

## CHAPTER 5

### PRESENTATION OF DATA

#### 5.1 Introduction and purpose

As indicated in **Chapter One**, this study was aimed at determining the impact that school governing body members' understanding and/or interpretation of current legislation on the appointment and promotion of teachers in public schools have on the way said legislation is implemented at the schools they govern. Specifically I wanted to determine whether governing bodies of formerly white, House of Assembly, schools interpreted and implemented the amendments promulgated in the Education Laws Amendment Act of 2005 differently to their black counterparts in former Department of Education and Training schools.

I indicated that I would be focusing on three inter-dependent aspects of current legislation in order to achieve my research purpose, namely the Act itself (Education Laws Amendment Act of 2005), reaction to the initial Bill (ELAB 2005) and the implication thereof for school governance. In doing so I hoped also to be able to ascertain if and how the racial profile of schools has changed as a result of the Act. This, I assumed, would give me some indication of how school governing bodies' interpretation of the Act affects their implementation.

To this purpose I made use of a number of research strategies to collect and analyse data. My primary research instrument was one-on-one interviews, which I conducted with available parents, teachers and principals who serve on the governing bodies of the five Tshwane North schools purposively selected for my study. I also compared various pieces of legislation dealing with the governance

of schools and the employment of educators so as to determine what exactly the law says about the selection of teachers for appointment by the governing bodies of public schools. Key pieces of legislation studied were the Schools Act of 1996, the Employment of Educators Act of 1998 and the Education Laws Amendment Act of 2005. Having determined that all these laws are, amongst other, aimed at the promotion of equity, redress and representivity in the workplace and, given South Africa's history of racial and gender discrimination in education, I reviewed literature on the promotion of racial integration at schools as a redress measure.

Informed by the insights gained from my literature review as well as by my comparison of the Acts mentioned I embarked on my empirical investigation of school governing bodies' understanding, interpretation and implementation of legislation on teacher selection and appointment in South Africa. This chapter, Chapter Five, is devoted to the presentation and discussion of data I collected in this regard from various categories of school governors - parents, teachers, and principals – at the five schools in the Tshwane North school district of the Gauteng Province in South Africa that constituted my sample.

## **5.2 Data collection, analysis and presentation**

Since my study focuses on the way governing bodies at the schools included in my sample understand and/or interpret specific changes to legislation on teacher selection and appointment, I intended to interview as many members of the governing bodies of these schools as possible. To ensure that I would be able to compare the ways in which those considered formerly advantaged (white), and those considered formerly disadvantaged (black), understood and/or interpreted the legislation concerned, I deliberately included both categories of schools in my

sample. The final sample consisted of five governing bodies, three of which were responsible for the governance of formerly white (HoA) schools, and two responsible for the governance of black, former DET schools. I did not include any schools formerly designated as Indian or Coloured schools in my sample because I wanted to focus on the two groups that represented the extremes of privilege – the most privileged (white) versus the least privileged (black).

Having obtained permission from the relevant department of education and the schools concerned I initially planned to conduct focus group interviews with each of the school governing bodies concerned. This was not, however, possible, due to the incompatibility of individual governing body members' time schedules. I therefore decided to conduct one-on-one interviews with those governing body members who were willing and able to fit me into their schedules. Even so, I could only manage to interview teacher and parent members of one white and two black schools. As regards the other two white schools I managed to conduct interviews with the principals of the schools only, in their capacity as *ipso facto* governing body members. It follows that conclusions drawn from comparisons of the way parent and teacher governing body members understand and interpret the legislation in question, while revealing, limits the possibility of extrapolating findings to any other context or group. Data collected from principals have more significance given that I was able to interview the principals of all five the schools in my sample.

I used the same interview schedule (see Chapter 3) for all the interviews, supplementing questions with in-depth probes where applicable. All the interviews were tape-recorded and manually transcribed prior to coding. Where probes were used this is indicated in the interview transcripts. I used English as the medium of communication during interviews but interviewees had the option of responding in either English or Sepedi. With the exception of one black

parent governing body member all the interviewees chose to respond in English. Since I am a Sepedi speaker myself I translated the transcribed Sepedi interview into English prior to the data coding process. The English transcript is included in my report.

With a view to organising interview data in such a way that I would easily be able to compare the ‘voices’ (Potter, in Miles and Huberman 1994) of different categories of governing body members and different racial groupings, I electronically cut and pasted the raw data in tabular form. Each table focused on a particular grouping’s response to the same interview questions (see Annexure F). Having done so I coded the data manually, using categories suggested by my initial research questions, with a view to first uncovering the understanding/interpretation of each category of SGB members. I then used the results of these comparisons as basis for my conclusions on the existence or not of differences in the understanding/interpretation and implementation of the governing bodies of former HoA and DET schools in my sample. While the responses of the different participant groupings are discussed separately, the conclusions are based on the combined results.

While I was analysing the data I realized that the way in which SGBs interpreted and implemented the amendments to teacher selection and appointment were influenced by their particular operational contexts. I therefore contacted each of the principals telephonically, asking them to provide me with the kind of contextual data that I had identified as factors influencing participants’ views on the legislation concerned. The results of these telephonic conversations are reflected in the description of each school (see 5.3).

I present and discuss the data on SGB members’ knowledge, understandings/interpretations of legislation in the form of contextualized

verbal descriptions. Where applicable my verbal descriptions include verbatim quotes meant to transport readers to the specific school contexts given that such contexts serve as frames of reference within which participants' interpretation and implementation can be better understood.

### **5.3 School context**

Since context and school culture have been proven to play a role in the way people interpret and respond to situations (McCarthy and Crichlow, 1993; Phillips & Wagner, 2003) especially to situations that require change (Fullan, 1993), I deemed it important to include a brief sketch of each of the five schools whose governing bodies agreed to participate in my study. For confidentiality reasons these schools are not named but rather referred to as Schools A, B, C, D and E. The first three schools – A, B, and C – while formerly white and regulated by the Department of Education and Culture: House of Assembly (DEC: HoA) – are now open to learners of other colours/races. Schools D and E were formerly regulated by the Department of Education and Training (DET). They were and still are, only black, although there is no legal hindrance to learners of other colours/races who wish to attend or enroll at these school and/or on educators who want to work there.

Since one of my research objectives is to determine the impact of educator employment legislation on the racial composition of schools, I include in my description information on the learner and teacher composition of each school. Also, since my interviews were conducted with members of the governing bodies of these schools, I also provide information on the racial composition of each school governing body.

### 5.3.1 School A

School A is a comprehensive school in that it includes a pre-primary, primary and secondary component, enrolling learners from Grade 0 to Grade 12. It can be regarded as a 'special' school in that it caters for learners who are hard of hearing and/or who suffer from one or more disabilities. Hostel accommodation is available to learners whose parents stay far away from the school, some of them in other parts of Africa.

Although the school is located in what was previously a poor white socio-economic area it is classified as a Quintile 4 (rich) school. Some learners – those whose parents earn less than ten times the annual school (SASA: 1996) – are exempted from paying school fees.

The school used to be an Afrikaans-medium school but English has now been introduced as an additional language of learning in Grades 11 and 12. Formerly open to white children only the current learner population is 54% white and 46% black. Of the thirty-eight teachers employed at the school – thirty-five by the Department of Education and three by the school governing body – only one is black. Three of the fifteen governing body members are black. According to the principal of the school, they never attend governing body meetings since the school is in Pretoria and they live in Johannesburg.

