

## Research Article

# All Hands on Deck! School-Community Partnerships as a Nexus for Resource Mobilisation in South African Rural Schools

**Themba Ralph Mkhize**  and **Joseph Pardon Hungwe** 

*University of South Africa, Department of Educational Foundations, Pretoria, South Africa*

Correspondence should be addressed to Themba Ralph Mkhize; [mkhizet@hotmail.com](mailto:mkhizet@hotmail.com)

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Despite the fact that South Africa attained freedom nearly three decades ago, rural schools still struggle to acquire resources that will deliver quality education. International and local research confirms the critical role of school-community partnerships in advancing quality education and maximising learning outcomes. However, a paucity of research explores school-community partnerships as a nexus for resource mobilisation in South African rural schools. This qualitative study sought to explore and identify school-community partnerships through which schools within rural contexts can mobilise resources, as supported by boundary-spanning leadership and resource mobilisation theories. Data were collected, using free-attitude interviews and transect walk with photo voice, from 15 participants in three schools in a KwaZulu-Natal rural municipality. The school stakeholders included three school principals, three teachers' school governing bodies (SGBs), three parents' SGBs, one trade union, two nonprofit organisations, two corporate social responsibility managers, and one local municipality manager. Thematic data analysis was used to analyse the data. Seven main school-community partnerships findings emerged from the data, which were used to make recommendations to address and improve the quality of education in the rural schools. We argue that all hands are required on deck from all school stakeholders, so as to enable the school-community partnerships aimed at resource mobilisation to work.

## 1. Introduction

In South Africa, colonialism and apartheid left marks on all facets of life in the rural areas. Their imprint was manifested through the marginalisation of rural people from the opportunities and services that supported their quality of life. Twenty-seven years after the formal end of apartheid, the South African government is, currently, still faced with the challenge of creating fundamental social change, so as to deal with persisting inequalities, poverty, and unemployment, including rural schools that still struggle to acquire resources for the delivery of quality education [1].

The South African Constitution Act, No. 108 of 1996, under the section of the Bill of Rights, declares quality education to be a right of all citizens [2]. Research shows that the scarcity of resources, which is part of the legacy of the apartheid education system, continues to be a challenge, in terms of the provision of quality education for rural learners [3–5]. International and local research confirms the critical

role of school-community partnerships in advancing quality education and in maximising learning outcomes [6–9]. However, there is a paucity of research exploring school-community partnerships as a nexus for resource mobilisation in South African rural schools. Thus, the purpose of this study sought to explore and identify school-community partnerships through which schools within rural contexts can mobilise resources.

*1.1. Background to the Problem.* Recently, Statistics South Africa [10] indicated that the South African economy has not been performing well. This study argues that the unfavourable economic state presented above implies that the state resource allocation to state departments, including schools, will be substantially reduced. The South African Schools Act is clear that, through school governing bodies (SGBs), schools are required to supplement their resources [2], but such supplementation is not happening. Given the

current state of economy, the SGB task of supplementing own resources is becoming a critical necessity if the schools concerned are to survive. This study argues that central to the effective participation of stakeholders in the mobilisation of resources is empowerment, which is currently lacking. The National Development Plan (NDP) sees quality education, including the schools in the rural areas, as being critical for social development and for fighting poverty [11]. The provision of “Quality Education,” which has been identified as part of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4), has been defined as ensuring “inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all” [12]. Similarly, Agenda 2063 of the African Union [13] appeals to African countries to advocate for well-resourced schools as a vehicle for human capital growth and quality education. However, the persistent resource scarcity in South African rural schools undermines the successful enactment of the above local, regional, and international laws that are intended to advance quality education for all. Therefore, this study argues that the responsibility for identifying and mobilising resources in schools within the rural context cannot be placed on the SGB only, but it requires having all hands on deck, in terms of all school stakeholders, through school-community partnerships, collaboratively working together in mobilising resources efficiently.

## 2. Literature Review

The literature review in this study explores the nature of the existing school-community partnerships both internationally and nationally and thereafter follows a discussion of rurality and rural schools as a space or context for this study.

