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# CHAPTER 1

## BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

### 1.1 Introduction and Background

The history of South African education has been characterised by the tendency to exclude other stakeholders in its design. This was manifested in its grand plan of apartheid; which sought to exclude Blacks from major decision-making processes. Even with the attempt to include them in the 1980s, through separate development in the homelands, these changes were trivial and cosmetic. This philosophy of exclusiveness, as expressed through the Christian National Education (CNE), affected the entire system of education, and in particular, how schools were to be governed. For example, learners and other stakeholders were excluded in the decision-making processes of the school. This fueled an outcry for inclusive-participatory forms of governance.

When the new government came into power, amongst other things, it was faced with the challenge of undoing these legacies. This was done partly by the introduction of various Acts and statutes; which were meant to promote participatory democratic values of governance. This resulted in the promulgation of the South African Schools Act (SASA) in 1996. It ushered in a completely new dispensation in the history of education in the country, especially the governance of schools. This has amongst other things effected community participation in the governance of public schools. Before this Act came into being, only the principal was responsible for what was happening in the school; with school boards of parents in an advisory capacity only. The spirit of the Act and other statutes at the national and provincial levels, now calls for school-based

decision-making and places the governance of schools into the hands of the school communities.

In order to implement the Act, all public schools in the Limpopo Province, as in all other provinces, were supposed to have elected their school governing bodies (SGBs) in 1997 consisting of parents, educators, non-educators, learners (in the case of secondary schools) and principals as ex-officio members. This was the first move by the Education Department to officially place the control of public schools into the hands of the school community. They expected them to develop and adopt policies that would have a bearing on the provisioning of quality education in classrooms, and be accountable about what is happening at the school. In order to facilitate that, the SASA is clear about the roles and functions that must be performed by the School Governing Body in that regard.

The assumption created by the SASA (1996) and other policy initiatives at both national and provincial levels is that by devolving power to school structures, democratic transformation and improved school performance could be fostered. The assumption that is also created here is that the working practice at the school needs to change so as to make it possible for stakeholders at the school to interact and work together. While implementation of the Act is unfolding, the reality of the situation on the ground is that there seems to be confusion over how the governing body ought to work and collaborate with the principal and his or her team in ensuring that the intention of the Act is effected. The line of demarcation between principals and the governing bodies' roles and functions seems to be misunderstood by those stakeholders. There seems to be a general lack of clarity on who is doing what and how they ought to collaborate and work together (EDM Task Team Report, 1996: 17).

The Act does not provide guidelines on what kinds of structures, processes or procedures need to be in place so as to ensure effective collaboration of the governing bodies and the principals in ensuring that they work together because

their working relations will be the lifeblood of effective self-managing schools. Furthermore, the Act does not empower governing bodies to apply certain measures to ensure compliance with its policies at the school. That means, if the principal does not approve of and/or is not implementing the governing body's policies at the school, there is very little that the governing body can do to enforce compliance. This may affect or undermine the power of the governing body at schools in the long run and thereby perpetuate the previous status of the parents within the old school boards.

This notion of the self-managing school as understood here, therefore, presents a different formal alteration of traditional structures in schools. This means, schools can no longer operate as in the past by having a school board, consisting of parents in an advisory capacity and the principal as an individual having the ultimate say. This is about joint responsibility of stakeholders in ensuring that quality education is provided to all learners. But there is a lack of how this joint responsibility ought to be operationalized in practical terms. This unintended confusion may lead to tensions and conflicts in schools and thereby undermine the intention of the Act.

Since the establishment of SGBs in the Limpopo Province, there are already instances whereby, the issue of power relations within them (SGBs) is beginning to surface by manifesting themselves through tensions that are gradually building up (The Star, 1996: 8). More predominantly, these are manifested through the relationship between the principal and other stakeholders. The Act seems to have assumed a healthy relationship among stakeholders because it does not make any provision on how to mediate or guide this relationship.

The research problem is therefore to look at tensions and power relationships that exist within the SGBs, especially between the principals and other stakeholders.

## **1.2 The problem statement**

Conflict of interests in the SGBs gives rise to power struggles that makes SGB members dysfunctional in the Mahwelereng circuit. The act does not provide guidelines on how SGB members should work together. Therefore, duplication of roles and lack of clarity on policy implementation becomes the order of the day. It seems the act assumed a healthy relationship among stakeholders since it does not make any provision on how to mediate or guide this relationship. As a result, tensions and conflicts manifest itself in schools.

## **1.3 Research questions**

The main questions are:

- What relationships exist among the stakeholders in the SGBs?

Sub questions are:

- What are the tensions and conflicts within the SGBs?
- What are the legislative and policy frameworks on SGBs?
- How are policies on SGBs being implemented?
- How does power evolve among stakeholders at schools?
- What kind of power relations does exist at schools?

## **1.4 Aim of the study**

- To explore relations within School Governing Bodies
- To investigate the functionality of the governing bodies in terms of their allocated powers.
- To investigate the challenges faced by stakeholders in the SGBs.

## 1.5 Rationale

Self-managing schools as intended by the South African School Act, 1996, is about giving the authority and control of schools to the governing bodies and principals so that they can work together to introduce change in school functioning that will impact on teaching and learning. The successful implementation of this Act, will therefore, depend by and large on how these stakeholders relate to each other and collaborate effectively. This may help to reflect best practices that can be used to assist dysfunctional schools.

Tensions and unhealthy relationships that took place between the SGB and principals / educators in some of the Limpopo Province (Western Region) schools due to the introduction of this new power block, have therefore, also heightened the significance of this research. The researcher has therefore, attempted to propose some recommendations, as a contribution that can help to provide a framework or some guidelines that could be used to harmonise, maintain and consolidate the relationship between the most important stakeholders responsible for turning schools into places where quality education could be provided. Possible structures, processes and procedures for maintaining relationships among stakeholders in the SGB has been explored so as to provide schools with mechanisms for taking up and addressing issues that affect them through recognised structures and procedures.

A study of this nature also attempts to encourage people to deal effectively with behaviour on the part of the principals/educators, parents and the governing bodies, which may bring schools into disrepute, endanger the school community and disturb the learning process.

## 1.6 Significance of the study

The study is significant on three points, namely:

- It will contribute to the debates around policy development on school governance,
- It will contribute to the understanding of power relations amongst the stakeholders in the SGBs ,
- It will help policy makers in their implementation of policy on school governance.

## 1.7 Limitation of Research

Although there is literature on what constitutes a successful school-based management system, there is very little written on how those who are entrusted with the task of improving school performance relate to each other. This is because the issue of self-managing schools is a fairly new concept piloted in few countries (Pampallis and Sithole 1996). So, most of the recommendations dealing with how tensions are to be approached, will be based on the responses of those who will be interviewed during the course of the research.

The nature of this research will also impose time constraints with limited funds. Lack of funds for something such as transport costs to schools for interview appointments may impact on the volume of work to be undertaken. It is also not clear as to whether the interviewees will always be available for appointments since most governing body members are not located at the same area or not based at the school on daily basis.

One other problem with this topic that the researcher has chosen is that it is about the type of job he was doing as a deputy principal ten years ago. He is

known to stakeholders who are supposed to be engaged in terms of interviews, questionnaires and so forth; therefore it is not clear as to whether they will feel comfortable in expressing their views and opinions in the presence of someone they know.

This could be addressed through a well-written cover letter to legitimise the study. Alternatively, before any interview is carried out respondents are assured of anonymity and confidentiality with regard to their participation.

## **1.8 Conclusion**

This chapter introduced the problem under investigation, the aim of the study, the research questions that guided the study, definition of some key concepts, and the limitation of the study. In the next chapter, chapter 2, the literature review that informed and guided the methodology of the study is discussed.

# CHAPTER 2

## THE RISE OF THE PHENOMENON SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES

### 2.1 Introduction

This literature review aims at providing a context for this study. First the researcher reviewed literature on the background to school governance policy since 1994. The researcher then reviewed school governance and school funding<sup>1</sup> policy, which together frame the form and function of School Governing Bodies (SGBs), and give a critical analysis of these policies with reference to equity, participation, and quality outcomes. After considering the experience of SGB development in Mahwelereng Circuit, and the power struggles that accompany it. The researcher raises questions about the policy formulation on SGBs and implementation experience thereof. These questions provide the basis for the development of the study tools used for field work and data analysis and the discussion.

### 2.2 Background to school governance policy since 1994

It must be noted that the first democratic elections of 1994 has ushered in a completely new chapter in the history of education in the country by effecting community participation in the governance of public schools. During this time, only the principal was responsible for what was happening in the school with school boards of parents in an advisory capacity. Stakeholders in the education sector call for school based decision making and place the governance of schools into the hands of the entire school communities.

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<sup>1</sup> While this review focuses specifically on policy development with reference to SGBs, funding policies will be discussed to the extent that they illuminate issues surrounding SGB function and form.

According to the ANC Policy Framework for Education and Training (1994), democratic participation in school governance must be distinguished from the responsibilities for the management and administration for the schools, which are vested in school principals. The relationship between the principal and the school board is extremely important for the well being of the school community and the implementation of the school mission. It is essential to establish this relationship on a clear legal footing, so that lines of accountability between the principal, the school board... are understood by all concerned and function in a transparent manner.

According to Lennan (1995) governance in South Africa is broadly understood as a combination of political and institutional power to ensure the effective management of resources for development. She further maintains that if appropriate management system is not developed, the opportunity for building a sustained education system will be lost. Of crucial importance in this dynamic is the tension between where we are now and where we want to be, in the context of managing and structuring the relationship between stakeholders, policies and power networks. This is about the operations and practices at the school level as well as about the process needed to ensure the effective provisioning of quality education.

According to Creese (1995), one of the most common causes of misunderstanding and friction between two groups of people is that neither group has clear and agreed expectations of the other. Sometimes, when we feel that we have been let down, we blame the other party without stopping to ask ourselves whether or not they were clear about the sort of behaviour which we expect of them. So, these are some of the instances that mirrored the situation immediately after 1994.

The South African School Bill was then published in August 1996 and after parliamentary debate, the South African School Act (SASA) was passed in

November 1996 in Cape Town. This was followed by various provincial regulations for the establishment of School Governing Bodies in public schools. What is central about the Act is that it advocates for the decentralisation of power at school based level.

The South African education system is characterised by significant centralisation as well as important elements of decentralisation. There are two important elements of decentralisation: the South African Constitution divides the control of pre-tertiary education between the national and provincial spheres,<sup>2</sup> and school governance is devolved to SGBs.