### 5.3.2 School B

School B is a primary school, enrolling learners from Grade 0 to Grade 7. The language of learning at the school is Afrikaans but they also use English for the

5% who struggle with the language. Ninety-nine percent of the learners are white and one percent is coloured. Of the forty-five teachers, who are all white, twenty-five are employed by the Department of Education and twenty by the school governing body. All the governing body members are also white.

Situated in a previously white, affluent suburb of Pretoria, it is classified as a Quintile 5 (very rich) school. Parents typically earn high incomes and all the children can afford to pay school fees.

### **5.3.3 School C**

School C, which was formerly an Afrikaans-medium primary school, now uses both Afrikaans and English as languages of learning. Ninety percent of the learners are black and ten percent are white. While not completely representative there are indications that the staff composition of this school is gradually becoming representative of the learner population since thirteen of the twenty-five teachers – all employed by the Department of Education – are black.

Classified as a Quintile 3 (middle income) school, School C is situated in an area where parents are middle-income earners. Since not all parents can afford to pay school fees some learners are exempted from having to do so.

### **5.3.4 School D**

School D, a black secondary school formerly under the administration of the Department of Education and Training (DET) uses English as its medium of instruction. Situated in the township of Mamelodi it has an entirely black staff, an all black SGB and all the learners are also black. Classified as a Quintile 3

(middle income) school, School D caters for learners across the spectrum, some of whose parents are rich and some who are very poor. Learners whose parents earn less than ten times the school fees are fully exempted and those whose parents earn less than thirty times the fees are partially exempted. Also, conditional exemption is given to learners whose parents provide proof of financial/family problems.

### **5.3.5 School E**

School E, a black primary school formerly under the administration of the Department of Education and Training (DET) uses primarily English as its medium of instruction. Its staff and learner populations as well as its SGB are all black. Because it is situated in an informal settlement and most parents are unemployed or earn very little money it has been classified as a Quintile 1 (no fee) school.

## **5.4 Comparison of parent data**

The South African Schools Act of 1996, in providing formal power to SGBs had created the expectation for parents to be meaningful partners in school governance. The government's call for greater participation in education is based on the assumption that if more people were included in school governance, then democracy in education would be boosted and equality among schools would be ensured (Dieltiens & Enslin, 2002:5). Parents' collaboration with educators was deemed to be crucial to the enhancement of education success (Singh, Mbokodi, & Msila, 2004). Informed by this assumption the extremely limited success achieved thus far in the racial transformation of schools is ascribed to the limited role that parents are willing to play in the schools their children attend.



I interviewed six parents - two from School A, a formerly white Special School under the administration of the House of Assembly, and four from Schools D and E, former Department of Education and Training (black) schools. Parents serving on the SGBs of Schools B and C were either unavailable or unwilling to talk to me. Three of the black parents were governing body members of the same school; the fourth parent was on the governing body of a different school.

To enable me to compare the views, understandings, interpretations and experience of parent governing body members belonging to different racial groupings (white versus black) I electronically cut and pasted the raw data collected during individual focus group interviews with them into tabular form (see Annexure F). The essence of each question asked is represented in Column 1; the responses of parent members of governing bodies of formerly white schools are represented in Column 2 and those of formerly black schools in Column 3. Column 3 data are recorded in two styles, normal and italics, with the views presented in italics being those of participating parents serving on the governing body of a different school than that of the other three. Having organized the data in this way I highlighted the essence of each response because this enabled me to identify similarities and differences in parent member responses.

#### **5.4.1 Experience as SGB members**

SGB elections take place every three years. According to the Department of Education (DoE, 2005), elections can only be regarded as free and fair if a national framework is in place, if provincial regulations have been promulgated,

if electoral officials have been trained, if stakeholders know about and willingly participate in elections.

Parent data, collected from the SGB members who participated in my study, indicate that most of the parent members are serving on the governing bodies of their schools for the first time. Since the official term of office of a governing body member is three years (SASA, 1996), and one third of the parent members in my sample have served for less than two years, they can be regarded as relative 'novices' as far as the interpretation and implementation of legislation is concerned. On the other extreme, two of the black participants have served on the governing bodies of their schools for four and eight years respectively, i.e. they are serving for a second and third term respectively – and could be regarded as veterans. Both extremes could suggest that some parents whose children attend these schools are not particularly keen to serve on the governing bodies of their schools and that the parents who do serve do so because of their willingness and/or availability.

The re-election of the two black parents could, however, also be indicative of the school community's satisfaction with their performance. In the case of the parent serving for the second time this supposition seems to be confirmed by the reason he offers for his enjoying his SGB work (see 5.5.2) – 'I want to be the *ear of the community*' – and his perception of the reason/s for his nomination/election as a governing body member – the fact that he was perceived as 'progressive' and successful by the community and his ability to 'work well' with people. As for the other veteran black parent member, indications are that she might have been re-elected for a third time because she has a child in the school, and her experience as a parent *and* an 'educator' is regarded as an asset to the SGB. In line with the Schools Act she is allowed to serve for more than two terms

consecutively if she has a child in the school. This suggests that the community and the staff are satisfied with her involvement in the SGB.

If the terms of office of the white parents were to be compared with those of the black parents one could infer that black communities are more inclined to re-elect parents as school governing body members but this would be risky given that both white parent members in my study serve on the same governing body. They are not the only white parents on the governing body, but the only ones willing and available to be interviewed by me.

An interesting finding that emerged from my data analysis is the suggestion that, as regards the parent component of governing bodies at the sampled schools, the majority of parents serving on the governing bodies of historically black schools are males while males and females are equally represented in the governing body of the white school whose parents participated in my study. The conclusion regarding gender in the parent component of the SGB of white schools in my sample is, however, particular to one white school only. It cannot be applied to the other white schools in my sample because their parent SGB members were not available to be interviewed by me.

#### **5.4.2 Enjoyment of SGB duties**

All the parent respondents, irrespective of race and gender, indicated that they enjoyed serving on a school governing body. Only one of them, a black parent member, indicated that there are times when he does not enjoy it. According to him, he does not enjoy it when discussions become 'very hot' and people start to

‘personalize issues’, or take criticism or differences of opinion as attacks on them personally instead of focusing on the ‘issue’.

The reasons white and black parent respondents gave for their enjoyment are, however, somewhat different. Although both groups indicated that they wanted to make a difference in the school and in others’ lives, the reasons white respondents gave for their enjoyment suggested that their involvement gave them emotional satisfaction while black respondents’ reasons suggested that the opportunity the SGB gave them to do something for the schools and the school community restored their sense of self-worth. The difference in the reasons they gave for their enjoyment is succinctly captured in the figurative expressions they use to convey their feelings - ‘I have a *heart* for the school’ (white respondents) versus ‘I want to be the *ear* of the community’ (black respondents).

Individual respondents’ reasons for the pleasure they take in serving on their respective school governing bodies reinforce the inferences drawn from the figurative expressions they used. One of the white respondents indicated that the reason she enjoys serving on the SGB is the emotional connection and responsibility she has for her own child - ‘obviously my kid is here’ – as well as for the children of parents who cannot be there - ‘there’s not a lot of parents that are involved and that’s why I feel that I should be here’. The other white respondent ascribed her enjoyment to the opportunity that his SGB work creates for social interaction – ‘I am a one-man business and it is nice to work in a team’.

