CHAPTER 4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Chapter 3 reviewed the literature on the quality of education in small rural schools, providing insights into the nature and quality of pedagogical and management processes in satellite primary schools. This chapter presents and justifies the research methodology adopted to generate findings related to the quality of these processes, which form the basis of this book. An interpretive-qualitative research methodology with emphasis on the multiple case study design guided the data generation process. Methodological issues addressed include population and sampling procedures, site and participant selection, data generation methods, strategies for enhancing trustworthiness, and ethical considerations.

Research methodology in any field, whether natural or social sciences, is informed by a philosophical paradigm (Leavy, 2017; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). For this book, data generation was informed by the interpretive research paradigm. Interpretivists argue that reality is socially constructed, and the researcher's role is to interpret this reality from the perspectives of the social actors involved in its construction (Mertens, 2010; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). This research paradigm was adopted to understand the nature and quality of pedagogical and management processes in satellite primary schools from the viewpoints of teachers and TICs.

The ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions of interpretivism informed the data generation process. Ontological assumptions involve a philosophical belief system concerned with the nature of social reality (Taylor *et al.,* 2016; Leavy, 2017; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). A fundamental question addressed in this book is, "What is the nature and quality of pedagogical and management processes in satellite primary schools in the provision of quality education?" Interpretivists reject the positivist notion of a pre-existing

and objective reality waiting to be discovered (MacMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Mertens, 2010; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Instead, they believe that humans construct reality through ongoing interactions with others, attaching meanings to these experiences (Neuman, 2014). Social researchers interpret social reality from the perspectives of the social actors involved in its construction (Mertens, 2010; Braun & Clarke, 2013). Guided by this view, data for the book were generated from teachers and TICs, who serve as key informants in implementing pedagogical and management processes in satellite schools. Interpretivism posits that multiple, fluid, and relative realities are socially constructed through social interaction (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Neuman, 2014). The diverse perspectives of research participants on the nature and quality of pedagogical and management processes in the selected schools were captured through FGIs and in-depth interviews.

Epistemology refers to the philosophical belief system regarding how we know about the world around us and what constitutes true knowledge (Neuman, 2014; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Interpretivists assume that knowledge is rooted in contexts and individuals distinct from the researcher (Mertens, 2010). Consequently, teachers and TICs were interviewed in their respective schools to understand the research problem *in situ*. This approach is essential because humans engage with their social world and make sense of it based on their cultural and historical contexts (Crotty, 1998; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). For interpretivists, knowledge is inductively gained through personal experience within the human community (Crotty, 1998; Taylor *et al.,* 2016; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In other words, they believe that research findings are rooted in the data generated from the field. The nature and quality of pedagogical and management processes in the schools emerged from the data collected during this process. This concept aligns with what interpretivists refer to as grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Braun & Clarke, 2013; Cohen *et al.,* 2018). An inductive approach was utilised to understand the

nature and quality of pedagogical and management processes in the schools.

Methodological assumptions significantly influence how the inquirer gains knowledge about the social world (Cohen *et al.,* 2018). Interpretivists assert that understanding the subjective meanings of social actors occurs through personal interaction, negotiation, and the application of inductive research methodologies (Willig, 2013; Cohen *et al.,* 2018). During the data generation process for this book, personal interaction with research participants was achieved through in-depth interviews and FGIs. As noted by Mertens (2010), such interactions are hermeneutical and dialectical, allowing the researcher to obtain multiple perspectives on the research problem. Open-ended interview questions were employed to capture the diverse viewpoints of the teachers and TICs regarding the nature and quality of pedagogical and management processes in satellite primary schools. The more open the questioning, the better the multiple perspectives of respondents are captured (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This approach not only enriches the findings but also strengthens the overall narrative of the book by providing a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter.

The qualitative research approach, informed by the interpretive paradigm, guided the data generation process. It is a form of inductive research, that focuses on understanding the subjective meanings that individuals or groups ascribe to social situations in their natural settings (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). The primary aim of qualitative research is to generate an insider's view of social reality. Given that the researcher was relatively unfamiliar with pedagogical and management processes in satellite primary schools, the qualitative approach was deemed particularly suitable for the data generation process, allowing for a deeper exploration of the context in which the pedagogical and management processes occur.