In their review of the decentralisation debate, Karlsson et al (1999) conclude that the function and form of decentralisation depend on the political and economic context in which decentralisation takes place. They highlight two important conclusions from the international experience with decentralisation efforts:

First, the function and form of decentralisation highlight the competing motivations behind the will to decentralise decision-making power. For example, while decentralisation is often motivated by a desire to increase participation, international experience suggests that decentralisation can serve to undermine participation.<sup>3</sup>

Second, there are different forms of decentralisation, with different degrees of responsibility and power devolved to lower levels, as well as differing locations of accountability.

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<sup>2</sup> For a further discussion of the dynamics of the national – provincial devolution of powers in education see Motala (2000).

<sup>3</sup> For example, authoritarian leadership at local level can undermine meaningful participation by stakeholders even when decision-making power is devolved to the local level. Similarly, centralised solutions do not necessarily lead to greater equality, and decentralisation can contribute to equality if organised carefully.

These conclusions mean that while an examination of the location of power is useful (for example, the official extent of decentralisation or centralisation), this examination on its own cannot predict outcomes such as equity, democratisation, and quality. A more detailed examination of the context, form, and functions within a centralised or decentralised system is required to assess these outcomes.

### **Arguments for centralisation and decentralisation of public sector functions**

<b>Common Arguments for Centralisation</b>	<b>Common Arguments for Decentralisation</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ To maintain control when power is threatened</li> <li>◆ To promote equity in an unequal society, and ensure universal access to quality education across social boundaries and disparities</li> <li>◆ To promote universal values such as equality, anti-racism, anti-sexism</li> <li>◆ To decrease costs</li> <li>◆ To increase the speed of implementation</li> <li>◆ To compensate for the shortage of skills and expertise at lower levels</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ To increase democratic control by allowing community participation in decision making</li> <li>◆ To increase efficiency of resource utilisation (UNHCS, 1989)</li> <li>◆ To promote the ideology of markets and consumer choice</li> <li>◆ To reduce the financial burden on central government by sharing it with local authorities or parents (UNCHS, 1989)</li> <li>◆ To justify or protect local privilege in an unequal society.</li> </ul>

Table 2 arguments for and against centralisation

The above table is a dissection of what has been propounded by Lauglo (1996) cited in Karlsson et al (1999). The present study used the concept of decentralisation to understand challenges that face SGBs in policy

implementation. This enabled the researcher to understand the conceptualisation and the rationale behind the South African School Act as a cornerstone of school governance.

### **2.3 Intersection of traditions**

A commitment to decentralising school governance in South Africa can be traced back to local activist traditions and the specific history of the Parent Teacher Student Associates (PTSAs) of the mid-1980s (Rensburg 1995; Sayed and Carrim, 1997).

The PTSAs of the mid-1980s provided a concrete experience of local governance of schools. They emerged as part of the larger struggle against apartheid, through the efforts of the National Education Crisis Committee (NECC) to provide a voice for education-based resistance. The purpose of PTSAs was to organise local stakeholders (parents, teachers, and students) to guide the running of schools as well as to co-ordinate school-based resistance. Importantly, their tasks involved both decision-making and management, thus blurring the latter-day distinction between 'governance' and 'management' in post-1994 debates.

According to the NECC by the early 1990s there were 2 500 PTSAs across the country. Although many of them subsequently collapsed (due to the combination of operational pressures and the decline in political mobilisation), they demonstrated the role local stakeholders could play in the running of schools. The experience suggested the potential power of local stakeholders in insisting on school quality, and the importance of an organised voice of stakeholders, particularly within disadvantaged communities.

Grounded in another set of political imperatives, parents in predominantly white communities came to support the concept of school governance driven by

parents, as a mechanism to increase parental involvement in education and control the pace of change. In 1992, most white state schools became state-aided Model C schools. Model C was an organisational model open to historically white schools whereby schools would receive a state subsidy and raise the remainder of the school budget through fees.

While subsidised by the state, Model C schools were remarkable for the role of parent-elected governing bodies with a high degree of autonomy, including the right to determine admissions policies and charge school fees. While Model C continued to exclude students on the basis of race – through language-base admission policies – as well as inability to pay fees (Carrim and Mkwanazi, 1996), they did mark an important step towards increased involvement of parents in school governance.

These two traditions (PTSAs and Model C) converged into a powerful consensus around the need to democratise governance in education. While there were different (and opposing) motives for decentralisation, policy documents broadly associated decentralisation with the three core visions of education transformation – democratisation, equity, and quality. Decentralisation was specifically put forward as a means to facilitate more meaningful participation of all stakeholders in the day-to-day functioning of schools. However, as already argued, the realisation of these objectives depends less on the stated motives and more on the form and context framing the decentralisation process.

## **2.4 The policy process: governing bodies**

While there was a consensus over the concept of decentralised governance, there was intense contestation over the form and function of SGBs. The current framework for SGBs must be understood as an outcome of this contested process.

The first policy document to motivate for the formation of governing bodies in South African schools was the White Paper on Education and Training of March 1995. The composition of the governing bodies was to reflect the main stakeholders in the school community, especially parents, as well as demonstrate sensitivity to race and gender representation.

The White Paper articulated the principles underlying the transformation of the education system. These principles included open access to quality education, the redress of educational inequalities, utilisation of state resources to achieve equity, quality improvement, community participation and a sense of 'ownership', democratic governance, a culture of accountability, and financial stability (Gauteng, Gazette, No. 6. 1995).

Following the release of the White Paper, the Minister of Education appointed a commission (the 'Hunter Committee' 1995) to review the organisation, governance, and funding of schools. The report of this committee motivated for school governing bodies to represent all school stakeholders with parents as the majority constituency. The process was followed by two additional White Papers that were finally accepted as the South African Schools Bill. The Schools Bill confirmed the formation of school governing bodies, and began to formulate the scope of tenure, as well as roles and responsibilities.

The process culminated in the South African Schools Act (SASA) adopted in November 1996. SASA created the legal framework for the establishment of SGBs. Governing bodies were to be created as juristic persons and were granted considerable powers related to the governance of schools. As noted by Sayed and Carrim (1997), the *legalisation* of the status of governing bodies raises the question of whether governing bodies will find themselves entrapped in bureaucratic and legalistic processes that might undermine their effectiveness as vehicles of more creative participation.

With reference to composition, SASA prescribes that parents make up the majority of SGB members, and that SGBs must include the principal and elected representatives of educators and non-educator staff. In public schools with grade eight classrooms or higher, learners must be represented on the SGB. These schools must establish a Learner Representative Council (LRC), elected by learners according to provincial guidelines. LRCs are entrusted with the duty of electing learners to serve on the SGB. The Act further allows SGBs to co-opt additional members who do not enjoy voting rights.

With reference to function, SASA prescribed one set of basic functions for all SGBs. Additionally, SGBs have the right to 'apply' to their provincial educational departments for further functions.

**School Promotion:** To promote the best interests of the school and ensure its development, including encouraging school stakeholders to offer voluntary and developmental services to the school.

**School Policy and Protocols:** To determine specific policy and protocol issues at the school level including the adoption of a school constitution, mission statement, code of conduct, language policy, religious policy, and school hours. SGBs may apply to determine extra-mural curriculum and subject options as per provincial policy guidelines.

**Financial Responsibilities:** To assume the responsibility over financial matters at the school including budgeting, financial management, the determination of school fees and additional fundraising. SGBs may apply to purchase textbooks, educational equipment and materials, as well as school services.

**Physical Infrastructure:** To assume responsibility for the upkeep of the physical infrastructure of the school (including buildings and property).

**Recommendation of Teacher Appointments** taking into account issues of redress, equity, and teacher competence.

**Table 2: Core functions of SGBs as outlined in SASA (1996) and amended by the Government Gazette of 28 November 1997**

Tensions between the Department of Education, teachers unions, and some schools ensued due to rights given to SGBs to appoint teachers (DoE, 1996). A school in Cape Town took the Provincial Department of Education to court for refusing the SGB the right to appoint teachers of its choice. The Act was amended in 1997 to curtail the role of SGBs in the appointment of teachers. SGBs were given the right to *recommend* teachers (but not *choose* teachers), taking into account issues of redress, equity, and teacher competence. (Government Gazette: 28 November 1997)

## **2.5 How does school funding fit in?**

The development of school funding policies is crucial to an understanding of the evolution of the function and responsibilities of SGBs. One of the most contested issues surrounding school policy was funding. The policy process was aimed to reconcile the goals of equity and quality education with insufficient state funding and a restrictive macro-economic framework. The Department of Finance was an important player in this process, by prioritising growth over redistribution, with the assumption that growth leads to redistribution in the medium to long term. Redress was based on the containment of subsidisation of the more expensive parts of the system (Department of Finance, 1996: 14). In fact, the relatively privileged sector was small and the mere equalisation of subsidisation could not result in any significant quality improvement within the most disadvantaged part of the public education system (Karlsson et al, 1999).

School funding policy did not enjoy the consensus seen in the governance debates. The White Paper of 1995 did not address issues of school funding in detail. SASA (1996) did not provide a final word on school funding. The legislation outlining the framework for school funding, 'The National Norms and Standards for School Funding', only emerged in 1998.

The Hunter Committee came up with three school-funding options. The first advocated full state funding (with no school-based fund-raising), and the second focused on school-based fund-raising.<sup>4</sup> While international experience suggested that reliance on fund-raising would privilege the already privileged schools, such a policy, it was argued, would allow public funding to be shifted to previously disadvantaged schools. A third option influenced by international consultants allowed governing bodies, with the consent of the majority of parents, to determine school fees to be paid by all parents at the school. These fees would be used at the school to cover costs beyond those covered by state subsidies. This should allow the state to shift its funds from the privileged schools (which would cover costs through fees) to disadvantaged schools.

The National Norms and Standards for School Funding (DoE, 1998) were released in October 1998. It dealt with the funding of public schools, subsidies to independent schools, and the exemption of parents who are unable to pay fees. These guidelines have a profound impact on the function and form of SGBs. Three elements are worth noting in particular:

### ***2.5.1 Budget allocation formulae***

The Norms and Standards provide for the allocation of non-recurrent provincial funds according to an equity-driven formula. In 1998/99 personnel represented 90% of the costs of provincial education departments. The provincial allocation formula is designed to guide the allocation of the remaining non-recurrent 10% of the budget to the poorest public schools and those in the worst physical condition. The formula divides schools into quintiles based on socio-economic status and physical condition of schools. The lower two quintiles (40% of

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<sup>4</sup> Sayed and Carrim (1997: 93) categorise the funding models proposed by the commission as “the minimalist to gradualist approach”. They range from the equitable school-based formula (equal per capita expenditure and no fund-raising by schools), to the partnership approach (parental contribution allows the state to reduce its subsidy).

schools) are allocated 60% of the resources. The most privileged two quintiles are allocated 20% of the resources.