*2.1. School-Community Partnerships.* This study acknowledges the fact that South African government has made some strides in terms of bringing about educational reforms that are responsible for moving away from the discriminatory education system of the past [14–16]. Forming mutual relations with different stakeholders is an approach that has gained prominence as a strategy of providing quality education both internationally and nationally [6–9]. This study argues that such relations are critical to establishing what is prominently known as school-community partnerships, which are aimed at mitigating resource scarcity in rural schools. School-community partnerships offer opportunities for cooperation, coordination, and collaboration, to support educational outcomes by means of bringing together different stakeholders, organisations, and like-minded social partners that serve educational quality [17,18]. The efforts involved seek to overcome the fragmentation concerned, in terms of addressing the existing educational challenges, by means of bringing together different role-players with varying capabilities and resources [19,20]. According to Bloomfield and Nguyen [21], the term “partnerships” refers to the sustainable relationships, equal association, reciprocity, and mutuality realised through a process of negotiating the relationship concerned, as grounded on a common objective. Berg [22]

defines the school-community partnership as an intentional effort to create and sustain relationships between a school or school district and a variety of formal and informal organisations and institutions in the community, for the purpose of advancing quality education and learner development. Within the South African context, the concept of the school-community partnership refers to the collaborative relationships and activities involving school staff, parents, and community organisations and members [8,23]. The present researchers posit that effective leadership at the school and community level supports the development of sustainable school-community partnerships [24,25]. Bhengu and Svoe [26] explored how school heads enhanced resources mobilisation in remote Zimbabwe’s rural early childhood development (ECD) centres, through the development of school-community partnerships. The authors involved found that forming partnerships with various societal structures is an innovative way of creating and enhancing the environment for effective teaching and learning.

*2.2. Rurality.* Contestations around what constitutes the concept of rurality contribute to its inexactness throughout the world [3,27]. Therefore, rurality may be defined in various ways, due to the fact that no universal definition has been adopted worldwide. Cloke et al. [28], writing from a United Kingdom-based perspective, stated that the rural phenomenon stands as a significant illusionary space, which is linked by means of different cultural meanings, varying from those pertaining to a range of peaceful to suppressive conditions. Cloke et al. [28] posited that the “rural” is a way of life that some desire for a peaceful lifestyle that is essentially different from the hectic lifestyle of urban centres. Rurality is defined as being the opposite of urban, which further adds to the present ambiguity of the terms employed. We find the above comparison to be problematic when applying it to the South African context.

Rural occupation in South Africa directly links to the past history of apartheid and the colonial policies of dispossession, and to the systematic exclusion from opportunities that dominated the economic landscape during such times [15,29,30]. This study has adopted the definition of rurality, drawing from the Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Act, No. 41 of 2003 [31], and the KwaZulu-Natal Traditional Leadership and Governance Act, No. 5 of 2005 [32], whose provisions have also been adopted in many ground-breaking studies on rurality [5,14,33]. The Acts mentioned define rurality as denoting areas under the jurisdiction of Amakhosi (chiefs).

*2.3. Rural Schools.* The previous section of this study discussed the concept of rurality. Discussing how the conceptualisation of rurality informs what we regard as a “rural school” in this study is, therefore, important. Schools in South Africa are faced with very specific challenges [34,35], with the situation being more dire in the rural schools than in the urban ones [36]. According to Hlalele [4], rural communities in South Africa suffer from poor infrastructural development, limited basic services at school level, including sanitation, running water, electricity,

libraries, and laboratories, with schools and communities mostly alienated from major cities. According to the South African Department of Education [37], the most striking feature of rural communities in South Africa is their economic poverty. The Department of Education [37] adds that the deprived rural context, with its features of illiteracy and lack of resources in the schools, deepens the challenges related to ensuring that each school provides quality education. Therefore, the government efforts to provide equal and fair education within the deprived contexts and, more specifically, through the rural schools have given rise to only a minimal amount of change in South Africa since the dawn of the country's democracy in 1994 [14,37,38]. However, the present authors acknowledge that rural schools and communities possess great potential for mobilising their resources through school-community partnerships, for the advancement of quality education. A number of studies [8,9,25] argue that various agencies, depending on the unique and relevant attributes of a particular rural community, need to form partnerships to address rural education issues. It is mainly in line with the above argument that this study amplifies the voices of all school stakeholders, in terms of identifying and mobilising resources in schools within the rural contexts by way of utilising school-community partnerships. In the next section, we wish to discuss the theoretical framework guiding this study.

### 3. Theoretical Framework

This study acknowledges that the schools within rural contexts experience challenges concerning the acquiring of resources that are required for providing quality education. In exploring the complexities, challenges and solutions related to the problem of resource scarcity that have been presented, the field of study concerned dictates that utilising a single theory will not serve the purpose of this study. Therefore, to achieve the purpose of this study, we decided to integrate the boundary-spanning leadership theory and the resource mobilisation theory (RMT) as a theoretical framework. Instead of utilising one theory, we triangulated two theories or perspectives to be able to understand and interpret the same phenomenon.