According to Taylor *et al.* (2016), the goal of qualitative research is to understand participants from their perspectives and voices. Throughout the data generation process, the researcher focused on learning about the nature and quality of pedagogical and management processes in satellite schools from the teachers and TICs. Utilising in-depth interviews and FGIs enabled the teachers and TICs to express their opinions in detail. This unstructured approach allowed for capturing multiple perspectives on the research problem, enriching the narrative of the book. The inductive nature of qualitative research means that insights, patterns, and themes emerge from the data rather than from preconceived hypotheses (Taylor *et al.,* 2016). Consequently, data were generated from teachers and TICs without beginning with a null hypothesis.

The importance of the natural setting in qualitative research cannot be overstated, as it profoundly influences social realities (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Mertens (2010) emphasizes that data and interpretations are rooted in context, not merely the researcher's constructs. Taylor *et al.* (2016) further argue that an explanation of social reality must account for its natural setting to be complete. Aware of this impact, the researcher conducted interviews in the participants' respective satellite schools, ensuring that contextual conditions affecting pedagogical and management processes were thoroughly explored.

Qualitative research also employs an emergent design, allowing for flexibility throughout the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This adaptability enables researchers to learn from participants and adjust their approach as the data generation process progresses (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Braun & Clarke, 2013; Braun *et al.,* 2018). Initially, the researcher aimed to gather data from a broader range of stakeholders, including Heads of 'mother schools', learners, School Inspectors and parents. However, due to financial and time

constraints, the study ultimately focused on TICs and teachers. This experience underscores Creswell and Creswell's (2018) assertion that qualitative research processes cannot be rigidly predefined; adjustments often occur as data generation begins. Consequently, the interview guides were revised multiple times to reflect this flexible approach.

In qualitative research, there is a strong preference for rich narrative descriptions (Taylor *et al.,* 2016). These descriptions prioritise words or images over numbers, although some quantitative elements may be included (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). As noted by Taylor and Bogdan (1984), cited in Chisaka (2013), presenting data in the participants' own words maintains the human aspect of the research. Accordingly, verbatim citations from participants were extensively used in Chapter 5 to present, analyse, and discuss the findings. These citations effectively capture the voices of the research participants regarding the nature and quality of pedagogical and management processes in satellite primary schools, allowing for a nuanced understanding of the research problem from their perspectives.

The multiple case study design guided the data generation process for this book. This approach involves studying two or more cases of the same phenomenon to deepen understanding (Stake, 2010; Yin, 2018). In the study that was conducted for this book, four selected satellite primary schools were examined in depth. The multiple case study design is particularly effective for generating insights that expand our understanding of a phenomenon as it manifests across different contexts (Willig, 2013). This design was deemed suitable for exploring the nature and quality of pedagogical and management processes in four satellite primary schools.

The logic of a multiple case study lies in the selection of cases that produce similar or contrasting results (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Leedy &

Ormrod, 2015). In this instance, the selected schools were similar in having multi-grade classes but differed significantly in their teaching and learning infrastructure. For example, School A utilised pole, dagga, and grass-thatched structures; School B relied on a non-standard classroom block and a shade; School C repurposed tobacco barns; and School D an incomplete standard classroom block, a shade, and a garage. These four cases were purposively selected to provide a wide spectrum of how pedagogical and management processes in satellite primary schools affect the provision of quality education.

Comparatively, the multiple case study design offers distinct advantages over a single case study. While a single case study allows for an in-depth understanding of one unique situation (Stake, 2010; Yin, 2018), a multiple case study facilitates the comparison of results across two or more cases (Starman, 2013; Yin, 2018). The findings from the four schools were compared to identify commonalities and differences in the nature and quality of pedagogical and management processes. With each new situation examined, the emerging theory was modified to account for all instances related to the phenomenon (Willig, 2013). This approach enriched the data, providing a more detailed understanding of how pedagogical and management processes in satellite primary schools influence the provision of quality education.

Despite its strengths, the multiple case study design also has limitations. Stake (2010) and Yin (2018) note that this design tends to generate large volumes of narrative data, which can be challenging to analyse. This challenge was addressed through the application of thematic analysis (TA) to ensure adequate data analysis and interpretation. Additionally, positivists often critique case study research for its low generalisability (Willig, 2013). However, this limitation did not deter the researcher from adopting the multiple case study design. The primary aim of this book is not to generalise findings but to illuminate how pedagogical and management

processes in satellite primary schools affect the provision of quality education. This focus ultimately enriches the narrative and findings presented in the book.