While funds raised by privileged schools allow the state to compensate disadvantaged schools, the proportion of funds allocated to this end represents 10% of provincial spending. Thus, only a negligible amount of public funds can be shifted from advantaged to disadvantaged schools.

### ***2.5.2 Exemption from payment of school fees***

Low-income parents can be exempted from paying school fees if their combined annual gross income is less than 10 times the annual fees per learner. There are several problems with the assumptions underlying this policy:

- It assumes that SGBs have the capacity to determine parents' incomes – a notoriously difficult and sensitive task in the context of the informal economy
- It implies that this task is mechanical (based on a formula), ignoring its social implications, and its potential to undermine social cohesion and solidarity within a school community
- It implies that parents living in poverty will engage constructively with school authorities through a process of 'exemption', underestimating the alienation from bureaucratic processes and power associated with living in deep poverty (Porteus et al, 1998)
- It does not provide for state subsidies to compensate for the parents who receive exemption.

Thus, in reality large numbers of schools in low-income neighbourhoods will not pay school fees, and yet may not apply for exemption. The burden of exemption rests with schools, with the possible result of further alienating the poorest of the poor from the larger school community.

### ***2.5.3 Shifting the financial burden***

Perhaps of most importance, SGBs are allocated the task of reconciling school finances. The responsibility to close the gap between state subsidisation and the financial requirements of the school has become increasingly central to the function of SGBs. They must set school fees (with parental consent), draw up budgets, and raise funds where state subsidies are insufficient. Information from DoE, Gazette, Section 36 (1998) reads:

*'All public school governing bodies are obliged by the Act to support their schools financially as best they can. The Act provides that a governing body must, 'take all reasonable measures within its means to supplement the resources provided by the State in order to improve the quality of education provided by the school' (Section 36) (DoE, 1998: 49).*

## **2.6 Critical concerns: threats to participation, equity and quality**

Given this policy process one takes a step back to consider the form and function of school governing bodies in the context of the three principles driving the policy development process – quality, equity, and participation. The latter principle is of the greatest interest in this review.

Through this process the form and function of school governing bodies is increasingly located at the interface of governance principles and funding policies. While the formation of governing bodies at schools represents a possible vehicle for increased participation, in the larger socio-economic and policy context there is a danger that it will lead to the opposite result.

Beyond the state subsidy, few additional resources come into a school servicing a low-income community. School fees are set at a low level, reflecting the socio-

economic basis of the feeder community,<sup>5</sup> and few parents pay school fees.<sup>6</sup> In high-income communities, the proportion of parents who pay fees and the fees themselves are much higher. The ratio between school fees in low-income and high-income neighbourhoods can easily reach a level of 1:20. This means that although the funding formula favours schools in low-income neighbourhoods (by allocating to them a larger portion of the 10% of the budget spent on non-recurrent costs), the overall volume of resources at schools in high-income neighbourhoods is still much higher, due to parental contributions. The gaps in education provision consequently continue to grow.

In the context of the massive financial constraints of provincial education budgets, the allocation to schools fall short of covering basic provisioning, such as sufficient textbooks, stationery, training, physical school maintenance, and even utility bills. It does not cover materials associated with the new curriculum (learner files, art supplies) and is unable to fund any quality improvement activity emerging from local priorities. The process of closing the gap between the allocated budget and the provision of basic needs is devolved to the SGB.

Quality improvement is a complicated process beyond the scope of this review. It involves more than access to material resources, and includes issues such as relationships, morale, creativity, leadership, and local innovation. However, in the context of current educational transformation, access to resources impacts on quality improvement in at least three ways:

- Lack of resources to cover basic material requirements undermines school quality over time

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<sup>5</sup> Anecdotal evidence suggests that most SGBs in very low-income neighbourhoods set school fees at a low level (about R50 per year). When SGBs suggest higher school fees, parents do not ratify the proposal.

<sup>6</sup> A study in Kathorus documented the school-going economy of children living in very poor households (Porteus et al, 1998). Low school fees (R50 per year) combined with the periodic purchase of a school uniform (excluding transport, food, and other costs) represented 90% of average per person household income of out-of-school families (40% of out-of-age families). Many households clearly cannot afford basic education costs.

Lack of resources to fund new curriculum challenges, creative methodologies, and local ideas for innovation serve to undermine school improvement efforts. The challenges facing school change range from interactive teaching methods to alternative approaches to discipline. These challenges do not rely on material resources, though material provisions facilitate the achievement of many of them. Additional teaching staff hired through school fees decreases teacher loads, making the environment more conducive to individualised attention and child-focused methods. Materials including stationary, learner files and art supplies are key educational resources when facing these challenges.

- The observation of continued inequalities between schools; reflecting the apartheid past, deflate the morale of stakeholders within low-income schools.

When quality does not improve there are many devastating effects on the system. School leadership and educators are faced with a sense of failure. Frustration increases and may be directed at non-paying parents who are labelled as 'lazy', 'ignorant' and 'not respectful.' Parents facing protracted poverty are further alienated from meaningful participation in the life of the school. Middle class and lower middle class households increasingly invest in 'exporting' their children to schools in higher income neighbourhoods, further eroding and ghettoising local schools. Together, these effects exacerbate the cycle during the subsequent year, with serious implications for the three key goals of policy:

**Equity:** This cycle suggests that the outcome of this policy may be increased inequality – between schools, and between learners within a given school. Tensions between the poor and the 'poorest of the poor' in a community increase and erode social cohesion in the community. This may lead children from the most disadvantaged families to leave school altogether (Porteus et al, 1998).

**Participation:** Sayed (1997) argued that the emphasis of SASA on parental participation could benefit middle class communities. Sayed and Carrim (1998)

take this further by suggesting that inclusiveness is tied to discourses of democracy, which privilege the notion of participation. They argue that SASA circumscribes such inclusiveness in ways that may marginalise black working-class and rural families (see also Motala and Mngudi, 1999). There are several concerns regarding active and meaningful participation of the school community, and parents in particular.

Given the evolution of the functions of the SGB (with an increased focus on financial management and legal requirements) the nature of participation may become formal and technocratic with an emphasis on 'technically skilled' participation.<sup>7</sup>

Moonsammy and Hasset (1997) brought evidence from urban low-income communities that suggests that parents experiencing the deepest levels of poverty are often alienated from the social connections and power required to engage in formal civic processes. While SGBs may represent parents, they may fail to represent parents from the most vulnerable families.

SGBs are tasked with facilitating the development of quality at their schools, and embarking on fund-raising efforts to achieve this end. Their success is linked to their ability to raise funds. A tension between SGBs and non-paying parents naturally emerges, which would serve to further alienate such parents from meaningful participation in school life. SGBs would be increasingly chosen on the basis of their capacity to raise funds, or force parents' hands to pay school fees. Rather than a forum for activist and creative participation and debate, the SGBs take on the technocratic role of rent collectors.

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<sup>7</sup> Several authors have commented on the skills required to achieve the functions laid out for SGBs. If SGBs do not gain the required capacities, failures and frustration may entrench an emphasis on technical skills and capacities, at the expense of less technically-oriented participation.

Muller (1998) argues that while SASA is implicitly based on the notion of a community-based school, in reality there is a massive increase of migration in the school system. All parents, even working-class families, try to exercise the right to choose better quality education. Many parents live far from the schools their children attend. Transport, time constraints, and alienation from local social networks militate against meaningful participation in school governance (Motala and Mngudi, 1999).

Underlying much of the concern about participation by parents is the perceived lack of synergy between the responsibilities of local governing bodies, the organic skills, talents and energies of stakeholders, and the extent of the capacity-building programme to bridge the skill gaps, particularly in less resourced environments.

A longitudinal study exploring the implementation of SASA policies (Kgobe, 2000) reported an uneven experience of SGBs largely related to different contexts of schools. SGBs in schools from privileged areas, with a tradition of parental participation, function relatively well, with ability to deal with financial management and fund-raising. In disadvantaged neighbourhoods, problems with SGB functioning are widespread and wide-ranging, expressed in particular by lack of parental participation, and lack of confidence among SGB members when facing school management structures. Kgobe notes that, 'in some schools they were regarded as merely rubber stamps to the decisions of the principal, while in others their existence was seen as hampering the effective functioning of schools, especially as parental participation was not forthcoming' (ibid: 121). Case studies confirmed the importance of on-going support and capacity building of SGBs, to avoid conflict between various levels of the system – particularly given the lack of skill, confidence, time and money among many parents from poorer communities.

**Quality:** A key responsibility for quality improvement is passed by SASA onto the school governing bodies. This responsibility includes issues of budgeting and fund-raising. While school quality is not a manifestation of resources alone, there are profound relationships between resources, inequity, and stakeholder morale. Thus, the tension of managing quality improvement in the context of limited resources is woven into the fabric of SGBs – particularly for SGBs in poorer neighbourhoods (Motala and Mngudi, 1999: 19; Christie and Potterten, 1998).

## **2.7 The structuralism of governance debates**

In the context of education, McLennan (2000) suggests that governance is primarily about the distribution of authority and voice. Authority includes both explicit authority (financial decisions, decisions of policy), as well as implicit authority (the culture and values that determine the ‘way things are done’). The distribution of voice questions, the patterns of communication (both formal and informal), the patterns of listening, and the power associated with the distribution of voice in a given context.

The SASA does not provide guidelines on what kinds of structures, processes or procedures need to be in place so as to ensure effective collaboration of governing bodies and principals in ensuring that they work together effectively. The SASA does not empower governing bodies to apply measures to ensure compliance with its policies at the school level.

The notion of self-managing school as understood here means that schools can no longer operate as in the past by having a school board, consisting of parents in an advisory capacity, and the principal as the ultimate authority. Rather, there must be joint responsibility of stakeholders in ensuring that quality education is provided to all learners. However, there is a lack of clarity on how this joint responsibility ought to be operationalised. This unintended confusion may lead to tensions and conflicts at schools and thereby undermine the intention of the

SASA. Empirical research should consider the different roles of school management and school governance.