*3.1. Boundary-Spanning Leadership.* Boundary spanning as an important leadership construct has emerged from studies concentrated on the absorbing, sharing, and relaying of information across organisational boundaries, so as to facilitate organisational effectiveness and performance [39–41]. According to Purcell et al. [18], boundary spanning as a critical element of leadership first appeared in the literature on management in the 1970s, before being adopted by the theorists concerned with public administration and public leadership.

Scholars like Miller [42] and Benoliel and Somech [43] conceptualised boundary-spanning leadership as the ability to create alignment and commitment across organisational boundaries, so as to achieve an elevated vision. According to Ernst and Chrobot-Mason [44], the boundary-spanning leadership of school leaders, working together with all of the

school stakeholders concerned, promotes the creation of direction by means of sharing an understanding of common goals and strategies with the external partners, and the performance of alignment with the joint coordination of resources and activities, aimed at mobilising resources within the rural school context. Yun and Lee [45] posit that a key dimension of boundary-spanning leadership involves the social and political skills that increase the number of external resources that are available for rural school stakeholders to address the resource scarcity present in their context, thus leading to the adoption of the approach in this study. Boundary-spanning leadership theorists [39,41,42,44] argue that effective communication and partner trust, as facilitated by boundary-spanning leadership, help the stakeholders and leaders from different organisations share a common understanding of mutual goals and of different perspectives.

*3.2. Resource Mobilisation Theory.* As a major sociological theory that emerged in the 1970s [46], RMT stresses the ability of a movement's members to acquire resources and to mobilise people towards accomplishing the movement's goals. Early adherents of RMT [47–50] sought to understand how rational and, often, the most marginalised social actors were effectively mobilised to pursue their desired social change goals. RMT acknowledges the role that can be played by the study of social movement organisations (SMOs) in advocating, expressing, and addressing the challenges of resource scarcity. For instance, Kendal [46] argues that social movements can succeed through the effective mobilisation of both material and nonmaterial resources and through the development of political opportunities for their members. Material resources include money, organisations, workforce, technology, the means of communication, and mass media, whereas nonmaterial resources include legitimacy, loyalty, social relationships, networks, personal connections, public attention, authority, moral commitment, and solidarity [46]. Edwards and Kane [51] indicate that early formulations of the resource mobilisation perspective fell into two groups: an organisational, social entrepreneurial perspective, linked to McCarthy and Zald's [52] work, and the political perspective that is linked with that of Tilly [53]. The entrepreneurial model analyses social action as being determined by economic factors affecting a social movement. It argues that grievances may not be the only reason for establishing social movements. However, the accessibility of and the monopoly over resources are a crucial determinant in forming social movements. The political model strongly emphasises the political struggle involved, rather than the economic factors concerned. We posit that both approaches are critical for the mobilisation of resources within the rural school context.

### 4. Methodology

The main research question guiding this study was the following: "Which school-community partnerships are available for rural school stakeholders to utilise in advancing resource mobilisation efforts in their context?" The article is based on a qualitative research study, couched by critical

emancipatory research (CER) [54,55]. CER anchors the study, with its recognition of the important principles of social justice and equality being grounded within the critical theory paradigm [56]. Therefore, the study reported in the present article was conducted in schools within the rural context of KwaZulu-Natal, with the marginalised voices of the school leaders involved being amplified through the CER principles of equality, participation, social justice, and human emancipation [56,57]. The study deals with school-community partnerships for mobilising the resources in schools within the rural context. The research focused on 15 school stakeholders, who were attached to three different schools in a rural municipality of KwaZulu-Natal. The school stakeholders included three school principals, three teachers' SGBs, three parents' SGBs, one trade union, two nonprofit organisations (NPOs), two corporate social responsibility (CSR) managers, and one local municipality manager. Drawing on the above explanation, the qualitative study adopted a purposive sampling technique [58].

A free-attitude interview, as described by Meulenberg-Buskens [59], and transect walks with photo voice were used to collect the required data that identified the school-community partnerships that existed in their context. The principal, the SGBs, the union representative, and the NPOs worked together to identify the school-community partnerships impacting on the creation of successful conditions for the resource mobilisation to thrive. Thematic data analysis was used to identify, analyse, and report the existing patterns (themes) within the data [60]. To ensure the required rigour, reflective journaling and member-checking were used to ensure that what emerged from the interactions with the school stakeholders in the study was not influenced by own personal interpretations and biases [61].