All four the black parent respondents, on the other hand, indicated that serving on the SGB gave them a sense of self worth because they had the opportunity of gaining knowledge that contributed either to their own development or that of

the community. One of the respondents specifically stated that not only did her involvement in the SGB make her 'feel part of' the school, but it allowed her to make decisions that 'affect the school', resulting in her own sense of empowerment.

#### **5.4.3 Perceived reasons for nomination/election as SGB members**

Parent members' perceptions of the reasons others might have had for nominating and/or electing them as school governing body members are rather similar. Both groups (black and white) indicated that they were regarded as having the time as well as the requisite knowledge and expertise (financial and educational) to serve on the governing body. They also indicated that their involvement in school activities prior to their nomination/election as school governing body members might have played a role in this regard. One of the white parent respondents indicated, for example, that her church, which financially sponsors the school, had had initially nominated her. There was one exception, though. One of the black parent respondents indicated that people might have thought that because he was a successful – 'progressing' – member of the community and 'worked well with people', he would be able to 'bring about change' in the school.

#### **5.4.4 SGB Agendas**

Parent respondents were asked to indicate to what extent an SGB meeting dealing specifically with the selection of possible candidates for appointment as teachers at their respective schools differed from their usual SGB meetings. Both

groups (white and black parent respondents) indicated that the usual SGB meetings focused on typical governance matters (general challenges/problems, strategic plans, financial management, resources, parental/community involvement, school maintenance, and discipline).

An interesting difference between the two parties is that black parent respondents indicated that they also discussed operational matters – ‘the daily running of the school’, and ‘teacher discipline’ – responsibilities which, according to SASA (1996), are the principal’s. White parent respondents, on the other hand, indicated that they also discussed the curriculum and extra-mural activities. As indicated in Chapter Three the responsibility for matters like these is devolved only to those school governing bodies that, having submitted an application in this regard, are deemed suitably competent to handle such additional functions. One could therefore infer that the difference in the responsibilities of the SGBs of the sampled schools reflects various researchers’ (see Chapter 3) claims of differences in the SGB capacity of formerly black and white schools respectively. By implication, the parents of former HoA schools could be said to have a greater say in the education of their children than those parents whose children attend former DET schools.

As regards the agenda and activities of extraordinary SGB meetings dealing specifically with teacher selection – short listing – there is very little difference in the agendas of black and white SGBs whose parent members participated in this study. In both cases the respective SGBs discuss the post requirements as they appear in the advertisement or vacancy list and then use these as basis for the selection of possible candidates. They assess each candidate’s qualifications and experience – as appearing on their curriculum vitae - against the post requirements to determine the extent to which they constitute a match. Having

done the first round selection other relevant factors – language proficiency, personality traits, management skills, ability and experience in working with special needs children (in the case of School A) – come into play. According to one of the black parents this is a ‘tough’ process because, as one of the white parents commented, it is ‘difficult’ to determine from a ‘piece of paper’ whether or not this is a ‘good or a poor candidate’.

#### **5.4.5 Selection Criteria**

As indicated in the afore going section, the SGBs whose members participated in this study, match the information in applicants’ curriculum vitae with the post requirements stipulated in the advertisement concerned. Informed by my own assumption that there might, however, be differences in the standards that formerly white and black schools’ SGBs set for the selection of teachers, I specifically asked parent respondents whether or not candidates’ personal characteristics, qualifications and previous experience played any part in their being short listed. Also, given my research purpose, namely to determine how their understanding/interpretation of legislation on the selection and appointment of teachers by governing bodies of selected Tshwane North public schools affect the way they implement the amendments promulgated in the Education Laws Amendment Act (Act 24 of 2005). I wanted to find out whether or not language, race and gender were factors that played a role in this regard. I therefore specifically asked them this question.

##### **5.4.5.1 Personal attributes**

As regards personal characteristics and/or disposition, white parent respondents indicated that they looked for candidates who were committed, enthusiastic,

involved in the community and able to 'present' themselves 'in a good manner'. Black parent respondents also placed a high premium on self-confidence – i.e. the ability to 'present' themselves well – coupling this with the ability to speak 'eloquently, but they also wanted someone who was proactive, who 'studied further', who knew how to work with and motivate people, learners included, and who would work 'holistically' and/or 'beyond the book content'. In short, they wanted someone who had the 'potential to make a difference' in the school and in learners' lives.

#### 5.4.5.2 Qualifications

One black parent respondent as well as both the white parent respondents indicated that the minimum qualifications considered would be those specified in the advertisement and emphasized the importance of a correlation between the qualification and the subject or learning area in which the post was available. The same black respondent emphasized moreover that there should also be a correlation between the qualification and the phase or grade for which the teacher would be responsible if appointed. This parent, from School E, also claims that the SGB on which he serves takes the applicant's commitment to lifelong learning – 'adding to' initial studies – into consideration.

Two of the three parent respondents who serve on the SGB of the other formerly black school, School D, indicated that they would accept a diploma, although one said that they preferred a degree. The third member claimed that they only considered those with a degree. All of them agreed, however, that applicants should have a matriculation certificate (Grade 12) plus a three-year post-matriculation qualification that would place them on an REQV 13 level. White



parent respondents made no reference to specific qualifications, only to the fact that candidates should be appropriately trained.

#### **5.4.5.3 Professional experience**

Participating parent members serving on the governing body of School A, the formerly white special school, indicated that prior experience played a role in the selection process, indicating that they would feel 'more comfortable' with someone who was not coming 'straight from college'. Two of the four black parent respondents agreed that experience was important but not instead of qualifications; the other two did not answer this question.

#### **5.4.5.4 Language as a factor**

Both groups (black as well as white parent members) acknowledge that language is a factor in the selection/short listing of candidates but the way in which it affects the selection differs in some instances. All of them agree that language is considered in terms of the official language of learning of the school concerned. The black parent respondents consider only English proficiency, unless the advertised post is for a language teacher other than English. The white school, which is a parallel-medium school catering for children with a range of special needs, considers bilingualism (English and Afrikaans) to be important, arguing that the use of mother tongue (L1) is especially crucial in the case of learners who are hard of hearing.

#### **5.4.5.5 Race as a factor**

Not a single parent in either group (black or white) was of the opinion that race played a role in the selection process. On the surface this could be seen as an

indication of members' ignoring the stipulations of the law but the way in which they responded to this question indicates that their interpretation of the questions differed from mine. Comments from both groups in this regard suggest that parent participants regard the selection procedures of the SGB on which they serve as 'colour blind' or non-racist, rather than as non-adherence to the law. They include comments like, 'It is not important to me'; 'I can honestly say race never plays a role here'; 'Race is not considered'; 'Race is not an issue'; 'All candidates would be interviewed the same', and 'We don't look at race'. In short, in the words of one of the parent SGB members of the formerly white school, 'We have never appointed the one person and not the other because of race'.