Governance policies outline the structure, roles, and functions of different levels of government – their composition, powers, channels of accountability, and rules guiding their operations. SGBs have been regarded as important structural players in the system of educational governance. Non-structural processes of change have been explored to a lesser extent. As McLennan summarises,

*Although the new goal of new education policy is the achievement of equity and quality, existing institutional contexts and the norms and social relations which constitute them contain countervailing tendencies which limit the development of effective governance relationships. An overall lack of attention to institutional contexts and the ways in which relationships are patterned, leads to a focus on structure (McLennan, 2000:21).*

The field of organisational behaviour and change has exploded over the past twenty years, pulling together the fields of politics, psychology, economics and history to understand how and why organisations function and change, or fail to function and stagnate as a result. A consensus of this growing literature is that organisational effectiveness, particularly when confronted by profound change, cannot be guaranteed by a structural analysis alone. System theorists (Senge, 1990; Wheatley 1992) emphasise the importance of understanding organisational behaviour through the lens of larger systems, with an emphasis not only on structure but also on the complex interrelationships within the context of an organisation.

Systems thinkers motivate for a structural analysis only as a part of a larger interdisciplinary analysis that considers the nature and meaning of both the context and organisational characteristics such as power, relationships, trust,

spirit, culture, and capacity. Rather than interpreting policy intention at its face value, theorists of organisational behaviour reach into the 'under currents of reality', both the explicit and tacit (Schon, 1992) assumptions which drive organisational behaviour and performance.

In the context of the subtle ways in which the policy framework may impact on equity, quality, and participation in low-income communities, the evaluation of SGBs must reach beyond issues of structure to a more holistic interpretation of contextual behaviour. It should be noted that the spirit of the South African School Act calls for school based decision-making and place the governance of schools into the hands of the entire school communities. Therefore, the assumption created at both national and provincial levels is that by developing power to school structures, democratic transformation and improved school performance could be fostered. The assumption that is also created here is that the working practices at the school need to change so as to make it possible for stakeholders at the school to interact and work together. This is about giving the authority and control of schools to the governing bodies and principals so that they could work together to introduce change in school functioning that will impact on teaching and learning.

## **2.8 Looking at practice**

It is too early to comment on the experience of the school governance and funding policies of public schools. Schools are still grappling with their tasks, and there have been few systematic attempts to reflect on the implications of this policy implementation process. However, some initial observations can be made. The researcher will briefly outline the experience nationally, and then focus on the more specific experience of Limpopo.

### ***2.8.1 A brief overview of national experience***

The process of establishment of SGBs differed between and within provinces, though overall it has been a success. The first round of SGB elections, however, experienced some problems, from lack of understanding and interest by stakeholders to racism and nepotism. There were widespread problems related to representation, with African parents not being elected at former white and Indian schools, and women being consistently underrepresented specifically within executive positions. There were widespread reports of parents not participating in the elections due to inappropriate election hours (ignoring the needs of working parents), and the long distances between homes and voting sites (particularly in the rural areas).

The training of SGBs was patchy and uneven (Vally, 1998). Financial constraints posed serious difficulties for the training processes to be effective in terms of time span, quality, and iterative methodologies. These are kind of methods that do not take the background of the audience into considerations. These are the kinds of methodologies that do not have impact and have minimal outputs. In 2000, during the first national conference of governing bodies Minister of Education, Dr. Kader Asmal acknowledged the problems that beleaguered the training of SGBs. He asserted that SGB training was frequently designed without a proper analysis of training needs in the context of provincial strategic plans. Training used 'conveyor belt' style with little support and follow-up to address the complex challenges unraveling at the interface of SGBs and schools. This is a once off training without proper follow-ups. Asmal conceded that these shortfalls rendered many SGBs dysfunctional, with members not always attending or participating meaningfully in SGB activities.

There has been a particular set of problems with the development of LRCs at middle and secondary schools, particularly former Model C schools. Historically, learner participation in these schools was through the prefect system whereby

teachers selected student leaders on the basis of academic performance, behaviour, cleanliness, participation in school activities, etc. While the prefect system was based on an assumption that 'teachers know best', the new system of learner representation is based on more learner-centred democratic principles. Tensions emerged at the interface of these two sets of values as the prefect system was maintained alongside the new LRCs. Further, there were widespread problems with the training of members of LRCs (Pampallis and Sithole, 1996).

### ***2.8.2 The national association of school governing bodies***

Another process that may have an impact on the function and form of SGBs is the process to formulate a national association of SGBs. Immediately after the elections of SGBs in 1997, associations of SGBs began to emerge. In their review of this period, Karlsson et al (1999) suggest that while the associations were actively encouraged in one province (Gauteng), elsewhere they emerged organically to share ideas and frustrations (largely with the lack of effective training provided by provincial education departments).

Two national structures were formed as vehicles to represent the national interests of SGBs – the South African Federation for State-Aided Schools (SAFSAS) and the National Association for School Governing Bodies. SAFSAS was formed in 1993 to represent Model C schools. The Federation was criticised as conservative and unrepresentative, and calls were made to form a more representative national association.

A national conference, organised by the Minister of Education, was held in April 2000. The conference was attended by a large number of SGBs, representing diverse school constituencies. The conference served as a forum where problems and frustrations could be raised. Important frustrations shared across SGBs were insufficient training, incomplete training modules, power struggles between SGB constituencies (and particularly between parents and the

principal), the lack of a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of SGBs, and the inadequacy of training and materials for non-literate and non-English-speaking parents.

The conference was not conducted as a forum to facilitate a plan of action for the launch of an ongoing national association. In his concluding remarks at the conference, Director-General of Education, Mr Thami Mseleku, said that no resolution or binding decisions could be taken because the conference had no legal national mandate. The form and context undermined a more organic emergence of visions and plans to launch a national organising forum for SGBs.

Where the process will go from here is unclear. Whether or not a national body for SGBs is launched, and what function and form it adopts, will have an impact on the character and spirit of SGBs in the future.

The achievements represented by the outcomes of the impact study of SGBs in Gauteng (Khulisa, 1999) should be celebrated. In less than three years it appears that the majority of schools in Gauteng have established a governing body, as outlined by the policy framework. However, this review of the policy process, and particularly the evolution of the form and function of SGBs, has tried to suggest that the true 'impact' of SGBs will rest less with their structural form than with the way that the 'form' is interpreted and translated within the dynamic context of South African schools. This review raises several questions – many of which reach beyond questions of structure – which must be answered before we can begin to understand the role of SGBs with reference to the objectives of equity, participation, and quality. These issues and others are outlined in the following sections, which detail the findings of the empirical study.

It must be understood that at the outset of the study the researcher reviewed almost all available and relevant documents with the view to gather relevant information before developing research instruments, administering and

conducting interviews and analysing data. The two aims of this phase were to gather more information about the roles and challenges faced by SGBs at school based level. During the process, the researcher scrutinised and reviewed documents produced in the process of supporting the conceptualisation of school governance with special reference to the South African School Act. This laid a foundation to the second stage of the study, the research design and the entire methodology.

## **2.9 Conclusion**

It is within this perspective that the study found a home for the location of the problem of power relationships in SGBs. The study is located under the circumstances prevailed within the duration of the study. The next chapter deals with the methodology that was followed in undertaking the study.

# CHAPTER 3

## METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research strategy that was used for the study. First it outlines the research design, which is then followed by sampling and data collection methods used. It gives a detailed explanation of data capturing, cleaning and analysis. A profile of the schools used, followed by ethical as well as validity and reliability considerations are also outlined.

### 3.2 Research Approach

To achieve the expected outcomes, the researcher used both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative approach was used to gain an insight of the problem in power relations within SGBs at the Mahwelereng circuit. Here a survey design was followed to gain a broad perspective of the problem, which allowed the researcher to then make a follow up on those schools that were flash points. The survey questions also assessed the institutional and human resource capacity of schools in implementing their programmes and the adequacy of the project materials with regard to the means to be used for implementation. The survey gauged their impressions of their participation in implementing policies.

It was from these schools that a follow up was made for an in-depth understanding of the problem. Here a case study design was adopted. The in-depth interviews are qualitative in nature and allow for a more nuanced and deeper understanding of the topic in question. They also allow for a flexible

approach to data gathering, which encouraged respondent participation in the study. This approach provided the researcher with the opportunity to deal with issues not covered in the survey and further probed interesting issues emanating from the survey.

Data gathering, both quantitatively and qualitatively, took three months to complete.

### **3.3 Research Design**

The researcher selected both the quantitative and qualitative methodologies in data gathering. The method used in quantitative research was a survey. The questionnaire was structured and had a list of answers that the respondents choose from. Data here was represented by numbers and this allowed the researcher to generalize results beyond just the set of respondents that were interviewed.

The researcher also used the qualitative research methodology that involves in-depth collection and analysis of information from a smaller group of respondents. Qualitative research helped the researcher to understand issues around governance in more detail. It allowed the researcher to distinguish between what SGB members say and what SGB members do. This was done purposively through case studies.

### **3.4 Sampling**

For the quantitative data a randomly sampling strategy was used. The researcher selected 4 schools out of 24 schools within the Mahwelereng circuit due to their relative close proximity and the fact that the research task was not viewed as insurmountable. Of the 4 schools, 2 were primary schools while 2 were secondary schools. It is noteworthy that the Mahwelereng circuit comprises of two villages and one township, viz. Madiba, Tshamahanzi and Mahwelereng Township. Schools across these three areas formed part of the study.

For the qualitative data, sampling of the participants was done purposively since the nature of the research question required individuals that were au fait with issues around governance and policies connected therewith. Three relevant participants were selected per school, viz. a teacher liaison officer, the principal and the chairperson of the SGB. For quantitative data, the same schools were used as sites for data collection. However, only a few respondents were selected by means of a purposive strategy.

### **3.4 Data Collection**

The following data gathering techniques were adopted:

- Literature Review
- Questionnaires for the quantitative data
- Semi-structured interviews for the qualitative data

#### **3.4.1 Literature Review**

From the onset, the researcher had to consult relevant literature to assist in answering the research question, informing the choice of the research methodology and in the development of an optimal instrument. The first month of the study required a great labour, however after the initial submission of the research proposal, the reference to applicable literature was done on a less cumbersome but continuous basis.

The two key aims of this phase of the study were:

- To determine the components of the SASA implementation process which have already been effectively dealt with and to incorporate these inputs into the study
- To identify the key issues that need to be considered when designing the research instruments

In addition, the researcher reviewed documents produced in the process of supporting the conceptualisation of some policies.

### **3.4.2 Questionnaire**

In order to gain a broad perspective of the state of affairs in school governance and in particular the relationships that exist among the stakeholders a questionnaire was administered at four schools, where three respondents at each school was given a questionnaire to complete. The questionnaire was made up of five main items, i.e. roles and responsibilities, school finances, participation and power, relationships, qualities and skills. It should also be mentioned that there was no piloting of the questionnaire. The questionnaire was approved by the supervisor and used for data collection

### **3.4.3 Semi-structured interviews**

Prior to the commencement of this phase, the researcher had to request permission to visit schools from the Mahwelereng Circuit Office. Permission was in fact granted within a day and the researcher proceeded to set up appointments with the respective schools. Appointments with all schools were secured in less than a week.