According to Bless et al. [62], research ethics assists in avoiding research pitfalls and misuse, as well as promoting the accountability of researchers, who need to be guided by, and who need to respect, the applicable ethics. Permission to conduct the study was granted by the institution's ethical clearance committee at the College of Education. Further approval for conducting the research was obtained from the Department of Basic Education (DBE) in KwaZulu-Natal. The study was informed by ethical principles, including non-maleficence, the autonomy of research participants, informed consent, anonymity, and confidentiality [58]. The next section describes the findings and the discussion of this study.

## 5. Findings and Discussion

The rural schools identified the school-community partnerships existing in the different sectors as part of a strategy for mobilising resources in their rural contexts. As discussed below, they include *private and public organisations, faith-based organisations, the nonprofit sector, school-parent partnerships, traditional leadership, and higher education institutions*.

**5.1. Partnering with Local Businesses.** Figures 1–3 show local businesses as part of a school-community partnership strategy identified by stakeholders for mobilising the resources in their



FIGURE 1: Bhejani Hardware and Furniture: site one.



FIGURE 2: School built by shell SA: site two.



FIGURE 3: Cashbuild: site three.

context. In addition to the transect walks, the individual interviews conducted with participants revealed the use of local businesses as being part of an important strategy for mobilising the resources in their midst. For example, the union representative at site three said:

*As a school, we need to create partnerships with small and large companies in mobilising resources.*

CSR manager B stated:

*Schools need to identify companies that operate in their area, and to form partnerships that will help in bringing about school resources.*



Principal A at site one noted:

*School stakeholders need to identify companies that will also be able to assist us through their corporate social responsibility initiatives.*

In addition to the transect walks, the voices of the participants point to the importance of having local business as part of a strategy for mobilising resources in their context. The individual interviews that were held with the union representative emphasised the importance of creating partnerships with business as a strategy within their own context. CSR manager A stressed the need for the schools within the rural contexts to identify businesses operating in their area and to form partnerships with them. Principal A further highlighted the importance of identifying local businesses that might be able to assist the school through CSR, as part of a critical school-community partnership for mobilising resources within their own context. We argue, in this study, that boundary-spanning leadership is critical in forming effective school-community partnerships for resource mobilisation efforts to succeed. Van Meerkerk and Edelenbos [63] posit “boundary spanners with different profiles perform different types of boundary-spanning activities” and may “complement one another” (p. 111). RMT [64] identified the private sector as possessing material resources consisting of physical and financial capital, thus the importance of the partnership in terms of mobilising resources.

**5.2. Partnering with Public Institutions.** On the transect walks, the photographs that were taken by the participants of all the sites (see Figures 4–6) revealed that the public sector was part of a crucial strategy for mobilising resources of the school stakeholders in their context. The participants explained that the public sector is a powerful state vehicle in the provision and delivery of services within their own context. They explained that the South African Police Service in Figure 4 is critical in ensuring school safety. For example, Principal B said:

*There was a time in my school where we had a problem of boys forming themselves into gangs based on the village they come from. We used to experience physical fights between these groups and we learned that they were now bringing weapons to the school. The intervention of the SAPS through searching learners for weapons unannounced and also bringing awareness on the negative impact of gangsterism helped in shaping our learners to focus on their education. Our partnership with SAPS is important for school safety and crime awareness.*

Figure 6 of site three shows a partnership strategy between the public sector Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) and the school concerned. The stakeholders involved identified the partnership as being part of a strategy, with the EPWP providing employment to the parents and households involved. According to the participants, the EPWP provides free cleaning and school maintenance services at the school.



FIGURE 4: SAPS: site one.



FIGURE 5: Local municipality: site two.

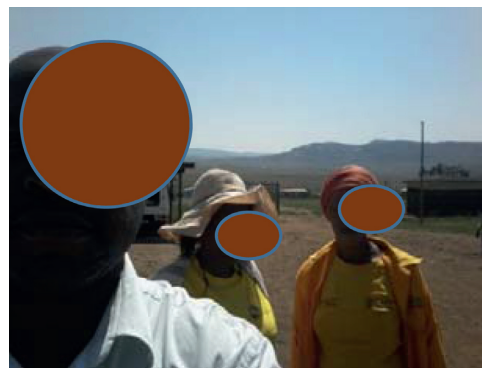


FIGURE 6: School and the EPWP programme: site three.