The black parent respondents all seemed to feel that they had to explain why they did not regard their procedures as racist. In doing so, they shifted the blame entirely onto the shoulders of the applicants of other races, thereby absolving themselves from any responsibility for racial integration. They offer availability and location as inhibiting factors, arguing that 'some ethnic groups or races are scarce', that the schools on whose governing bodies they serve are 'in a township' and therefore 'not safe', and that other races 'will never avail themselves to be appointed at our schools'. Only one black parent member, the one serving on the governing body of School E, indicated that there was 'one coloured' at their school, indicating that 'the other coloured got a promotion somewhere'. In short, those parents serving on the governing bodies of black schools 'don't expect white teachers to come for interviews' but they 'don't discriminate: all people get equal opportunities'.

White parent respondents, on the other hand, justify their claims of non-racism by indicating that few of the black applicants are proficient in both Afrikaans and English, a requisite for appointment to a parallel-medium school. The one black teacher on their staff was appointed in preference to white teachers because she is proficient in both these languages.

#### **5.4.5.6 Gender as a factor**

It is in the area of gender differentiation that the two parent groups (white and black) participating in this study differed most. White participants indicated that there is a gender imbalance in their school, with the male participant ascribing this to two factors. On the one hand, he argued, 'there are not a lot of men teaching these days', probably because they 'don't like to learn' and are more practically inclined. On the other hand, he argues, 'women like to study' and 'have a better connection with children'.

The same stereotyped assumptions about male and female abilities and inclinations can be detected in the responses of black parent participants. Indicating that 80% of the staff members are female, and acknowledging that they are 'not so very gender sensitive', two of the four black respondents argued that male teachers are better at maintaining discipline. One participant did not respond to this question while the other one indicated that the SGB typically 'checks' on the 'number of teachers we have according to the gender and subject'. This same respondent indicates, however, that 'some subjects, like history (sic), 'are more suitable to be taught by a male'. In short, if they had a 'good male candidate' - to help with discipline of especially the teenage boys - they 'would recommend' him for the post.

One of the white parent respondents (LSEN) considers the applicant's ability to work with children with 'special disabilities' as crucial given that School A is a 'special' school while one of the black parent respondents indicated that they would only consider those with a 'good record'.

#### **5.4.6 Perceptions of SGB Effectiveness**

When asked whether they were of the opinion that their SGB was effective as regards the selection of teachers for appointment to the schools they represent, both participating white parent members indicated that they were. In support of their claim they indicated that they went out of their way to find black teachers for classes where the majority of the learners are black. One of the respondents indicated that this is especially the case if the class concerned is a Foundation Phase. Parents indicated that if they could not find a suitable black teacher they tried to identify someone who could act as 'an assistant' to 'accommodate a specific child'. The other respondent indicated that they were satisfied with all the people who had been appointed. He also mentioned that they have had 'a lot of black people applying' and that in one instance 'only black candidates applied for a specific position'. Based on these responses one could infer that the parent members of this school equate SGB effectiveness with its ability to promote racial integration on the one hand, and to select teachers who perform as expected on the other.

Participating black parent governing body members had different opinions on the effectiveness of their SGBs. One respondent did not answer this question, two said the SGB was effective and one said it was not. The two who regarded the SGB as effective served on the governing bodies of different schools. One of them

– the one from School E - said that he thought the governing body of his school was effective because they followed legislation and criteria ‘stipulated by the government’ but he did not elaborate on this statement. The other one indicated that the SGB of his school was effective because their advertisements were open to all races. That they ended up ‘having one race’ was not, he argued, their problem because they could not ‘force people to apply’ to their school. The parent member who was of the opinion that his school’s governing body was not as effective as it should be argued that they were ‘not succeeding’ because, on the one hand, they failed to ‘attract white people’ to their school while on the other, the governing body seems to devolve its authority to the school principal who ‘seems’ to dictate’.

#### **5.4.7 Knowledge of the law (ELAA)**

White parent members, in responding to questions on the criteria they used to select teachers for short listing, indicated that they had to ‘short list five (candidates) and recommend three ... to the Department’. In being asked whether they thought that the criteria they used were aligned to legislative requirements, specifically to the stipulations in the ELAA, one of the white parents indicated that ‘*they*’ are ‘very strict’ in this regard and that ‘*they*’ tell the SGB members beforehand how things should happen. The other parent, who serves on the same SGB, indicated that the ‘*they*’ refers to the principal. He is the one who ‘briefs’ them before they go through the selections and ‘reminds’ them which criteria and qualifications they should focus on. According to this parent the SGB cannot exclude someone from the short list without a valid reason or reasons.

One of the participating *black parent* governing body members did not answer this question, one claimed that they did not ‘use nepotism’, and one indicated that the *principal* talked them ‘through legislation’, linking this to qualities that they had to look for in candidates during the selection process. The remaining parent indicated that the criteria the SGB used were ‘in line with legislation’ because they were trying to restore existing gender imbalances by selecting more women for leadership positions. He also argues that staff members at the school on whose governing body he serves come from different language communities and that this is an indication that they are abiding by the law.

When asked what they think the reasons were for the changes to legislation on the selection and appointment of teachers, the two participating white parent members differed markedly from each other. One of them disagreed with the stipulation that they had to submit three names, arguing that this would be impossible if only two of the interviewed applicants were found suitable. According to this respondent, SGBs should have ‘more power in the say of who would fit in at a school like this’ because they knew what was required. The other respondent was of the opinion that the changes were good because they prevented the SGB from appointing someone ‘connected to the school’. According to him, the legislation will ensure that the SGB selects candidates with ‘more care’ if the Department has the ‘final’ say.

Three of the participating black parents were of the opinion that the reason could be found in the ‘past’, that it was because of the ‘legacy of apartheid’ in the workplace. They assumed that the changes are intended to eliminate past divisions and injustices through the provision of equal employment opportunities that would restore existing language, racial and gender

imbalances. One of the members of this school governing body indicated that the principal had not, however, discussed it with them at any great length. The remaining parent participant, who serves as the governing body of School E, was of a different opinion. According to him, the government had often not been satisfied with the people who were appointed, resulting in 'disputes'. Because 'only one' candidate was previously nominated for appointment the government's hands were tied. By insisting that governing bodies should now provide the Head of Department with three names this problem could be overcome.

These responses seem to indicate that black school governing body members are more aware of the possible rationale informing the changes to legislation than their white counterparts are. Even so, if the claims of their white counterparts are true, it is the governing body of the formerly white school that is making the greatest effort to promote racial equality in the workplace, not the governing bodies of the two black schools included in my sample. Whether the claims of the white governing body members could be accepted at face value is not certain because, although one of the participating parents indicated that their SGB has interviewed many black applicants, only one has been appointed, supposedly because she was the only one who was proficient in both Afrikaans and English, even though at one stage 'all the applicants for a particular post were black'.

It is also not clear whether or not their efforts to identify potential black teaching assistants have had any success. It would seem, therefore, as if both groups are reluctant to actively promote integration, with the white school seemingly using language proficiency as an excuse not to do so while the black schools hide behind location and white fears. Either way, since the staff composition at these schools does not reflect the elimination of apartheid divisions, neither of the

governing bodies can be said to be implementing legislation as they are expected to.