The population for this study consisted of 55 satellite primary schools in Makonde District, along with their 55 TICs and 709 teachers (DSIR, 2020). Given the impracticality of gathering data from the entire population, a purposive sampling procedure was employed to select the study sites and participants. Qualitative researchers often utilise purposive sampling to identify rich sites and informants relevant to the phenomenon under investigation (Mertens, 2010; Patton, 2015; Cohen *et al.,* 2018). This method involves selecting study sites and participants that provide the most insightful information about the research problem (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Kumar, 2011). While some positivists criticise purposive sampling for its limited representativeness and generalisability, it is advantageous for selecting information-rich sites and informants (Cohen *et al.,* 2018), on the nature and quality of pedagogical and management processes in satellite primary schools.

Based on the findings discussed in Chapter 3, it was assumed that satellite schools with multi-grade classes would serve as rich sites for exploring the research problem. However, the District Schools Inspector (DSI) indicated that most satellite schools in Makonde District employ multi-grade teaching. To address this challenge, the researcher requested the DSI's assistance in purposively selecting four satellite schools with the longest experience in MGT. This approach ensured the selection of sites that could provide valuable insights into the nature and quality of pedagogical and management processes in this school type.

The TICs of the four selected satellite primary schools were also purposively chosen to participate in the study. As noted by Patton (2015) and Schutt (2015), each element in purposive sampling is

selected for a specific purpose. The TICs were included to offer an administrative perspective on the nature and quality of pedagogical and management processes within the schools. Additionally, four teachers with the most extensive teaching experience in satellite schools were selected from each of the four schools, ensuring that the participants were rich informants regarding the research problem.

In qualitative research, samples are typically smaller due to the depth of information desired from the research sites and participants (Mertens, 2010). The purposively selected sample for this study comprised four satellite primary schools, four TICs, and 16 teachers (four from each school with the longest teaching experience in satellite primary schools). **Table 4.1** summarises the study sample.

Table 4.1: Summary of sample size

Cases	**Description**	**Number**	**Sampling procedure**
Schools	Satellite primary schools	4	Purposive
Teachers in Charge	Teaching heads of satellite primary schools	4	Purposive
Teachers	Four teachers from each school with the longest teaching experience in satellite primary schools	16	Purposive

In qualitative research, data are generated rather than merely gathered or collected (Chisaka, 2013). For this book, data were generated through in-depth interviews and FGIs with TICs and teachers, respectively. The generation methods were intentionally designed so that insights from in-depth interviews would be further explored in FGIs, and vice versa. This approach was essential for creating a holistic picture of the nature and quality of pedagogical and management processes in satellite primary schools during the provision of quality education.

As Jones (1985, cited in Cohen *et al.,* 2018) advises, understanding others' constructions of reality requires asking them in ways that reflect their terms rather than those imposed by the researcher. Heeding this counsel, the researcher utilised in-depth interviews to generate data from the TICs. In-depth interviewing involves face-to-face encounters aimed at understanding participants' experiences in their own words (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Taylor *et al.,* 2016). This method centres on exploring the lived experiences of participants (Seidman, 2013; Taylor *et al.,* 2016) regarding the nature and quality of pedagogical and management processes in satellite primary schools. An in-depth interview guide was crafted around the following sub-research questions of the study:

1. What is the nature and quality of pedagogical processes in satellite primary schools in the provision of quality education?
2. How are management processes implemented during the provision of quality education in satellite primary schools?
3. How are the prospects and complexities of quality primary education in satellite primary schools currently managed?
4. How can quality education be improved in satellite primary schools?

To minimise disruption to the teaching and learning process, interviews were conducted in the afternoons when TICs were not teaching. Each interview was conducted in English and lasted at least 45 minutes, recorded using a voice recorder, and later transcribed verbatim.

In-depth interviews feature open-ended questions that enable respondents to express their thoughts in detail and their own words (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Johnson & Christensen, 2014). Open-ended questions allowed TICs to express multiple perspectives on the nature and quality of pedagogical and management processes in their schools. This method also provided opportunities for the researcher to

probe for greater clarity and depth (Seidman, 2013; Johnson & Christensen, 2014), resulting in extensive and rich data.