In addition to the transect walks, the interviews with the stakeholders revealed the importance of the public sector as being part of a strategy for mobilising resources. For example, the SGB teacher B at site two had this to say:

*Government categorises schools. Our school is categorised as a disadvantaged school. Our school uses that to access government redress funds, which funds required school resources.*

SGB parent C at site three noted:

*We need to improve our relationship with the municipality, because the municipality has the responsibility and power to deliver basic resources to our school.*

During individual interviews, the municipality communications manager stated:

*As local government, we provide projects and sister government departments provide programmes.*

CSR manager B acknowledged:

*The blessing of the local municipality in approving a project or support to a school is important before we intervene, as the municipality has the competency to provide basic services to the school.*

The participants above identified government organisations as forming part of a strategy for mobilising resources. SGB teacher B at site two indicated that their school is categorised as a disadvantaged school, which, therefore, enables them to use the categorisation as part of a strategy to access government redress funds. SGB parent C at site three acknowledged collaborating with the municipality as a strategy for mobilising resources, because the municipality has sufficient authority and power to deliver basic services at the local level. The municipality communications manager emphasised collaborating with the government as a strategy, due to the fact that the municipality provided projects, and its sister government departments provided the relevant programmes.

Forming partnerships with public and government institutions is critical to resource mobilisation. Consideration must be given to which boundary-spanning leadership profiles are necessary for the school stakeholders to possess, so that they can effectively form beneficial school-community partnerships that will enhance resource mobilisation within their context. Van Meerkerk and Edelenbos [63] suggest four distinct boundary-spanning profiles: fixer, bridge, broker, and innovator (p. 111). Similarly, Williams [65] provides his typology, including the five roles: reticulist, interpreter, communicator, coordinator, and entrepreneur (p. 58). The RMT [51,66] identifies the public sector as possessing the social-organisational resource, consisting of such public goods as services and civil infrastructure.

**5.3. Partnering with Faith-Based Organisations.** Taken during the transect walk, the photographs of the stakeholders concerned (see Figures 7 and 8) show that the Church and faith-based organisations held potential for the stakeholders to unlock as part of a strategy for mobilising resources within their own context. During the transect walk discussions, the stakeholders involved revealed that the Church had the potential to assist the school in terms of resource mobilisation initiatives, by means of donating to the school and providing free time to assist the school in the mobilising of the relevant resources. SGB teacher A, during the group discussion at site one, indicated that the local Church, which

was a few meters from the school, had always been a resource for the school. Transect walk discussions at all the sites supported the views of SGB teacher A, acknowledging the Church to be a critical resource. Over and above the transect walks, the individual interviews with stakeholders revealed that faith-based organisations form part of a crucial strategy in the rural context. The NPO chairperson was asked during individual interviews about what role the school and Church partnerships could play in the mobilisation of resources. He said the following:

*A pastor and his church can assist the school in mobilising resources, through linking the school with faith-based funders, business and government.*

Principal A at site one, when he was asked a similar question to the above during individual interviews, responded as follows:

*The church has always supported the school through Church donations and physical labour, whenever required by the school.*

The voice of the participants emphasised partnership with the Church as forming part of a strategy for mobilising resources within their own context. The NPO chairperson indicated that partnership with the Church has potential to serve as a critical strategy for the mobilising of resources. He further emphasised that the pastor and the Church might assist in mobilising school resources by means of linking schools with faith-based funders, business, and the government. Principal A at site one noted that the Church has always supported education, and schools in particular, through making donations and providing physical labour. Historically, the Church has played a critical role in the political changes made in South Africa in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, focusing on the dismantling of apartheid, reconciliation, and nation-building [67]. Dweba and Rashe [68] argue that, even in formal education, the Church has played a significant role. Boundary-spanning leadership is seen as being a key factor in the facilitating of effective school-community partnerships with the Church, which enhances the mobilisation of resources within the rural school context [69]. The finding above, which identifies churches as being a crucial resource for school-community partnerships, is in line with the moral resources identified in terms of the RMT [51]. By moral resources, Edwards and Kane [51] mean such resources as solidarity support, legitimacy, and sympathetic support.

**5.4. Partnering with Nonprofit Organisations and with Community-Based Organisations.** The photographs taken by the stakeholders during the transect walks (see Figures 9–11.) revealed that the NPOs were identified as part of a strategy for mobilising resources within their own context. In addition to the transect walks, it emerged in the individual interviews with the stakeholders that the NPOs present a good strategy that may be utilised by the school



FIGURE 7: Church: site one.