#### **5.4.8 Summary of parent data**

Based on the afore-going comparison, I would conclude that, based on data collected from parent governing body members, there is little difference between the governing bodies of schools formerly regulated by the Department of Education and Culture: House of Assembly (DEC: HoA), i.e. formerly white schools, and those (black schools) formerly regulated by the Department of Education and Training (DET) as regards SGB experience (tenure), job satisfaction (in terms of serving as SGB members), the agendas of general and extraordinary SGB meetings, basic selection criteria, or bias as regards race, language and gender.

There does, however, seem to be less agreement on whether or not the SGB is effective amongst black parent respondents than there is amongst white ones, probably because both white members belong to the same SGB. The most obvious difference, though, seems to be in the reasons why white and black parents respectively enjoy serving on the SGB. While both groups indicated that they wanted to make a difference in the school and in others' lives, white respondents seem to gain emotional satisfaction from this while black respondents' seemed to gain in self-esteem and community status.



## 5.5 Comparison of teacher responses

I conducted interviews with four teachers who serve on governing bodies of the schools included in my sample. Two of these were white, serving on the governing body of the same school and two, each serving on the governing body of a different school, were black. Both the white teachers and one of the black teachers were females; the remaining black teacher was male.

### 5.5.1 SGB Experience

With the exception of one of the respondents, a white teacher, who was serving for a third term, all the other respondents were serving on the governing bodies of their respective schools for the first time. The female respondent who was serving for the third term indicated that she had previously served on SGB committees, suggesting that she might have been an ad hoc rather than a full-time SGB member. She was, therefore, not really serving for a third term but for a second term, the first as a teacher representative and currently as the SGB secretary. The remaining white respondent, who serves on the same SGB as the SGB secretary, has been on the SGB for two years while the two black respondents have been SGB members for two and three years respectively.

Since three of the four respondents have been serving for at least two years – the other one much longer – one could infer that they should have a pretty good sense of what the SGB is all about – its principles, procedures, responsibilities – but that there might be areas, such as the interpretation and implementation of legislation, where they are not yet as competent as they could be.

### 5.5.2 Enjoyment

When asked whether or not they enjoyed being governing body members three of the four respondents indicated that they did; one of them – the white respondent serving her first term on the governing body of School A – indicated that she enjoyed it ‘sometimes and sometimes not’. One of the reasons she offers for this ambivalence is that ‘administration’ is not her ‘first love’, teaching is. This being the case she feels guilty when she has to attend meetings because these keep her out of the class, especially since she has a ‘difficult class’ that works at a ‘slower pace’ and needs ‘a lot of attention’. This indicates that the school sometimes holds SGB meetings during school hours which is not in line with what SASA says. The only reason she stays on the SGB is because she wants to be or do something ‘useful’.

All four the respondents ascribed their enjoyment to the fact that it was ‘interesting’ to ‘constantly learn new things’, such as what was happening at a ‘higher’ level. One of the white respondents called this ‘an eye-opener’, while one of the black respondents indicated that, since they, as governing body members, were now part of ‘governance’ they were no longer ‘at the end of the line’, being ‘left outside when decisions are made’; instead they are part of the decision-making process. It would seem, therefore, that the reason why teachers, across racial divides, enjoy serving on the SGB is because it gives them a greater understanding of ‘how things work’ as well as a sense that they have an influence - or a say - in what happens to education.

### 5.5.3 Perceived reasons for nomination/election

Both groups of teachers – black as well as white – seemed to think that teachers, whom they represent on the governing bodies of their respective schools trusted them, either because they had the requisite skills or because they had won teachers' confidence through their past actions. In this regard both the white teacher respondents indicated that, in addition to their good track records at the school, their availability could have played a role in their nomination/election. One of them indicated that this was her second term of office as a teacher representative on the SGB, that she had served on numerous committees and that other teachers have probably come to see her as 'someone they can come to with their questions and concerns'. The fact that she was also the SGB secretary, she suggested, confirmed her perception that people trusted her and that they were satisfied with the way she was carrying out her SGB duties. The other teacher indicated that, since she had been at the school for 30 years she understood the problems of the school and, 'being older and not having children at home' she had more time available to give to the school.

The black teacher respondents believed that they were nominated/elected because of specific skills they possessed which, according to them, could be useful to the SGB. One of them indicated that, having been an administrative clerk prior to becoming a teacher, she was computer literate and that this skill had led to her being elected as the SGB secretary. The other black teacher indicated that he had served and chaired a number of SGB sub-committees in the past – 'maintenance committee, school committee and cultural committee' – and that this could have led to his nomination/election. Because of the way he had conducted himself as chair of these committees, he indicated, teachers now had

‘confidence’ in him because they knew that if he was their representative on the SGB ‘positive results would be acquired’.

#### 5.5.4 SGB Agendas

When asked what was typically discussed at SGB meetings, white teacher respondents gave very different answers. One of them indicated that the agenda depended on the type of SGB meeting being held. Executive meetings typically focused on governance matters – finances, strategic plans, discipline – as well as on ‘anything that affects the learners, such as social grants, financial assistance from the school, and school uniforms. Committee meetings, on the other hand, are task-specific but always involve policy matters – discussing departmental policies and integrating them into existing school policies, drafting/updating school-specific policies, drafting/changing/updating the school code of conduct, ‘which is the largest thing’. The other respondent indicated that SGB meetings typically focused on academic matters, ‘what is working well and what is a problem’, claiming that each SGB members has to present a report dealing with his/her portfolios, e.g. extra curricular, academic, hostel, and financial matters.

There could be many reasons for the difference in these two teacher members’ responses but, based on the evidence I have in my possession, I have to infer that the difference could be ascribed to the number of years each of them has served on the SGB. The first respondent, being in her second term, and having served on various sub-committees, would have a better sense of the overall activities of the SGB than the latter, who is still relatively new to the position. This inference is supported if the two teachers’ responses to the next question, dealing with the agenda of an SGB meeting dedicated to teacher selection, are taken into account. The long-serving teacher member provides a detailed, step-by-step description of

the procedures that the SGB follows in meetings dealing with this matter, while the novice member simply states that they 'have to decide what the post is and what that post requires' and 'what kind of person' would best fit this description.

Black teacher respondents, like their white counterparts, indicated that, generally, SGB meetings focus on school governance matters. Even so, indications are that the SGBs of formerly black schools participating in this study focus primarily on operational and communal issues - school maintenance, school safety, community and stakeholder involvement, the coming parents' meeting (dates, agenda and means of notifying parents), and learner behaviour - while the focus of their white counterparts is on strategic matters (policy development and implementation). This does not mean that the SGBs of DET schools neglect strategic matters altogether. They do, according to the respondents discuss changes and improvements to the school, including difficulties in this regard, but their primary focus is on making things work. Like their white counterparts, the SGBs of formerly black schools also discuss academic matters - learner progress, and the challenges educators face in their classes. It would seem, therefore, that typical SGB agendas in my sample are influenced more by context than by race or SGB competence, as suggested in the literature.

With regard to the agenda of extraordinary SGB meetings focusing specifically on the selection/short listing of teachers for possible appointment to their respective schools, teacher SGB members who participated in this study followed more or less the same procedures, suggesting that they do take cognisance of departmental guidelines in this regard. Typical activities/procedures include scrutinizing and discussing the advertisements in which the posts were advertised as well as applicants' curriculum vitae with a view to matching the post requirements to the candidate's qualifications and professional experience.