The researcher conducted 12 interviews with key stakeholders at schools. This was completed at 4 schools distributed as follows:

- 2 primary schools and
- 2 secondary schools

The two main challenges encountered related to the unavailability of some SGB chairpersons during the day due to work constraints and the lack of designated personnel dealing with teacher liaison. In such cases, appointments with SGB members prejudiced by work constraints, were rescheduled to the evenings and in instances where there was an absence of teacher liaison officers, these were then substituted by the longest serving educator at the particular school.

## **3.5 Data Analysis**

### **3.5.1 Analysis Plan**

The analysis took cognisance of the following:

- Aims and objectives of the study
- Agreed broad areas for the study

The analysis was two-pronged:

- Quantitative data was analysed using a simple Arithmetic, since the numbers could be calculated easily without applying any mental gymnastics. This included running frequencies, cross tabs and recoding some of the open-ended questions.
- Qualitative data analysis involved a search for general statements about relationships amongst categories of data.

### **3.5.2 Logistical / Physical / Resources**

Under this section the focus was on the responses with regard to the quantity and quality of resources available. This would give the department and other interest parties a sense of the current state of delivery on policy implementation.

The following aspects formed sub-themes:

- Perceptions of the availability of physical resources such as training materials and the infrastructure.
- Human resources who included educators, principals and support from the department. This also included the educational level of SGB chairpersons
- Views pertaining to the functioning of schools with special reference to the SGB involvement in developing the code of conduct and mission statements of the school
- Perceptions around the development of policies at school based level such as the Religious policy, Language policy, admission's policy, etc.

### **3.5.3 Policy Implementation**

The focus was on the responses pertaining to challenges on consultation on policy initiatives, policy implementation and the effectiveness of policies being transmitted. The findings are indicator as to whether fundamental change regarding policy is needed or not.

### **3.5.4 Communication / Relationship**

Responses with regard to the quality of communication and how often it takes place was investigated. The section will also focus on elicited responses in relation to the support systems in place and mutual trust that exists amongst relevant stakeholders.

### **3.5.5 Governance**

The main line of thought under this section evolved around responses on representation and meaningful participation of various stakeholders at school level. Subject to the outcome of the foregone the researcher had an idea as to whether structures on governance are democratic or not.

Data was analysed via a simple Arithmetic exercise. Comparisons of open-ended responses from the various groups of participants (i.e. SGB chairpersons, principals, educators, etc) were made and these were then contrasted or aligned accordingly.

Responses were also broadly categorised and where plausible, new themes were then constructed, which at times, illuminated issues around the broad themes.

## **3.6 Schools' profile and experience in the field**

Schools at Mahwelereng circuit are a mixture of good and bad in as far as facilities go. Some schools, especially at the villages, have no running water, library, sports fields or computer centres. On the other hand, some schools at the township boast well-equipped modern laboratories which were donated from various companies. Almost all schools in the township have electricity, running

water and scientific labs. Some of them have computer centres with internet. All schools at the villages and the township have enough desks, chairs and enough teachers (The Star, 1996)

Classrooms are not enough. At the villages there are classrooms built by the community to ease overcrowding.

School fees are in the region of R100 for learners in the primary section and R200 for their counterparts in Grades 8 to 12. There are exceptions though, especially for learners from the needy families. Schools have joined thousands of others in the province which have been declared no-fee schools and relied solely on a government subsidy.

At the villages, the environment at schools was encouraging. It was so quiet in the corridors and teachers seemed to be dedicated. Teachers teach until late, on weekends and the researcher was told they work also during holidays. They indicated that teaching commences on the first day of school because registration of learners is always done in October the previous year.

At one secondary school in the township, the situation proved different. When the siren rang to signal the start of classes, learners were standing in groups around the school grounds cracking jokes. A group of learners nonchalantly ignore the siren strolling down a narrow street that leads to the school gates. Two teachers were lazily chasing learners into classes. Some just laugh at the impromptu game of cat and mouse, before disappearing into classes.

### **3.7 Conclusion**

The researcher can report with confidence that the study went well with few challenges that were manageable. The findings thereof, give a succinct reflection of what transpired in the field and the level of enthusiasm portrait by the participants during the study.

# CHAPTER 4

## DATA PRESENTATION

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter encompasses the exploration of relationships that currently exist amongst relevant stakeholders at school level (educators, principals and parents). It also seeks to answer questions pertaining to the kind of a relationship that exists at the selected schools, be it strained or smooth. The chapter presents results from both questionnaires and interviews.

### 4.2 Results from questionnaires

#### 4.2.1 Policy implementation

This topic sought to elucidate issues pertaining to policy implementation and to the extent to which frictions and tensions are experienced in the process. In particular, the objective is to address questions with regard to power relations that exist, how effectively policies are being transmitted and the extent to which consultation on these matters occurs under the circumstances. The sources of data in this regard consisted of educators, principals and SGB members. A number of tables hereunder are intended to aid the reader in the consequent quantitative exposition of perceptions of respondents on relationships with regard to policy matters.

The table below is a result of a probe into the perceptions of principals and SGB members regarding tensions that are there in the formulation of policies pertaining to admission, school fees, language, religion and the code of conduct.

The ideal scenario is one whereby SGB members and principals concur that parental involvement relating to policies leaves much to be desired.

	Parents			Principals		
	Very involved	Somewhat involved	Not involved	Very involved	Somewhat involved	Not involved
Admission	0	0	4		3	1
School fees	0	0	4		3	1
Uniforms	0	0	4	1	2	1
Language	0	0	4		3	1
Religious	0	0	4	0	4	0
Code of conduct	0	0	4		3	1

**Table 1: SGB involvement on policy matters**

On closer observation, the above table reveals that the largest number of both SGB members and principals felt that the involvement of parents in policy issues was 'not involved' as opposed to the high number contained under the heading 'very involved'. A careful examination of the above table also reveals that the lowest number of respondents preferred to categorise the extent of parental involvement with regards to the policy on school fees as 'not involved'. This seems to be an area of genuine concern to respondents, since it undermines the integrity of parents in dealing with financial issues. Parents always suspect that monies are misappropriated at school by the school management. These kinds of perceptions cause tensions between parents and principals at schools. Most of the parents advocate transparency when coming to finances. They would like to be involved at all levels in order to account to money issues. Indeed, the South

African Schools Act compels schools to ensure that ownership of such policies is in the hands of parents / community at large.

The discouraging figures of the preceding table is accentuated by the number of the respondents below which captures the negative views of SGB members with regards to policy implementation at school level.

	<i>Agree</i>	<i>No opinion</i>	<i>Disagree</i>
I have been given sufficient information about these policies	0	0	4
The school has been able to implement these policies properly	0	1	3
School funds are used to improve the quality of education	0	0	4
The principal decides what the school funds are used for	0	0	4
Parents are involved in deciding what the school funds are used for	0	0	4
Policies are explained well and understood by most parents	0	1	3
The SGB contributes to more effective teaching and learning in the school	0	0	4
The SGB contributes to more effective functioning of the school	0	0	4

**Table 2: SGBs' views on policy implementation**

From the table above one notices that all 4 SGB members ‘agreed’ that policies were never explained well and understood by most parents and they indicated that schools have not been able to implement these policies properly. One is inclined to deduce that these inconsistencies and tensions that exist contain an element of mistrust and communication breakdown, namely poor transference of information to parents led to ineffective implementation of policies at school level.

Further attestation to the above would be laudable and hence necessitates a further probe that seeks to expose such negation if ever it exists, into principals’ perceptions on parental involvement on policy matters. The objective of the table hereunder is precisely to examine principals’ perceptions on parental involvement on such matters.

	<b>Agree</b>	<b>No opinion</b>	<b>Disagree</b>
Parents have been given sufficient information about these policies	4	0	0
The school has been able to implement these policies properly	4	0	0
School funds are used to improve the quality of education	4	0	0
The principal decides what the school funds are used for	0	3	1
Parents are involved in deciding what the school funds are used for	4	0	0
Policies are explained well and understood by most parents	4	0	0
The SGB contributes to more effective teaching and learning in the school	1	3	0
The SGB contributes to more effective functioning of the school	4	0	0

**Table 3: Principals’ views on policy implementation**

The pattern of the perceptions of principals – as reflected by their response - with regard to parents’ conceptual understanding of the policies that has emerged in table 2 above, is a contradiction of the views of principals with regards to policy implementation at school based level. This scenario is suggestive of a possible strained relationship that exists between principals and SGB members.

What emanates from tables 1 to 3 above seem to suggest that there is general disagreement amongst principals and SGB members pertaining to the communication of policy matters and the implementation of such policies. This inevitably causes tensions at schools between the two parties.

The following was an attempt to assess whether stakeholders are satisfied or dissatisfied in relation to policies on language, whether stakeholders accede to various religious and national events, whether stakeholders find the payment of school fees easy or difficult and finally whether stakeholders have referred to the code of conduct.

	<b>Educators</b>	<b>Principals</b>	<b>Parents</b>
Yes	4	4	1
No	0	0	3

**Table 4: Satisfaction with language policy**

Clearly, the message from the figures is one that conveys dissatisfaction amongst stakeholders with regard to the various language policies at schools. This clearly tends to corroborate the views expressed by respondents in tables 1 to 3. Parents would like to use mother tongue as an official language at school while principals prefer English.

The table below serves as a depiction of the extent of the utilisation and practicalisation of the policy on the code of conduct. With regards to this table, the researcher credited the reader with enough common sense to read and interpret the figures.

	<b>Educators</b>	<b>Principals</b>	<b>Parents</b>
Yes	1	3	0
No	3	1	4

**Table 5: Respondents that referred to code of conduct**

The vast majority of respondents opted to respond to the ‘no’ category as is evident in the table above. In this case the ‘yes’ refers to respondents who made an effort to be informed about, or to utilise the relevant code. It is highly discouraging that the bulk of stakeholders deem this a futile referral for guidance on disciplinary and related issues.

The probe into the policy on religion with reference to evoked responses as captured in the table hereunder admittedly does not do justice to a comprehensive attempt to capture the accommodation of diversity in its current form. However, for the sake of brevity, this was the most appealing and pragmatic path to pursue.