After transcribing and analysing the initial interviews, follow-up interviews were conducted to seek clarification and additional details. During these follow-ups, the researcher worked to establish trust and rapport, which encouraged participants to provide more information regarding the nature and quality of processes in their schools. After three rounds of follow-up interviews, data saturation was reached, indicating that no new relevant information was emerging (Charmaz, 2014). This saturation served as a confirmation that adequate data had been generated for the book.

One major limitation of in-depth interviewing is that it can be time-consuming (Taylor *et al.,* 2016; Denscombe, 2014). Some interviews extended beyond the planned 45 minutes due to the detailed responses from TICs. However, the researcher viewed this as an opportunity to gather more detailed data rather than a drawback.

FGIs were conducted with teachers at each of the four satellite schools, using the same questions as those posed to the TICs to enhance the trustworthiness of the study. A focus group interview consists of a small group of interviewees brought together by the researcher to explore attitudes, perceptions, feelings, and ideas about a research topic (Denscombe, 2014). For this book, four focus groups were formed, one for each school, each consisting of four teachers. This structure aligns with the recommendation that focus groups should comprise no more than 6 to 8 participants to ensure maximum participation (Flower, 2009; Willig, 2013).

To promote open discussions, all focus groups were homogenous in composition, consisting solely of teachers. The TICs, who are teaching heads in the schools, did not participate in the FGIs. Homogeneity

helps to avoid power dynamics that can inhibit free expression (Willig, 2013).

FGIs thrive in a permissive, accommodating, and non-threatening environment (Chisaka, 2013). Before the interviews, the researcher established ground rules with the participants to create an atmosphere of trust, openness, and confidentiality. Participants agreed that discussions would remain confidential and respected each other's views, facilitating a productive dialogue.

In line with the naturalistic nature of qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018), FGIs were conducted in the natural settings of the participants, that is at their respective schools. Each FGI lasted at least one hour, was conducted in English, and recorded for later transcription.

FGIs offer several advantages that were evident in this study. They generated a wider range of responses compared to individual interviews (Seidman, 2013; Denscombe, 2014; Cohen *et al.,* 2018), resulting in richer and more holistic data. During the FGIs, contributions from some discussants stimulated others to participate, leading to dynamic discussions. Participants often triggered each other's memories of specific events and facts (Taylor *et al.,* 2016), elaborating on and sometimes correcting each other's views. This reflects Willig's (2013) observation that focus groups can challenge and develop beliefs, enhancing the depth and credibility of the research findings. The FGIs were structured around open-ended questions, allowing the researcher to probe for more detail on the nature and quality of pedagogical and management processes in satellite primary schools.

Despite their benefits, FGIs also have limitations, such as the potential for some participants to dominate the discussion (Denscombe, 2014; Cohen *et al.,* 2018). To mitigate this, the researcher encouraged all

participants to engage actively, fostering lively discussions. While facilitating the interviews, it became clear that tactful encouragement was necessary to ensure balanced participation. In some FGIs, discussions occasionally veered off topic, but rather than interrupting, the researcher redirected the conversation with probing questions to maintain focus on the research problem.

The data generated from the in-depth interviews and FGIs were analysed using Thematic Analysis (TA). This method is essential for identifying, analysing, and reporting categories, patterns, or themes within the generated data (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Braun *et al.,* 2018). It involves examining all the data to identify recurring categories and themes that summarise the views of research participants concerning the research questions. TA operates on inductive logic, revealing categories and themes ingrained in the data (Willig, 2013). Consistent with this approach, the researcher did not begin the data analysis process with predefined themes or categories; instead, these were developed from the data itself. Braun and Clarke (2013) outline six stages of TA, which were followed in the analysis of the data.

The first stage of TA is organising the data, which involves compiling all case data into a computer database (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The researcher created a database for each of the four cases, transcribing verbatim the audio-recorded data from interviews with TICs and FGIs with teachers. Handwritten field notes and memos were also typed and included in their respective databases.