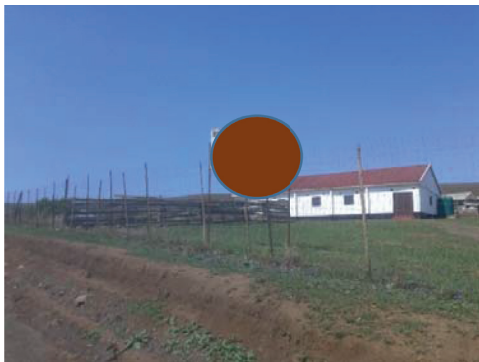


FIGURE 8: Church: site two.



FIGURE 9: Home for orphaned learners: site one.



FIGURE 10: National lotteries commission: site two.



***"Always Needed, Always There"***

FIGURE 11: The South African red cross society: site three.

stakeholders within the rural context. For example, principal A at site one stated:

*We need to form partnerships with non-profit organisations.*

SGB parent C at site two noted:

*The school must create a newsletter that will market the school to NPOs that may assist in mobilising resources.*

When asked during individual interviews regarding the importance of forming partnerships with the NPOs, CSI manager B acknowledged:

*NGOs understand the development speak, and they can be in a position to work with the school in packaging their requests.*

The participants quoted above point to the importance of forming partnerships with the nonprofit sector as part of a strategy within their own context. The individual interviews that were conducted with Principal A added to the call for the need to form partnerships with NPOs. "For partnerships and resource mobilisation to work effectively, multiple boundary-spanning roles—community-based problem solvers, technical experts, internal engagement advocates and engagement champions—must work in harmony" [70] (p. 651). According to Kalenga and Chikoko [71] and RMT theorists [51,66], the call for schools to create partnerships emanates from the quest to meet school resource demands by means of involving additional stakeholders in the community.

5.5. *Partnering with Higher Education Institutions.* Figures 12 and 13, which are photographs that were taken by the participants during the transect walk at site three, show the local Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) College and a final-year TVET student. The participants identified the TVET College and its learners as part of a strategy that might assist in mobilising resources by means of forming synergies that work between the school





FIGURE 12: TVET college: site three.



FIGURE 13: TVET final-year student: site three.

and institutions of higher learning within their own context. The transect walks at site three revealed that the college offers training programmes on animal and plant farming, farm management, soil testing, agriculture, human resources management, financial management, and other critical programmes. It emerged from the transect walk discussions that the school-higher education partnerships presented an in-service training opportunity and expert human resources that might assist the school in mobilising resources within their own context. The discussions that were held with the stakeholders during the transect walk revealed the lack of a partnership, or of any relationship, between the school and the TVET College. The school stakeholders still had to identify areas requiring assistance from the TVET, and they still needed to hold a meeting to initiate and develop a viable mutual partnership. In addition to the transect walk, the interviews with the participants stated the importance of forming school-higher education partnerships as part of a strategy within their own context.

For example, the communications manager at the municipality had the following to say:

*I am saying, higher education and basic education must interlink. You see, there is a TVET College in this area. Every quarter, they produce people qualified in administration and human resources management, but the problem is that children who come from these colleges look for internship with the municipality or government departments.*

Principal B noted:

*Schools should form partnerships with TVET colleges and universities.*

The communications manager suggests a different form of partnership that views schools as assets or resources for the partners with whom they work. In other words, while schools receive support, they can also give support. For example, the participants' voices stated above show that the TVET College could have their students benefit from the local schools by way of granting them internship opportunities. Fick-Cooper et al. [72] explained that boundary-spanning leadership is the capability to create direction, alignment, and commitment across boundaries in service of a higher vision, in terms of which the school stakeholders engage in three strategies, including managing boundaries, forging common ground, and discovering new frontiers to benefit resource mobilisation efforts and beneficial partnerships between the school and higher education institutions.

*5.6. Partnering with Traditional Leadership.* Figure 14 shows photographs of Amakhosi (traditional leaders) from the municipality district that were taken by the participants. The participants identified the forming of partnerships with traditional leadership as a strategy, indicating that the one picture presents all the traditional leaders from the area. During the transect walk, the discussions identified the traditional leadership as being an important link between the local municipality and the school, in terms of basic service delivery to the rural schools. For example, principal A at site one stated that traditional leadership was considered to be an important resource, because such leadership has powers to represent and express school interests and challenges to the government, business, and other supporters. The principals at all the sites concerned expressed a similar view.