Once again the difference between the teacher selection meeting of the formerly white school and those of formerly black schools participating in this study can be found in the emphasis each group places on specific aspects as well as on the selection of the eventual interview panel.

According to the long-serving SGB teacher member of the formerly white school – School A – they have more than one meeting related to the selection of candidates for possible appointment as teachers. At the first meeting, using the management plan provided by the Department as basis, the SGB drafts its own ‘internal policy or management plan’ for short listing, decide on dates that will ‘suit’ the governing body, identify SGB members to serve on the selection panel, and notify the Unions. On receiving the applications from the Department, the SGB informs the ‘panel’ of the ‘final’ date on which selection will take place. During this meeting applications are opened and, using the criteria set by the Department and the short-listing procedure decided on during the previous meeting, marks are allocated according to a weighting scale. If an applicant satisfies the criteria, s/he is short listed; if not, his/her application is put aside.

Black teacher respondents made no mention of guidelines or ‘internal policies’; instead, they focused on the short-listing process itself, suggesting that they wait until they receive the applications before they meet and that they meet only once to compile the short list. In this meeting, the focus is on ‘the candidates who have applied, how to let them know that they are short listed - that is phoning or sending letters’. There is no mention of any specific selection criteria other than those intrinsic to the post but candidates with ‘management’ skills or experience seems to be favoured more than those without. This confirms my earlier inference that, as SGBS of formerly black schools are concerned, the need to ‘make a difference’ in their schools is a priority, not only in the selection of SGB members but also in the selection of teaching staff.

A major difference in the outcome of formerly white and black school short listing meetings is that, in the case of the former, not all SGB members are involved in the selection process and/or sit on the interview panel whereas in the case of the latter duties are 'divided' so that 'everyone will have to participate'. When the teacher respondents representing School A, the formerly white school, were asked how they decided on the interview panel, they indicated that such a panel typically included the chairperson or vice-chairperson, secretary or vice-secretary, and two to three additional governing body members – depending on the post concerned. If, for example, it is a (senior) academic post, the deputy-principal is co-opted to sit on the panel; if it is a post level 1 post, an HoD in whose learning area the teacher will be working is co-opted. Later on, when commenting on the effectiveness of the process, they indicate that union members are also invited.

Also, all the teacher member respondents, irrespective of race, indicated that the short-listing process was a long, difficult and 'tense' process because they have to be objective, thorough and fair. Both groups indicated that SGB members who had applied for a post would be excluded from any and all selection procedures and that no SGB member is allowed to speak out about what happens at these meetings. Also, 'if there are too many identified candidates, we go through a sifting process'. SGB groupings, (black as well as white) indicated that their SGBs are very strict about confidentiality. The black respondent from School E mentioned, for example, that every person participating in the short listing meeting has to take an oath that 'whatever information you are going to share will be kept indoors and will not be discussed outside with anyone who is not an SGB member; even SGB members are not allowed to talk about those things unless they are in a meeting'. According to him, it is this 'oath' more than anything else that distinguishes the short-listing meeting from ordinary SGB

meetings because, 'as the people who were delegated by the educators' they have to meet with educators to find out how they 'feel about matters' and to 'voice the educators' concerns' at general meetings, hence the agenda and outcome of general SGB meetings have to be shared with those they represent.

#### **5.5.5 Selection criteria**

All the teacher members who participated in my study indicated that, while qualifications were important they also took cognisance of other factors, such as personality traits, professional experience, language proficiency and management skills. In short, they considered the whole person, his/her 'internal' rather than 'physical' characteristics, coupled with appropriate qualifications and experience.

##### **5.5.5.1 Personal attributes**

Both of the white respondents – from School A, which is a school catering for learners with specific disabilities (special needs) – indicated that they were looking for applicants that would be able to work with the kind of children attending the school on whose SGB they were serving. More specifically, they were looking for someone that was 'soft and caring', who would connect with learners not only at an academic level but also on an 'emotional' one.

The black respondent from School D indicated that the SGB on which she served looked for a person who exuded confidence and leadership potential, that is someone who convinces the SGB that s/he is an efficient classroom manager. These skills, according to the respondent, can only be determined during the interview, not from the applicant's curriculum vitae. The black candidate from



School E agreed, arguing that it is from the way a short-listed candidate conducts her/himself during the interview that they can determine her/his worth as a possible staff member and her/his ability to fit in at the school concerned. One of the things the candidate should be able to do, according to this respondent, is to express her/himself fluently in English because the school on whose governing body he serves is an 'English-medium school'. Another character trait that would be to the interviewee's advantage is her/his ability and willingness to work hard because the school is so 'over-crowded' that only those who are 'willing to go the extra mile' would be able to handle it. Finally, according to this respondent, the successful candidate would be a self-disciplined one without a 'criminal record'.

#### **5.5.5.2 Qualifications**

Both groups of respondents – black as well as white teacher members of the school governing bodies that participated in my study – agreed that the minimum qualification that would be considered would be a three-year diploma. This would place the candidate on an REQV 13 level. The white teachers indicated, however, that they would prefer someone with four years of training (but this is not the criterion in legislation), and that, if no candidate were deemed suitable, they would re-advertise the post. In considering the candidate's qualifications they would go beyond the number of years training that the person underwent, also considering whether or not the qualification was relevant to the school phase and subject in which the person would be teaching. In this regard they would prefer someone with a degree for the 'higher grades'.

The black respondent from School D did not respond to this or the next question, which dealt with professional experience. The other black respondent (from School E) indicated that they would be happy with a three-year 'national'

diploma – a ‘qualified REQV13 educator’ – provided that the person was registered with the South African Council of Educators. If not, s/he would not be ‘eligible’ for the interview because SACE is the ‘regulating body’.

#### **5.5.5.3 Professional experience**

When asked whether experience played a role in the recommendations that the SGB made to the HOD, neither of the black respondents answered this question, while the two white respondents indicated that, since they catered for children with special needs they preferred someone with experience in this field. By implication this would exclude candidates with no teaching experience. One of the respondents indicated, however, that she would like the SGB also to consider people who had extra training in the field especially ‘younger people’ since this would give her the opportunity to ‘train’ them and to share some of her experience with them before she retires.

#### **5.5.5.4 Language as a factor**

When asked whether language played a role in the selection process, three of the four respondents indicated that it did, while the fourth one, the black respondent from School D, indicated that it only played a role if the post was for a language teacher. According to this respondent, it is subject or learning area knowledge that is the determining factor, not language. To support his claim he mentioned that the SGB had ‘hired a person from Zimbabwe’ the previous year because he was ‘the best candidate; we did not look at language’. The other black respondent reiterated that, although language proficiency could be post-specific – ‘where the teacher is supposed to teach Sepedi or Zulu, this is where we consider language’ – the ability to express her/himself ‘fluently in the English language’ is the only language consideration that plays a role in other learning

areas. He insists that there is no language discrimination in the SGB because they 'have Tsonga people teaching in school whereas our first languages are only Sepedi and Zulu. We even have Venda people teaching in the school'.

The two respondents representing the formerly white, 'special' school, indicated, however, that language was a crucial consideration in the selection process but that the 'needs of the post' determined this. They offered three reasons for the importance they attached to language proficiency. In the first instance, since this was a 'special school', communicative ability was even more crucial to learning than in ordinary schools. Secondly, since many of the children were 'hard of hearing' communication in their home language would make learning easier for them – 'it is difficult for them to be taught in another language'. Finally, since the school used both English and Afrikaans as languages of learning, the candidate's ability to use both fluently would be a determining factor in her/his selection.