Following data organisation, the next stage is immersion in the data. This involves repeatedly reading transcripts and listening to audio recordings to gain a comprehensive understanding of the data before coding (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Braun *et al.,* 2018). The researcher immersed himself in the data by examining the transcripts of the four cases line by line and listening to recorded interviews multiple times.

This process familiarised him with the categories and themes within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2013). As he engaged with the data, he wrote reflective memos in the margins of the transcripts. Memoing, which began during data generation, continued throughout the analysis and discussion phases, capturing significant insights into the nature and quality of pedagogical and management processes in satellite primary schools.

The next stage involves generating codes for the data. In TA, a code is a word, phrase, or symbol identifying a segment of interest (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014; Saldaña, 2016). Coding the data requires a line-by-line review to label relevant segments according to the research questions (Willig, 2013; Saldaña, 2016). The researcher used phrases such as Multi-grade Teaching, management support from the SDC, and large class size for coding data segments. These inductive codes emerged from prolonged immersion in the data, making them data-driven rather than theory-driven (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Braun et al., 2018). The researcher carefully examined each data segment for suitability before assigning codes, reviewing them multiple times in relation to the study's sub-questions. In instances where segments had multiple themes, multiple coding was employed.

Generating categories is the fourth stage of TA, where data segments with similar codes are grouped (Braun & Clarke, 2013). A data category succinctly captures the essence of a data segment (Miles et al., 2014). This process involved extracting data segments with similar codes from the coded databases and consolidating them. Initial categories were created, and following Braun and Clarke's guidance (2013), these categories underwent several reviews, integrating relevant ones into higher-order categories, splitting broader categories, and eliminating those that did not align with the research questions. This iterative review process was consistent with the flexible nature of qualitative research.

The next stage involves generating themes, which includes three components: searching for themes, reviewing themes, and defining and naming themes. A theme captures significant aspects of the data concerning the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Braun *et al.,* 2018). Searching for themes integrates the identified categories into overarching themes and sub-themes, discarding any that are irrelevant. The generated themes were reviewed multiple times, requiring the researcher to continually compare the evolving thematic map with the raw data (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Willig, 2013). This process included collapsing some themes and sub-themes and separating those that were overly broad.

The final stage of TA is producing the research report, which encompasses a comprehensive analysis and write-up that addresses the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2013). This stage integrates relevant literature and the theoretical framework adopted for the study, culminating in the findings presented in this book.

One of the central concerns of qualitative research is to generate credible and authentic findings, making trustworthiness a critical issue. Trustworthiness refers to the extent to which research findings accurately represent the realities of the people or entities under study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). For the study conducted for this book, Lincoln and Guba's (1985) model of trustworthiness was adopted, identifying four key criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility pertains to the degree to which research findings approximate reality and are perceived by participants as true reflections of their lived experiences (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Krefting, 1991). During the study on which this book is based credibility was enhanced through prolonged engagement, member checks, and triangulation.

The prolonged engagement involved conducting three rounds of interviews at each school, following Mertens' (2013) advice to spend sufficient time in the field and avoid premature closure. This approach was essential for building trust and rapport with participants, leading them to share sensitive information about the pedagogical and management processes in satellite schools. The engagement was concluded when emerging themes began to recur.

Member checks are considered the most critical technique for establishing credibility in qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). They involve presenting data and interpretations back to participants for verification and further input (Patton, 2015; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Participants were regularly asked to validate the accuracy of the findings, which helped eliminate misinterpretations and misrepresentations.

Triangulation, another strategy employed, involves using multiple methods, investigators, and data sources to generate corroborating evidence (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). During the study, in-depth interviews were triangulated with FGIs. This method allowed for cross-checking findings across different methods, providing a holistic view of the pedagogical and management processes in satellite primary schools. Additionally, data were generated from multiple sources, that are four satellite schools TICs and teachers, enhancing the richness of the findings and avoiding a narrow perspective.

Transferability refers to the applicability of research findings in other contexts with similar conditions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Bitsch, 2005). The transferability of findings was enhanced through purposive sampling and thick descriptions. Rich information sites and informants were deliberately chosen, and detailed contextual descriptions of the study sites, along with verbatim responses from participants, were provided. This comprehensive information enables readers to assess

the applicability of the findings to similar settings both nationally and internationally.