CSR manager B and the municipality communications manager were asked about the importance of forming partnerships with traditional leadership as a strategy. The individual interviews revealed the positive potential of a partnership that might result in a strategy for mobilising resources. For example, CSR Manager (CSR) B had the following to say:

*First, I think the traditional leadership council can play a critical role in mobilising resources for schools in their areas. Even today at the office, I was attending to requests from NGOs and schools, and asked my area managers if the applying NGOs or schools did go to the traditional leader (Inkosi) for endorsement and support.*

The municipality communications manager noted:

*Amakhosi participate in the municipality council and they work closely with the municipality in ensuring service delivery in their areas.*





FIGURE 14: Traditional leadership: site one.

The voices of the participants above emphasise the importance of forming partnerships with the Amakhosi as a strategy for mobilising resources. The role of the Amakhosi as community leaders is acknowledged at local, provincial, and national government levels as being conduits for development in their areas. CSR manager B, from a corporate company, further highlighted that their company takes any corporate funding required by the Inkosi on behalf of the school very seriously. She further indicated that, in most cases, her company insists on ensuring that any funding appeals by schools have the blessing of Inkosi and other traditional structures, even before they consider the application. The municipality communications manager emphasised that Amakhosi have both power and authority, and that they partake in the decision-making processes of the municipality through the municipal council. Mbokazi [73] and Mawere et al. [74] argue that traditional leadership is a governance system that fulfils the needs of the rural people, including those of social institutions like schools, in numerous ways. School stakeholders from different sectors, including traditional leadership, are important for the mobilisation of resources within the rural context through school-community partnerships. For example, Williams [65] describes the individuals and their positions and work in the following way:

*Boundary spanners are archetypal networkers, operating in the social interstices of the organizational space. They represent thick nodes radiating connections both within their organization and to and from others in a web-like or reticular fashion. These connections form a rich information highway in which they occupy a pivotal role as intermediaries.* (pp. 58-59)

Thus, forming partnerships with traditional leadership is critical for the success of RM efforts within the rural context [5,73].

**5.7. Partnering with Parents.** Figures 15 and 16 show parental involvement at school level. The participants indicated that the parents were actively involved in contributing towards the school day-to-day costs and the school governing through their participation as SGB members. In the interviews that were conducted at all the sites, the participants



FIGURE 15: Parents' school support: site two.

identified the parents as the main resource in assisting the school to mobilise resources. The transect walk photographs (see Figures 15 and 16) identified the parents as a resource that was ready to serve and to be utilised in mobilising resources within the rural contexts.

In addition to the transect walks, the interviews revealed the importance of forming partnerships with the parents. For example, principal C at site three had the following to say:

*... I want to indicate that parents in this school value education and, despite all odds, they want their children to be educated. When there is a need to discuss with the parents and the community, they all attend and are always committed to assist.*

SGB parent A at site two stated:

*Let me tell you that parents built this school. We have classrooms that were built by parents.*

The transect walks and interviews showed partnerships with parents as being a critical strategy for resource mobilisation within the rural context. As shown in the interviews, the contribution of parents can be seen to be important and, at times, they were the ones who had built the local schools before the government took them over. Myende and Nhlumayo [75] found parents to be an important resource in improving academic performance at schools within the rural context. Similarly, RMT [51] identifies parents as a resource that falls within the ambit of human resources. For school-community partnerships to be sustainable, parents and other school stakeholders have to play their boundary-spanning roles effectively. Van Meerkerk and Edelenbos [63] posit, "boundary spanners with different profiles perform different types of boundary-spanning activities" and may "complement one another" (p. 111). For example, in the present study, the parents assumed a leadership role in fundraising and building classrooms for the school. Purcell et al. [18] posit that various situations and contexts may require a professional boundary spanning to shift their dominant profile according to the particular needs encountered, as the school stakeholders mobilise the available resources.



FIGURE 16: The ECD supported by parents: site three.