Informed by perceptions that formerly Afrikaans-medium schools use language as a means of excluding black learners and teachers from their schools, I asked these teachers whether language is the reason for their only having one black teacher at their schools. The response was affirmative – 'we are mostly an Afrikaans school: the person coming in must be able to perform in Afrikaans'. Seeming to realize, however, that my question might be construed as a suggestion that they were being racist, they emphasized that they were not excluding people because they could not speak Afrikaans. They excluded them because they were not equally proficient in both Afrikaans *and* English. 'We do have English boys in Grade 12 and those learners get their work given in English. Teachers are proficient in both English and Afrikaans. Even the Black teacher who teaches English speaks to us in Afrikaans'. They indicated moreover that bilingualism is especially important in the 'junior' (Foundation) phase because

the small number of English speakers in these grades do not warrant an extra teacher hence they have to 'fuse with the Afrikaans children'.

#### 5.5.5.5 Race as a factor

As was the case with parent SGB members, all four the teacher SGB members who responded to my inquiry about the role that race played in the selection process denied any racist agenda. The two white respondents indicated that race is not a 'factor' - it plays 'no role'. What is important, according to them, is the person's ability to 'fit in' and to 'deal with the grade/subject they are needed for'. Consequently they consider the person's qualification and SACE number. To further support their claim that they were not racist, one of the respondents explained that the majority of their learners (60% of them) were currently white and that they do have one black teacher on the staff. The dominance of white teachers was not, they argued, because they were racists but because black applicants were not proficient in both languages of learning.

The teacher from School D (a black school) indicated that they 'just look at the requirements stated in the advertised post, and select'. According to him, they 'never look at race' but since they only 'receive applications from blacks and coloureds, not from whites the latter do not feature in their selection processes. The teacher respondent representing the governing body of School E reiterated the position that 'everyone will be considered as long as they have the minimum requirements' and since posts are advertised 'through the department of education ... everyone who is interested in applying will be eligible'. Insisting that race plays no role in the SGB selection process, he mentions that 'white teachers are also welcome', just like the 'coloured teachers' who are currently staff members of the school. The reason, according to him, 'because now we live

in the new South Africa where would like to see our learners being able to communicate and relate with people of other races’.

#### 5.5.5.6 Gender as a factor

Neither of the white teacher respondents indicated that gender was specifically considered except as a ‘last’ factor, i.e. if the ‘specific subject’ requires a ‘specific gender’. One of them indicated, though, that they ‘would like to have more men with strong character’ because they could serve as ‘role models for especially the boys’. The two black respondents indicated that gender did play a role, both referring to the fact that women had not enjoyed equal opportunities in the past and that, in terms of the law, this needed to be rectified.

One of the black respondents indicated that, as regard the SGB of his school, the ‘first preference is women ... especially when coming to management posts – ‘there is this legislation, women can become leaders, principals, deputy principals, et cetera.’ The other one pointed out that although ‘affirmative action gives the females the advantage of being considered first’, they could not give women preference at the school on whose SGB he serves because ‘we actually have more females than men’. While claiming that this has a historical cause his comment that ‘the people who raise children are mostly women, men are supposed to work those tough jobs like working in the mine or construction’ could be indicative of deeply entrenched stereotypes regarding male and female roles in society. So as not to be accused of gender discrimination, while also trying to appoint more men, he claims the SGB, when advertising posts, now has ‘this special condition: we request two males and two females if, let’s say, 4 posts are advertised. This is where we have gender equity’.

#### **5.5.5.7 Other contributing factors**

Indications are that, apart from preferring applicants with experience in special needs education, the SGB of the formerly white school does not explicitly consider any other aspects while the SGBs of the two formerly black schools that participated in this study do. One of the respondents indicated that they wanted someone who not only had ‘knowledge of the new curriculum statement’ because ‘it is the policy that governs how we plan, conduct and assess our lessons’ but who would be able to manage ‘the job and the classroom’. The other respondent indicated that they also considered specific legislative requirements, such as the need not to discriminate against those with disabilities’ because ‘the law states that discrimination of that kind can amount to crime’. The SGB on which he serves is also very particular about not considering anyone who is not registered with the South African Council of Educators (SACE).

#### **5.5.6 SGB effectiveness**

Indications from the data are that both groups (teacher members of white as well as black SGBs who participated in my study) experience the SGBs on which they serve as effective because the procedures and criteria they use in short listing teachers for possible appointment are thorough, fair and legal. The ways in which individual respondents justified their perceptions suggest, however, that their interpretations of effectiveness, fairness and legality are not exactly the same.

One of the white respondents, the one who is still serving her first term of office, did not answer this question. The other one seems to equate effectiveness with the extent to which the letter of the law is obeyed as far as prescribed procedures

are concerned, following legislation 'as it is given to us: we don't divert from the process of short listing'. To her fairness, and legality are therefore about the way in which legislation is implemented, the 'how' of the law.

*'One of the things to use as an example, a change in legislation is receiving applications at the school; we don't do that at all. They have to go through the Department. They have to follow the whole process and so I think that's a fair process to ensure that everybody gets the same opportunities'.*

The black respondent serving on the SGB of School D equated its effectiveness to the improvement in the school's Grade 12 results over 'the past years', suggesting that it is because of the SGB that teachers are 'now willing to pass their knowledge to the children to see to it that we get good results'. This supports earlier indications that teaching and learning as well as teacher discipline feature on the agenda of the SGB meetings of the DET schools in my sample.

The black respondent serving on the SGB of School D acknowledged that the SGB on which he serves sometimes selects someone who is not as good as s/he appeared to be at the interview – 'you find that a person can impress you in the way they express themselves, but you later find that this person does not do their work properly'. The other one, (from School E) insists that the SGB on which he serves is effective. He justifies his claim with reference to the SGB's objectivity ('personal issues arise but we try not to get personal'), its consideration of equity legislation (gender, language, and culture), and its involvement in teacher development initiatives. He specifically mentions that the SGB identifies a teacher's 'weakness' and then 'helps' him/her by allocating funds for 'development' and/or taking them to 'development workshops'. This response confirms earlier indications that, as regards this SGB, the ability of teachers to

bring about change is an important consideration in the selection of candidates. That the SGB goes to the trouble of ‘developing’ those who do not live up to the SGB’s impression of them during the interviews suggest that the SGB accepts its accountability for its (wrong) decisions and takes the requisite corrective action.

### 5.5.7 Knowledge of the law

When asked whether the criteria they used for short-listing applicants were in line with legislative requirements all the respondents said they were. Even so, none of them discussed specific aspects of such alignment. Instead they focus on the procedures they use during the selection process – ‘they ‘try to be fair’, giving the candidates’ ‘marks’ (white ‘novice’ School A), following the ‘policy that is provided by the department. So ‘everything we do we refer to the legislation unless someone individually goes against the legislation’ (black SGB member: School E).