	Parents			Principals		
	Yes	No	N =	Yes	No	N =
Ramadaan	1	3	4	0	4	4
Human Rights Day	1	3	4	4	0	4
Good Friday	4	0	4	4	0	4

**Table 6: Celebration of cultural or religious events**

The first row ‘Ramadaan’, is more or less a reflection of the demographic realities that exist in South African society. One SGB member indicated that ‘Ramadaan’ was being celebrated at schools as opposed to 3 that indicated the contrary. The reader should be wary that the 3 of the respondents that responded ‘no’, is not the direct opposite of the 1, but merely a reflection of the demographics. The appearance of the proportions that refer to ‘Good Friday’ is therefore not coincidental, but merely a confirmation of an obvious notion. The trend in the SGBs’ responses seems inextricably bound up with the responses of the sample of principals, and therefore, the previous warning to the reader necessarily extends to the principal respondents’ numbers.

The current expectation in the South African society is that events like Human Rights Day should ideally be a celebration of humanity in which every citizen participates. The responses of 4 of the two groups of respondents suggest conformity to this expectation. However, the remainder is food for thought. However, tensions do exist, especially the manner in which Good Friday is celebrated. Most of the SGB members prefer their kids to be released a day before in order to attend rituals at the Zion Christian Church. These in most cases do not auger well with some principals. They wanted kids to close schools at the same day.

## 4.2.2 Governance

Needless to say, issues of governance and policy implementation cannot be divorced from each other. This topic is an attempt at addressing fundamental questions pertaining to frictions that are there within relevant stakeholders in the development policies and the extent to which democratisation of such structures has occurred.

The next table gives an impression of SGB members' perceptions of stakeholders that wield power at schools.

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
Parents	1	3
Educators	2	2
Principal	4	0

**Table 7: SGBs on power concentration within schools**

With no intention to undermine the intended audience, the researcher shall give a meticulous account of the meaning of the figures as contained here above. The table informs us that 1, 2 and 4 of the respondents were of the notion that the Principals and educators hold the most power at schools, respectively. This definitely reflects a discouraging scenario since this suggests that democracy seems not to be the order of the day at schools. At some schools there are fights with respect to power positions.

The above figures should be key when one interprets the number of respondents 1 who were of the view that SGBs do not wield most power at schools. Having said that, the 2 and the 4 of the respondents, which is the number reflected on the principals and the educators respectively, is clearly a concern since the constitution advocates maximum participation of all stakeholders.

### **4.3 Results from interviews**

To gain another perspective on the functioning of SGBs at school level, the researcher conducted interviews with the principals, educators and SGB members, especially parents. They impressed on areas identified within the scope of the study. It must be mentioned that they were free in answering these questions without any intimidation.

#### **4.3.1 Formulation of mission and vision**

SGBs were afforded the opportunity to impress on their role in formulating mission statements and the vision of their schools. SGBs members reported that they had not contributed to the formulation of the vision and mission statement of their schools. Most of the SGB members (parent) claimed not to have been involved in the process of formulating a vision. One educator reported that it was formulated at the district level in consultation with the principal and imposed on the school. To confirm this, another educator representative said:

*We were not involved in the process. The principal came up with a ready-made vision and mission statement, which we were forced to endorse. It does not represent our aspirations. Therefore, we regard this as his vision and mission and not as our statement.*

This educator corroborates what was alluded by the parents' representatives. They further indicated that the whole process has caused tensions and combatant relationships amongst SGB members. They do not even talk to each other at one primary school.

Principals, who claim that parents were involved in developing visions and missions, stated that SGB members proved to have internalised what a vision and a mission entails. They understand the school's mission to be a set of means to realise the school's vision. The mission describes what the school does, for whom, and in what way it is unique. In other words, it describes the reasons for the school's existence. SGB members correctly defined a mission as follows:

- It gives direction to the school, and guides the school's work, actions and growth
- It sets a framework against which the school can measure its work
- It guides the school to identify what it is meant to do, how to do it, and why.

A parent serving on a SGB stated the following:

*You need to know where the school wants to be in three years time. But you also need to know what you are facing now, both inside and outside the school. This is important so that you know where you are really starting from, so that you can work out how to move forward from there.*

The challenge schools are facing is to ensure equal participation among stakeholders in developing the vision and the mission statements. It is paramount that a vision be shared among relevant stakeholders. Therefore, at schools where SGB members are told what to do and are also compelled to conform to the statement presented, there are tensions and a level of mistrust.

### **4.3.2 Admission policy**

SGBs also impressed on their involvement of drawing the admission policy. Most of the SGB members stated that they were not involved in developing admission policies. These were decided on at the district level. As a result, this caused tensions at some schools since they fail to understand how certain conclusions were reached without their inputs. The point in case is the age limit outlined in the provincial admission policy document, which requires turning away children who would not turn seven during the year. At one school in Tshamahanzi village parents had to take it to the streets, much against the principal as an attempt to force him admits learners who are underage. Many parents argued that school readiness reflects dynamics emanating from the ground, and that the SGBs should set admission requirements. The emphasis should be on broadening access to educational opportunities and developing conditions for successful admission into and attendance at schools.

Parents in Tshamahanzi claim that if they were involved they would have proposed an open learning system characterised by removal of restrictions, exclusions and privileges, and recognition of learners' background. For example, in their village, child labour is still in practice and children look after cattle up until the age of +- ten years before going to school. Therefore, they suggested that admission be left at the hands of school governing bodies. If the child is at the age of ten or above, they suggested a form of assessment that would place the learner at the appropriate grade. This recognises that the learner entering the school system at this age will be bringing with him/her life experience involving the development of varied skills, informal learning experiences and developed intellectual capacities. These learners cannot be referred to adult education centres because there is no nationally-approved curriculum suitable to their needs; no funding from the government to sustain their existence, no accredited courses, and no clear integrated monitoring system run by the Department.

Principals at primary schools indicated that they found it difficult to regulate the educator-learner ratio as stipulated in the provincial regulations, because of the attitude of feeding schools which send a large number of learners for admission. It is very difficult to reject some of the learners, as an agreement has been reached between the community and the schools.

At secondary level, principals face similar problems. They indicated that there is a pressure group advocating the principle of “admit one – admit all”, as is done in Mahwelereng Township for instance, by a forum which comprises learner organisations, educator organisations, educational non-governmental organisations and interested members of the community. This forum puts pressure on schools to allow admission to all. Non-involvement of relevant stakeholders in the process of drawing the admission policy at school level has caused stir in the community and everybody want his voice to be heard in this regard.

### **4.3.3 Language policy**

Role-players at schools indicated that government is moving very slowly in implementing language policy. At the moment, English and Afrikaans are still the predominant languages used in learning and teaching, and are the preferred subject choices offered by the curriculum. The notion of eleven official languages of equal status remains on paper, without impact on the situation at the schools. Almost all parents’ and educators’ representatives indicated dissatisfaction with regards to language policy at schools.

Parents welcomed the language policy as outlined in SASA. They all affirmed the right of learners to choose the language medium for instruction and supported the principle of affirmative action with regard to languages whose status was undermined under the previous regime. They considered language policy from

the perspective of the access to power and employment that it offers; educational equity; and feasibility in relation to available resources. But, there are divergent views in the manner in which the policy is implemented. This causes unnecessary friction at schools since the SMTs do not consult them on pertinent issues regarding the policy.

SGB members indicated that textbooks are still written primarily in English and Afrikaans, restricting the choices of educators. Therefore, they propose a second stage for the medium term, in which subjects would be provided in one or two additional South African languages across the different grades.

Although SGBs reported that they were not involved in developing language policy, at one school in Mahwelereng Township SGBs played an active role in this regard. They added that they use Ndebele or Northern Sotho as a medium of instruction especially at parents' meetings.

#### **4.3.4 Code of conduct**

The researcher wanted to find out as to whether there are tensions amongst SGB members with regards to the development of the code of conduct at schools. Principals at two secondary schools told me that they have a code of conduct, developed with the involvement of SGB members. SGB members attached to these schools disputed the statement. Following provincial guidelines, the document covers a number of areas such as (Gauteng, Gazette, No 6, 1995):

- Responsibility of parents – ensuring that all learners come to school regularly, on time, refreshed, alert, correctly attired and determined to work
- Responsibility of learners – ensuring that all learners attend school regularly, punctually, ready to learn and display an interest in all school activities

- Responsibility of educators – supporting the authority and discipline of the school, helping learners to cope with their academic requirements, exercising self discipline and self control
- Care of school property and equipment – all members of the school community must ensure that school furniture, equipment and grounds are properly maintained.

However, at the other two remaining schools, SGB members claimed not to have been consulted when a code of conduct was developed at their schools. In most of these schools it is alleged that principals have designed the code of conduct on behalf of all stakeholders. The problem that these schools are facing is that the existing code of conduct is being violated and defied by the SGB members and learners.

#### **4.3.5 Hiring of staff**

SASA gives parents the right to recommend the appointment of teachers. At two schools sampled for the study, parents are not involved in the appointment of educators; where involved, their role become minimal. This has resulted in some of the parents taking the matter to the streets in the form of protest. In some township schools, recommendations for the appointment of additional staff were made, but these recommendations were not always approved by the Circuit Office. This also resulted in parents being at loggerheads with school authorities.

The majority of stakeholders who were interviewed felt that parents should have a role in recommending educators for appointment. The main reason raised for that was that they have the right to decide on who is a suitable educator for their children. It was felt by parents that their involvement should include the interviewing process, short-listing and final decision on the candidates. This was especially the case, if they are helping to raise funds for extra educators to be employed. However, some educators who were interviewed felt that most

parents do not have the capacity to make decisions on the appointment of teachers, and that it is an area that requires expertise in the field. There is an ideological conflict among stakeholders.

Some of the comments made by educators included:

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*In many cases this may not be working, as SGBs do not have the capacity to identify the required professional skills for the position. Therefore, the system of recruitment and appointment of personnel in schools needs to be revised. The Department should address issues of equity and redress so that all SGBs are on the same level.*

*All capacity building has to be differentiated to address both advantaged and disadvantaged schools.*

It is good for advantaged schools and bad for disadvantaged schools because they are too illiterate to follow the process. Their judgments or recommendations are always tinged with some bias.

Some role-players indicated that there should be improvement with the way they work together in the process of appointing new staff members at schools. They are experiencing fights in the process and there seem to be no sign of coming up with solutions. They cited an example in Tshamahanzi where the principal was nearly killed by the community for being accused of nepotism. Surely, there should be a mechanism and a proper procedure of dealing with this kind of a situation.

