improving the performance of Basic Education.

Consent

You are free to decline to participate in this study or withdraw or stop participation at any time without any consequences or penalty. Your decision to participate or not to participate in this study will not have influence on both your present and future status in this community.

Participant's signature **Date**

Survey Questionnaire

Instructions

7. The participant who volunteers to participate should please answer ALL the questions.
8. The principal researcher study will keep this page with your personal information separate and safe. The information will only be used when there is a need for a follow-up visit.

Activist Identification

1.1 Activist registration			
A	**Eastern Cape Department of Education (Teachers)**		
B	**Locality:**	Name/s of the participant providing the information to the researcher	
		Name of the School/ Department	
		Contact number (cell/tel)	
		Work address	

Please indicate the participant skills with languages (Good=1a; Not so good=1b; Poor=1c)													
Language		**1**			**2**			**3**			**4**		
		Speak			**Read**			**Write**			**Understand**		
A	English	1a	1b	1c	1a	1b	1c	1a	1b	1c	1a	1b	1c
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C	Afrikaans	1a	1b	1c	1a	1b	1c	1a	1b	1c	1a	1b	1c

Result of visit (for recordkeeping on the completion of questionnaire by participant)		
	Visit 1	**Visit 2**
Date	dd / mm / yyyy	dd / mm / yyyy
Notes by the researcher		
Signature by the researcher		

Questions:

1. To what extent do you perceive governance challenges to hinder academic performance in the Basic Education Sector in the Eastern Cape Province?
    - 1: Not at all
    - 2: Slightly
    - 3: Moderately
    - 4: Very much
    - 5: Extremely
2. How effectively do you believe the current governance structures address academic challenges in the Basic Education Sector?
    - 1: Not effectively at all
    - 2: Slightly effectively
    - 3: Moderately effectively
    - 4: Very effectively
    - 5: Extremely effectively
3. How satisfied are you with the implementation of governance structures in your school or district to improve academic performance?
    - 1: Very dissatisfied
    - 2: Dissatisfied
    - 3: Neutral
    - 4: Satisfied
    - 5: Very satisfied
4. To what extent do you agree that effective governance positively impacts academic outcomes in the Basic Education Sector?
    - 1: Strongly disagree
    - 2: Disagree
    - 3: Neutral
    - 4: Agree
    - 5: Strongly agree
5. How would you rate the current state of basic education in the Eastern Cape Province?
    - 1: Very poor
    - 2: Poor
    - 3: Average

- 4: Good
- 5: Very good

6. How optimistic are you about the potential for improvement in the basic education sector in the Eastern Cape Province?
    - 1: Not optimistic at all
    - 2: Slightly optimistic
    - 3: Moderately optimistic
    - 4: Very optimistic
    - 5: Extremely optimistic
7. How important do you think it is to establish sustainable governance frameworks for improving academic performance in the Eastern Cape's basic education sector?
    - 1: Not important at all
    - 2: Slightly important
    - 3: Moderately important
    - 4: Very important
    - 5: Extremely important
8. To what extent do you believe that a sustainable governance framework can address the challenges faced by the Basic Education Sector in the Eastern Cape Province?
    - 1: Not at all
    - 2: Slightly
    - 3: Moderately
    - 4: Very much
    - 5: Completely
9. How confident are you in the feasibility of implementing a sustainable governance framework tailored to the needs of the Eastern Cape's basic education sector?
    - 1: Not confident at all
    - 2: Slightly confident
    - 3: Moderately confident
    - 4: Very confident
    - 5: Extremely confident
10. How willing are you to actively participate in the development and implementation of governance frameworks aimed at improving academic performance?
    - 1: Not willing at all
    - 2: Slightly willing
    - 3: Moderately willing

- 4: Very willing
- 5: Extremely willing

11. To what extent do you agree that teacher involvement and participation are essential for the success of governance frameworks in the Basic Education Sector?
    - 1: Strongly disagree
    - 2: Disagree
    - 3: Neutral
    - 4: Agree
    - 5: Strongly agree
12. How important do you think it is for governance structures to be flexible and adaptable to the unique challenges faced by schools in the Eastern Cape Province?
    - 1: Not important at all
    - 2: Slightly important
    - 3: Moderately important
    - 4: Very important
    - 5: Extremely important

The End

Thank you for taking the time to complete this interview.