Dependability indicates the consistency and accuracy of research findings over time (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Bitsch, 2005). A study is deemed dependable if it yields the same results when repeated in similar contexts with the same participants and procedures. The dependability of the study conducted for this book was bolstered through triangulation, member checks, thick descriptions, purposive sampling, and the mechanical recording of interviews. Following Krefting's (1991) guidance, the researcher maintained a detailed audit trail of the data generation, analysis, and interpretation processes, which included raw data, field notes, memos, and documents. This audit trail proved crucial for cross-checking the findings' accuracy.

Confirmability concerns the extent to which data and interpretations reflect the lived experiences of participants, free from the researcher's biases and value judgments (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Krefting (1991) suggests researcher reflexivity as a strategy to enhance confirmability. Throughout the study, the researcher disclosed his assumptions regarding the research problem to participants, ensuring these did not interfere with the findings. Regular member checks further supported this goal, allowing for the incorporation of corrections and additional information into the research findings.

By employing these strategies, the study on which the book is based aimed to enhance the trustworthiness of its findings, ensuring they accurately reflect the realities of pedagogical and management processes in satellite primary schools.

Educational research inevitably involves ethical issues, as it generates data from and about people (Punch, 2014). Therefore, planning for educational research must identify and address these ethical concerns. The following ethical principles were considered during the study:

obtaining approval for conducting the study, voluntary informed consent, privacy, anonymity and confidentiality, and avoidance of harm.

Securing approval or permission to conduct a study is a fundamental starting point for ethical research practice. In educational settings, it is essential to obtain permission from the "gatekeepers", such as the principal, superintendent, or a designated committee (Cohen *et al.,* 2018). For this study, the researcher applied for an Ethical Clearance Certificate from the University of South Africa (UNISA) before data generation, which was granted. Additionally, permission was obtained from the MoPSE Head Office in Harare, the Provincial Education Director (PED) for Mashonaland West Province, and the District Schools Inspector (DSI) for Makonde District. The TICs of the selected schools also approved before data generation commenced.

Participants in research studies have the right to choose whether or not to participate (Kumar, 2011; Schutt, 2015). Therefore, obtaining voluntary informed consent is crucial. This principle stems from the human right to freedom and self-determination, requiring participants to consider the risks and benefits of the study and make informed decisions about their involvement (Neuman, 2014; Cohen *et al.,* 2018). TICs and teachers were informed about the study's nature, purpose, risks, and benefits, and it was emphasised that participation was voluntary. Participants were free to withdraw at any time, and all completed and signed informed consent agreement forms.

Maintaining privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality is a key ethical standard for protecting research participants, and the researcher's commitment to this standard was included in the informed consent agreement (Best & Khan, 2010; Denscombe, 2014). This ethical principle ensures that information provided by participants does not reveal their identities and remains accessible only to authorised

individuals (Kumar, 2011; Cohen *et al.,* 2018). To uphold this principle, participants were instructed not to disclose their names or those of their schools during interviews. The schools were identified in the book as Satellite School A, Satellite School B, Satellite School C, and Satellite School D. Furthermore, participant identities were protected in the book, with individuals referred to as TICs or teachers. The researcher ensured that unauthorised persons could not access the data by securely storing hard copies and protecting electronic files with passwords.

A fundamental concern in all research is to ensure that no participants are harmed as a result of their involvement (Denscombe, 2014; Schutt, 2015). The role of research should ultimately contribute to the welfare of individuals. Researchers must protect participants from any form of harm, including physical, social, psychological, and emotional risks (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Cohen *et al.,* 2018). In the study that was conducted for this book, the researcher prioritised the integrity and dignity of participants, upholding ethical principles to prevent harm.

This chapter presented and justified the research methodology adopted to address the sub-questions outlined in Chapter 1, guided by an interpretive-qualitative research approach that emphasised a multiple case study design. This methodology aligned with the researcher's aim to understand the nature and quality of pedagogical and management processes in satellite schools from the perspectives of the participants. A purposive sampling procedure was used to select rich information study sites and informants, while in-depth interviews and focus group interviews (FGIs) were employed to generate data from the TICs and teachers, respectively. The data were analysed thematically. The chapter also discussed strategies for enhancing trustworthiness and addressed the management of ethical issues throughout the research process. The next chapter will present an

analysis and discussion of the main findings that emerged from the study.