#### **4.3.6 Schools administrative systems**

Other tensions are caused by the current system as being fragmented and disjointed. They indicated that most activities take place in the classroom and

they find it difficult to monitor the situation. They rely mostly on the information provided by the principals who are not always at schools. Therefore, School Governing Body members propose a management system that should be more efficient, more productive and better able to respond to the requests of the community. They claimed that the present system is mainly used for data collection (learners' names, addresses, locations and examination results), rather than for incorporating impact indicators that are critical for schools in implementing its policies. The lack of adequate monitoring of learner progress and educator support could severely hinder the schools' ability to use this information system as an effective management tool. Therefore, they propose a more extensive and detailed EMIS that would provide easily accessible data on stock, impact and outcomes. Further, the system should be user friendly to allow schools to use it in gathering and submitting learner and educator data to the circuit.

Given the inability of the schools readily to produce statistics on impact of educators, and especially the internal assessment of its learners, School Governing Body members felt the schools were in dire need of an EMIS. This will greatly enhance both the Circuit and the schools' ability to deliver quality education efficiently and effectively.

#### **4.3.7 Communication**

SGBs noted that writing and circulating reports is the most common method of communication in schools under normal circumstances. They stated that schools are required to write and submit reports on meetings, annual reports, departmental reports, and activity reports. They regarded the reports as useful for giving officials a summary of school activities, giving stakeholders a picture of school activities, sharing information, allowing learning, and giving all concerned an opportunity to make an input into policy formulation. However, this is not the

case at schools. There are tensions and communication breakdown with regards to information sharing and dissemination.

Most SGB members pointed out some weaknesses in communication efforts. Information from schools frequently reaches parents late and they are forced to respond promptly and work under pressure. Workshops have to be planned at short notice. The relationship between SGBs and SMTs is not always healthy, as there is an overlap of functions and lack of clarity about precise definition of tasks. There is an element of power struggle between them. Materials distributed to SGBs are not sufficient to address all their concerns and sometimes contain incorrect information.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

It should be noted that questions under the in-depth interviews are not necessarily the same with questions under the questionnaire. Respondents responded to a variety of questions under the administered semi-structured questionnaire. Therefore, the findings under both approaches took more or less the same results. Notwithstanding the above, it is the researcher's contention to see recommendations of the study taken serious by the relevant department and stakeholders in pursuing harmony and smooth working relations at schools.

# CHAPTER 5

## DISCUSSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1 Introduction

The study was conducted on the practical challenges faced by school governing bodies (Mahwelereng Circuit) in implementing governance policies. The research investigated the extent to which the governance of public schools was being implemented in terms of the South African Schools Act (SASA) and also tensions that might arise in the process.

### 5.2 Summary of the main findings

#### **Findings 1: roles and responsibilities**

Discussions with SGB members proved that there was still confusion as to who is supposed to do what at schools. Most of them did not know that they are responsible for school buildings, recommendations on new appointments and school funds. Instead, some of them thought they were responsible for disciplining educators and deciding of the curriculum. There is confusion as to who is in charge of professional issues and governance issues. Discussions were fruitful and revealed their weaknesses with regard to roles and responsibilities.

#### **Findings 2: relationships between stakeholders**

The study found that SGB members did not understand their roles and this resulted into duplications of tasks that eventually lead to tensions and combatant

relationships. Educators blame the principals for their failures while SGB members point fingers at both principals and educators for the wrongs that take place at schools. Everyone blame everyone else. Some SGB members are not talking to some principals and the tensions are so high that simple tasks could not be executed. For example, at some schools principals will punish parents by not issuing out reports to parents. Learners would be affected in the process. Therefore, the study tried to map out ways of resolving these tensions which affect the smooth running of schools. Most schools have no clear communication systems and they have a disjointed administration that impacts negatively to the existing relationship.

### **Findings 3: school finances**

The study found that most SGB members were never involved in drawing up budgets at their schools, and in some cases they were merely consulted about a budget that had been drafted already. Most of their budgets are based on funds allocated to schools by the provincial department of education, and are supplemented through school fees and other funds raised by the SGBs. They were not in sync with financial matters. It became clear that this lack of transparency regarding funds causes tensions at schools.

### **Findings 4: democratic governance**

All interviewees agreed that SGBs were elected in a democratic manner. However, SGB members stated that decisions were taken undemocratically, with few members having the right to offer their views. They further claimed that principals effectively imposed their views on other members by forming cliques within the school to ensure that their opinions become dominant, and thus undermined the independence of the SGB. These parents called on the circuit to monitor the situation and prevent this practice from continuing. Proper governance is a desire of many.

### **Findings 5: participation and power**

Levels of participation by different members of the school community varied somewhat. In cases where the participation of parents, learners and non-educator staff was low, the main reasons given were lack of clarity about roles and responsibilities, apathy, the fact that educators were better informed than other members, power struggle with management, other work commitments, and poor communication between parents and school staff. Active participation by stakeholders is a challenge at schools.

### **Findings 6: achievements and weaknesses of SGBs**

On the positive side it was found parents are showing commitment and involvement in school affairs, and that some parents have internalised their roles within the SGB structures, with some exceptions, of course.

On the negative side, the limited experience of most SGB members in educational and financial management, and insufficient back-up support were mentioned as weaknesses. Other weaknesses were struggles between the principal and the SGB chairperson over power, lack of accountability by principals, and the need to strengthen work ethic and punctuality.

## **5.3 Comparison with other studies**

The findings of this study are similar to other studies elsewhere. However, there are other studies that did not find similar results. However, an attempt has been made to compare this study with other findings from studies in the same field.

### **5.3.1 Roles and responsibilities**

Literature on tensions among stakeholders in the School Governing Bodies is relatively scarce (especially on roles and responsibilities). Studies that have

close to addressing this problem are by Sayed (1995), Lamola (1996), and Mabasa (1999) but they have not addressed themselves specifically to tensions that exist within SGBs in implementing policies at school level. Their emphasis is on roles and responsibilities as enshrined in the SASA document. They went further to explain some challenges experienced in implementing policies such as the Religious policy. According to Crease (1995:27), one of the most common causes of misunderstanding and friction between two groups of people is that neither group has clear and agreed expectations of the other. So, these are some of the instances in the study where you are tempted to conclude that roles and responsibilities are not clearly and well defined to stakeholders.

### **5.3.2 Relationships between stakeholders**

In 1996, Chisholm and Vally (1996:30) conducted a research study in some of the Gauteng schools on aspects of the Culture of Learning and Teaching and discovered that one of the most distressing aspects of schools visited was the conflictual nature of the relationship between principals, educators and SGB members. Their findings are not very different from the findings of this study. Although the exact form of these conflicts varied from school to school, they had a debilitating effect on all involved, and appeared to affect the culture of learning and teaching in all the schools. The practice was experienced at the Mahwelereng Circuit. There is a sense of isolation, lack of communication and fragmentation between different components. In general, there appears to be a marked lack of co-operation, trust and respect between different parts of the school body. The challenge we are facing is to harmonise the relationship at schools.

### **5.3.3 School finances**

Roles and responsibilities with regard to the aforementioned are well spelt out in the South African School Act (1996). The challenge that stakeholders are facing is to internalise these responsibilities. Karlsson et al (1999) indicated that this is a contested terrain amongst SGB stakeholders. Mainly, the principal undermines

other stakeholders taking advantage of their literacy level. This brought tensions to some schools whereby other stakeholders did not hesitate in raising their voice in protest. He advocates decentralisation of power when coming to finance issues. His experience resembles the findings of this study. At most schools the principal becomes a culprit and he/she is described as someone not transparent when coming to school finances. Almost all SGB members suspect that principals do benefit learner payments of school fees.

### **5.3.4 Democratic governance**

It came out clear from the findings that there exists a power struggle within SGB members regarding policy implementation. McLennan (2000) states that, the effects are from explicit and implicit authority that exists at public schools. In his explanation, explicit authority refers to decisions made on finances and policies and implicit authority refers to decisions influenced by culture and values. The researcher found the findings similar to this study, which revealed that there are cultural differences amongst the SGB members and some policies enshrined in SASA. For example, some parents would like schools to be headed by men than women which is contrary to what the policy demands. The Religious policy also reflected some cultural differences as it was explained under findings.

The above comparisons and contrasts with other studies suggest that tensions and power struggle in school governance exist through the world, including developed countries. Reasons for these similarities are not hard to find because education is a contested terrain. It is a field which stakeholders do not always see it eye to eye. In particular, politicians often use schools as sites of political bargaining.

Where the researcher did find similar results it could be because the studies in question were done in different contexts. For example, the study by Chisholm and Vally (1996:30) was conducted in an urban area where stakeholders are faced with different culture.

### **5.3.5 Participation and power**

Most SGB members demands for more involvement at schools rather than being treated as 'pawns' and 'robots'. They would like to be treated with respect and trust. They advocate active involvement on school matters. Rensburg (1995); Sayed and Carrim, (1997) gave similar situation with what was happening during the apartheid era. They outlined the frustration that the then PTSA was encountering, especially the limited role they were given. The study revealed that principals wield more power than anyone else in the SGB. This problem has existed from time immemorial without proper intervention. The study therefore came up with suggestions under implications to remedy the situation.

## **5.4 Explanations for finding similar and different results**

The researcher was frustrated by the way learners, parents, educators and principals relate to each other at schools, especially where the researcher was a teacher in the Mahwelereng circuit. Principals were targeted and some of them their houses were burnt during the uprising. Educators on the other hand had a problem in having control in the classrooms due to the unruly learners. Parents always complained of not being given enough space to effect changes at schools. The study was to investigate the extent to which this problem occurs and also to find out ways of improving the situation. Surely, the findings quantify what the researcher always believed in and revealed more pertinent issues related to working relations. The researcher was always worried about the situation since it impacts on the smooth running of the school. The study is vital and should recommend better ways of dealing with the situation.

## **5.5 Implications and recommendations**

The results of this study suggest that educational authorities take steps to ensure that all schools governing bodies (addressing the needs of parents at village

schools in particular) build their capacity to a level that would allow them to perform their tasks adequately and exercise their powers to the full without frictions. This would include the power to recommend and select educators for appointment, an issue that has been a bone of contention in some village schools. The contentious nature of this power is due largely to the insistence of educators that parents are not sufficiently educated to be able to understand the tasks of teaching, and therefore should not be given a say in personnel issues.