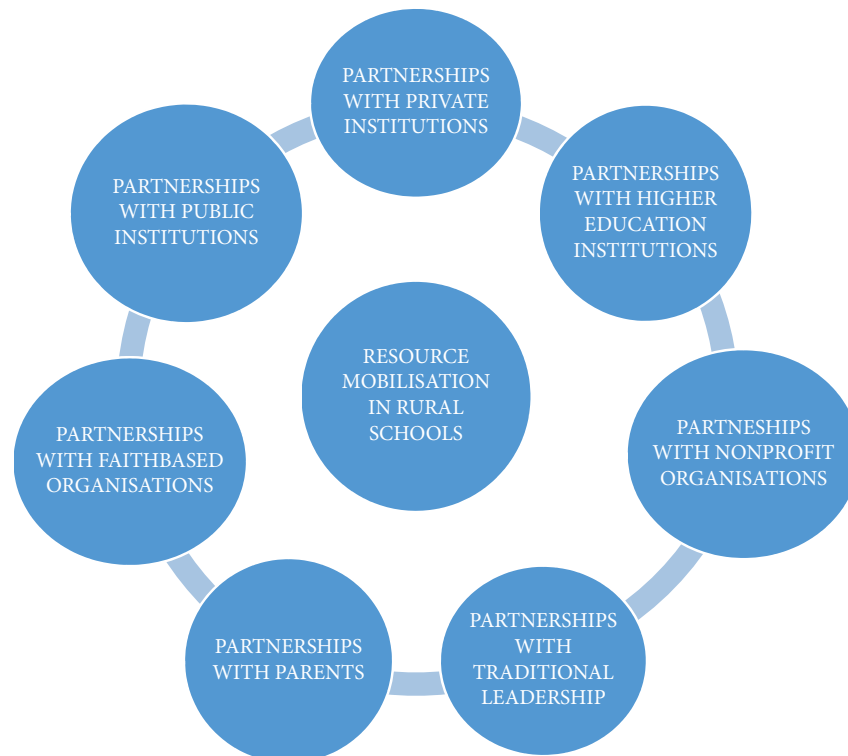


FIGURE 17: Rural school-community partnerships.

## 6. Limitations

Our research is a qualitative study conducted in three schools within rural context. Thus, our findings cannot be extended to other schools. However, we argue that the intention of this study was not to generalise its findings but, rather, to understand a practical case that can be used to unravel discourse about school-community partnerships and its implications for resource mobilisation in rural schools of South Africa. The study recommends further research on school-community partnerships for resource mobilisation within rural contexts. The proposed research should include action research that will test the utilisation of the proposed school-community partnerships in different school contexts as presented in the limitations under this section. Therefore, we are convinced that a study of this magnitude may be conducted in other contexts where there are challenges with mobilising school resources.

## 7. Conclusion and Recommendations

The main research question guiding this study was the following: “Which school-community partnerships are available for rural school stakeholders to utilise in advancing resource mobilisation efforts in their context.” We can argue that the methodology we used in this study enabled school stakeholders to develop new insights about school-community partnerships that may be harnessed to enhance resource mobilisation. For example, the findings led to the conclusion that the seven categories of rural school-community partnerships that exist within the rural context, as well as the stakeholders concerned, may be tapped into to mobilise the necessary resources and to promote the provision of quality education. The main contribution to such mobilisation is made by the private and public sectors, faith-based organisations, NPOs, higher education institutions,

and traditional leadership and the parents, as presented in Figure 17.

While many partnerships were found by the school stakeholders in this study to form strategies for the mobilising of resources, studies [5,8,21,25] have claimed that partnerships, on their own, do not yield favourable outcomes, unless an effort is made to sustain them. We, therefore, recommend that boundary-spanning leadership at all levels and between different partners is critical in supporting resource mobilisation efforts within the rural context. Finally, we recommend all hands on deck from all school stakeholders in forming and sustaining school-community partnerships that will advance the effective mobilisation of resources within the rural school context.

### Data Availability

A Free Attitude interview, as described by Meulenberg-Buskens (1996), and transect walks with photo voice were the main sources of data for this study. Data are available from the authors on a reasonable request at mkhiztr@unisa.ac.za.

### Ethical Approval

The article draws from the thesis conducted by the first author Dr. Themba Ralph Mkhize titled: *Resource mobilisation for the sustainability of schools within rural context: Voices of school stakeholders at UMzimkhulu circuit in Harry Gwala District Municipality*. <https://ukzn-dspace.ukzn.ac.za/handle/10413/17706> (Ethical clearance number: HSS/0340/016D).

### Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and publication of this article.

### Authors' Contributions

Themba Ralph Mkhize conceptualised the study and developed the structure and the focus of each section. He then wrote the introduction and the discussion section and co-wrote the findings section with Dr Joseph Pardon Hungwe. Joseph Pardon Hungwe wrote the literature section and co-wrote the findings section with Themba Ralph Mkhize. Joseph Pardon Hungwe was also responsible for checking the final copy of the manuscript and ensuring that all references were included. Themba Ralph Mkhize generated data. Joseph Pardon Hungwe and Themba Ralph Mkhize were both involved in the analysis process and the development of themes in this article.

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