When asked about the steps that the circuit office and the district should take to raise the ability of SGBs to function and reach their goals, SGB members put a strong emphasis on the provision of adequate training and the creation of better channels of communication between communities and schools. When asked specifically about areas of training, the top priorities that SGB members mentioned were financial management (including fund-raising) and roles and responsibilities of SGBs. Based on this, the following recommendations for action can be made:

- Circuit personnel should provide initial training which will serve as a general orientation to SGB members regarding their duties, relationships and powers. Thereafter, training may be outsourced to specialist trainers (agencies or consultants) in specific tasks.
- The training provided must take into account the starting level of SGB members, in other words their existing knowledge and skills. When it is pitched at a low level, members are bored with the training and dismiss its value. When it is pitched at a high level, members find the training difficult to follow and feel frustrated as a result. Since SGBs are diverse, it is obvious that the same training module would not be suitable to all (possibly not even to all parents on the same SGB). Designing different training modules to suit all the possible levels of knowledge among SGB members is obviously costly and logistically complicated, but SGBs should be offered a choice of at least two options: basic

and more advanced levels for each module of training. In addition, training may be linked to the tasks expected of specific members of the SGB. It may be possible to select specific individuals within each SGB to undertake financial tasks for example, once they are selected, tailor the training to their individual skill, knowledge and capacity to learn.

- The training programme should be better co-ordinated between the schools and circuit office, and between communities and schools. One problem in this respect, as raised by the principals, is lack of sufficient personnel and funds to undertake monitoring activities. These must be provided, subject of course to availability of funds, and to identification of the precise usage to which extra funds would be put. In particular, the circuit's capacity to monitor training must be boosted to ensure that training takes place, that it is conducted to the satisfaction of the trainees, and that the latter feel that the information is useful and relevant. In addition, they must monitor the functioning of SGBs to ensure that there are no frictions among their components, that conflicts are resolved promptly, and that their tasks are performed adequately.
- On-going and follow-up support for SGBs, to be provided by the circuit, is essential. While training is helpful, if it is provided on a once-off basis it cannot enable SGBs to tackle all the problems that emerge in the course of their normal functioning. Circuit office must keep track of governance-related problems and issues that come up at schools, and provide support to SGBs when necessary.
- Many respondents raised the issue of remoteness of circuit officials from school affairs. Schools may have unrealistic expectations regarding the time and availability of officials (who are few and stretched thinly over a large number of schools). However, it is important that schools feel that officials are listening to them and that there is a regular channel to convey concerns to circuit office and receive information from them. A better system of

communication must be devised (this could include a regular circuit newsletter to be distributed to schools and SGBs on time, regular schedule of visits to schools to be published in advance, a dedicated official to deal with all SGB issues, etc.). The specific conditions in the circuit would determine the precise nature of the communication mechanisms to be put in place.

- Regarding the role of SGBs (parents in particular) in making recommendations on the appointment of educators, no reason to change the policy in this regard has emerged from the study. The problem in the implementation of this policy results partly from negative attitudes on the part of educators towards parents whom they deem to be less educated than themselves, and partly from lack of clarity with regard to the distinction between school governance and school management. The circuit office can play a role in defusing tension arising on this basis in three ways:
  - ◆ Disseminate information to educators about the importance of parents playing a role in deciding on who will educate their children and explain why parents' concerns must be taken into account. Explain why they are qualified to take such decisions by virtue of their involvement and their ability to focus on the crucial non-technical qualities expected of educators (regardless of parents' own level of education).
  - ◆ Build up the capacity of parents to take decisions on this issue by providing training in interviewing and candidate selection skills. Specific interview tasks must be divided among SGB members in accordance with their experience and area of competence. For example, parents could concentrate on issues of discipline, relations between school and community, commitment of candidate to work, etc. Professional staff on the SGB could concentrate on technical aspects related to teaching and learning issues.
  - ◆ Encourage all members of SGBs to try to reach consensus on the suitability of candidates, by making their selection criteria clear and transparent, in order to prevent conflicts from erupting.

- To ensure success of the capacity building programme as well as of the overall functioning of SGBs, there should be periodic monitoring by the circuit office to ascertain progress, identify problems and address needs.

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# School Governing Body Questionnaire

## A. Background

1. Stakeholder	Parent	Teacher	Learner	2. How long have you served on the SGB?	months
	Non Ed Staff	Principal	Other (Specify)		
3. When was the SGB formed?					

## B. Roles and Responsibilities

1. In your view, what is the role of the SGB at this school?

2. In your view, what is the core function (the central most important function) of the SGB at this school?

3. In your view, what is your personal role in the SGB?

4. Has the SGB at this school been involved in developing any of the following policies / protocol for this school? If yes, please describe. If no, why has the SGB not engaged in this area?

<b>a) Mission Statement</b>			
Yes	No	DK	
<b>b) Code of Conduct</b>			
Yes	No	DK	
<b>c) Admission Policy</b>			
Yes	No	DK	
<b>d) Language Policy</b>			

Yes	No	DK	
<b>e) Religious Policy</b>			
Yes	No	DK	

5. Is the SGB involved in other learning and teaching issues or activities?	Yes	No	DK
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5a.	If yes, please describe.
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6. In your view, does the SGB have a role in improving the overall quality of learning and teaching at your school?	Yes	No	DK
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6a.	If yes, please describe.
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7. In your view, does the SGB have a role with reference to improving the morale of educators and learners at the school?	Yes	No	DK
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7a.	If yes, please describe.
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8. Does the SGB play a role in the following areas? If yes, please describe. If no, why has the SGB not engaged in this area?

<b>a) School Administration</b>			
Yes	No	DK	
<b>b) School Management</b>			
Yes	No	DK	
<b>c) Extracurricular Activities</b>			
Yes	No	DK	

d) Determining School Subjects					
Yes	No	DK			
9. Has the SGB ever applied to the province for additional functions?			Yes	No	DK
10. In your view, do you think there is a difference between the responsibilities of 'school governance' and 'school management'?			Yes	No	DK
10a. If yes, please describe your understanding of the difference.					
11. Are there times when the distinction between the role of the SGB (in school governance) and the role of the school management team (to manage the school) becomes confusing or difficult, or results in tension?			Yes	No	DK
11a. If yes, please describe.					

### C. School Finances

1. Is the SGB involved in preparing the school's budget?			Yes	No	DK
1a. Please describe the process of preparing the school's budget each year.					
2. In any organisation, even a family, people often have different ideas about how to spend funds. How are differences of opinion about spending the school funds resolved?					
<div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 60px; width: 100%;"></div>					
3. In your view, are there tensions between the SGB and school			Yes	No	DK

managers about how funds are used? Please describe.

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3a. If yes, please describe.

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4. [Beyond preparing the school's budget] What other financial management responsibilities does the SGB have?

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5. In your view, do you think that the SGB is currently coping with its financial management responsibilities? Please explain your answer.

Yes	No	DK
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6. Does the school charge school fees?

Yes	No	DK
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7. Please describe the process of determining school fees at this school.

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8. How do you understand the policies relating to parents who cannot afford to pay school fees?

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9. In your view, how should the school deal with parents who do not pay school fees?

10. In your view, what role should SGB's have in the employment of teachers?  
Please explain your answer.

**D. Participation, Representation, and Power**

1. How would you rate the level of participation of the following stakeholders in the meetings and activities of the SGB?

	Very Hi	Hi	Middle	Low	Very Low
a) Parents					
b) Educators					
c) Non-Educator Staff					
d) Principal					
e) Learners					

2. In your view, what are the reasons for this pattern of participation?

3. In your view, which members of the SGB wield most power?

3a. Why do you think that this person(s) wields the most power?

4. In your view, has the formation of the SGB led to increased participation of parents in the life of the school, outside of specific SGB activities?

Yes	No	DK
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4a. Please explain your answer.

5. Even in democratic systems, some voices are heard better than others. In your view, does the SGB fully represent the school's constituency?

Yes	No	DK
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5a. Please explain your answer.

6. In your view, are children and parents from very low-income households well represented in the SGB?

Yes	No	DK
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6a. Please explain your answer.

7. In your view, are children and parents who do not speak in the school's language well represented in the SGB?

Yes	No	DK
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7a. Please explain your answer.

8. In your view, are children and parents who have different religious or cultural beliefs from the majority of the school members well represented in the SGB?

Yes	No	DK
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8a. Please explain your answer.

9. In your view, what are the challenges for ensuring that SGB's represent the interests of all stakeholders at the school? Please explain your answer.

10. Please describe how opinions are canvassed and decisions reported back to each of the key SGB constituencies.

	Opinions Canvassed	Decisions Reported Back
a) Parents		
b) Learners		
c) Educators and Other Staff		

**E. Relationships**

1. In your view, does tension or problems exist between the school management and the school governing body in any way?

Yes	No	DK
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1a. Please explain your answer.

2. In your view, does tension or problems exist between the parents (on the SGB) and educators at the school?

Yes	No	DK
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2a. Please explain your answer.

3. In your view, does tension or problems exist between the parents (on the SGB) and other parents at the school?

Yes	No	DK
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3a. Please explain your answer.

4. Does the SGB work to improve the relationship between the school and the community?

Yes	No	DK
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4a. Please explain your answer.

Encouraging Parents to Volunteer at School	Allowing Community Use of Facilities	Encouraging Parents to Attend Meetings	Involvement in Community Based Initiatives / Forums
Other	XX	XX	XX

**F. Qualities and Skills**

1. In your opinion, can any parent who is interested being on the SGB make for a good SGB member?

Yes	No	DK
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1a. Please explain your answer.

2. In your view, describe the kind of person who makes a 'good' member of the SGB. Describe the personality, qualities, and skills that you believe make for a useful member of the SGB.

3. What skills are required of SGB members?

4. Did you receive any training as a SGB member?

Yes	No	DK
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4a. If yes, please describe the training you received (content, duration etc)

4b. In your assessment, did the training practically help you perform your duties?

Yes	No	DK
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5. If you were to design a training programme for new SGB members, what would it include?

6. In your experience, what support does the SGB at your school receive from the district or provincial office?

7. In your view, how could support from the district or province to SGB's be improved?

**G. Strategic Evaluation of SGB**

1. In your view, what are the achievements of the SGB at this school thus far?

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2. In your view, what are the weaknesses of the SGB? Probe: What factors prevent the SGB from functioning better?

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3. In your view, how could these weaknesses be addressed?

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4. How does the context of the school (socio-economic, cultural, other community factors) affect the functioning of the SGB?

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**H. Close**

1. At the end of the day, when you think about your experience of participating in the SGB, what two words would best describe your experience?

Frustrating		Fun		Other	
Stressful		Interesting		Other	
Tense		Exciting		Other	

2. At the end of the day, have you learned anything or grown in any way by participating in the SGB? Please explain your answer.

Yes	No	DK
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3. If you could give recommendations to the District Director about how to make SGB's more effective, what advice would you give him/her?

4. Is there anything else you would like to add in order for us to understand the SGB at this school better?