The ‘novice’ SGB respondent simply stated that she thought they were. She did not refer to legislation or give any indication that she knew about changes in this regard. The other, long-serving’ white SGB member indicated that she found the changes to legislation somewhat problematic, explaining that:

*‘The ‘Department does not see the candidates as we see them; they see them on paper only.... What’s on paper is not a true reflection of a person. I feel the Department should accept the decision of the people sitting there and appoint the person it was agreed. They must allow the judgment of the people that did the interviews’.*

She acknowledges that interview ‘situations’ are not always ‘good’ because many people can’t ‘perform’ in an interview but, according to her, this problem could



be overcome if 'Union representatives are part of the interviews and agree that they are happy with the process followed'.

When asked why, according to them, the government found it necessary to change previous legislation regarding the selection and appointment of educators at public schools, white respondents gave quite different explanations. The long-serving SGB member was of the opinion that requiring SGBs to provide the Department with three rather than one name gave the Department 'more to choose from' and enabled them to ensure that 'the best candidate will get the appointment'. The novice member was of the opinion that the changes were aimed at giving teacher the opportunity to move 'from rural areas into the city areas' or to 'go into schools where previously they could not go in to teach'. She then mentions 'equity', explaining it as 'giving everybody equal opportunities', adding that this must be the primary motive behind the changes.

The responses of the black SGB members reflected those of the white ones. One of them focused on equity, indicating that 'it was to address the past imbalances and discrimination'. The other one focused on the listing of three names, indicating that this enhances the transparency of the process while simultaneously creating an opportunity for the department to 'intervene' in the interview and/or recommendation process if necessary. He approves of these changes because past practices where 'bias' and 'nepotism' were at the order of the day would be stopped.

### **5.5.8 Summary of teacher responses**

Based on the data gathered from one-on-one interviews with teacher members of the SGBs who participated in my study I have to conclude that, according to the

black teacher respondents, the SGBs of former DET (black) schools seem to be more aware of legislation on the employment of educators than their white counterparts and specifically consider legislative criteria in this regard when short listing candidates for possible appointment as teachers at their schools. This does not imply the SGBs of former DEC: House of Assembly (white) schools deliberately ignore or undermine legislation. As indicated by one of the white respondents 'they' 'follow legislation as it is given to us, we don't divert from the process of short listing' What is interesting, though is that it is only the white respondents that mention the involvement of the unions, and only as a means of justifying the validity of the SGB process and decisions to the Department.

It would seem, though, as if black respondents are more aware of the declared rationale for or intent of the changes to legislation than their white counterparts. While there are subtle indications that black as well as white respondents still harbour stereotyped ideas about male and female roles in society and/or the ability of males and females to perform specific roles in schools, both groups seem to accept that change is inevitable. While acknowledging their bias there are indications that both groups strive to keep their own bias in check when short-listing. The SGBs of former DET (black) schools go out of their way not to discriminate on the basis of gender and disability while the formerly white school (DEC:HoA) claims to do as much as it can, given the school context, to promote racial integration.

## **5.6 Comparison of data on principals**

School principals are not nominated or elected to the SGB: they are *ex officio* members (SASA, 1996). I conducted interviews with five school principals, three serving on the governing bodies of former DEC: HoA (white) schools and two

serving on the governing bodies of former DET (black) schools. One 'principal' had not yet been appointed as a principal yet, but was the official 'Acting Principal'. There were no females in this group: all five the principals were males.

### **5.6.1 SGB Experience**

With one exception, the principal from School E, who has only been a principal for three years, all the others are experienced principals: two of them have been principals for eight years, one for ten years and one for eighteen years. It is assumed that, because of their experience, these principals are in the position to make a positive contribution to the SGB. There is, of course, also the danger that they can use their experience and intimate knowledge of school affairs to dominate or steer the SGB in a direction of their own preference.

### **5.6.2 Enjoyment**

With the exception of the principal of School E, who has fewer years of experience as a school principal than the other four, all the principals indicated that they enjoyed serving on the governing bodies of the schools they managed. Not all of them enjoyed it unreservedly, though. The principal of School A, the 'special' formerly white school, indicated that, while he found it 'very fulfilling in terms of his role as principal to serve on the SGB, he found it 'frustrating' that parents were not particularly keen to become SGB members.

The principal of School B was quite adamant that he enjoyed being an SGB member although he acknowledged that there are times when discussions become heated or when there are 'clashes/differences of opinion'. One of the

reasons he gives for his enjoyment is the fact that he works with 'very professional people', who, by bringing their 'kind of world' to the meetings, teach him, as principal, valuable lessons. This principal also indicated that he accepts responsibility for providing new SGB member with copies of the relevant Acts, which they then 'study' at home, and that the Department 'sometimes' offers SGB training workshops on Saturdays. Not all the SGB members seem to appreciate these workshops, apparently using their professional status as an excuse not to attend.

*'Well, it is not always easy to convince these people that they need training, especially on a Saturday, but usually most of them will go. Training, I think, is thorough, but you will always get these people who will always say, but I know these things. I wasted time. That kind of attitude you will always get. All SGBs are well educated and are very professional people, e.g. an attorney, for a labour relations meeting, will say he knows everything and does not need any training'*

Although the principal claims that he enjoys working with these 'very professional people' their presence on the SGB does not seem to be without its own complications.

The last of the white principals, the one managing School C, is the only one of this group (white principals) who seems to experience nothing but pleasure from serving on the SGB. He likes representing 'the management of the school' but he also likes the 'interaction' with people who are not part of the teaching staff, i.e. parents and 'other non-teaching members' because they have different views on 'certain things', which allows everybody to 'discuss...and learn from each other'. The relative ease with which this principal handles his SGB membership could, of course be ascribed to the fact that his is the only SGB in this group (formerly white schools) that consists of white, Afrikaans-speaking members only, hence

cultural and linguistic mismatches that might lead to communication breakdowns are basically non-existent.

The responses of the two black principals seem to suggest that their enjoyment of their SGB duties is somewhat more ambivalent than that of their white counterparts. While the principal of School D indicates that he does enjoy being on the SGB, his comment, that 'it is part of (his) job' suggests that he has to enjoy it whether or not he wants to. This is also the position taken by the principal of School E, who explicitly states that 'it is not a question of enjoying it but a question of performing your task. Since it is my job I have to find pleasure in it'. According to this principal serving on the SGB as a principal is a 'very demanding and challenging task' because it is the principal who has to 'ensure' that departmental policies are 'implemented as envisaged'. The principal of School D, while not as explicit, seems to share the same view, indicating that he cannot 'plan the activities of the school alone' because he has to accommodate the SGB, who has 'lots of ideas' on what their 'assistance' to him and the school should be.

### **5.6.3 Perceived reasons for nomination/election to SGB**

The reasons the principals offered for their nomination/election to the SGB suggests varied understandings of principals' SGB role function as envisaged in SASA. The new Education Laws Amendment Act of 2008 amends SASA of 1996 with clause 21a which clearly states that the functions and responsibilities of the school principal are to implement the various education policies and to see to the professional management of the school. The clause clearly indicates that the principal represents the Head of Department (HoD) in the governing body and is responsible for the implementation of all mandates issued by the Minister or the relevant Departments of Education.

While the principal of School B categorically states that he is merely an ‘ex officio member’ given his position as school principal, the principal of School A, the ‘special school’ seems to view his role as being a supportive one. Informed by this assumption he initiated the creation of specific ‘guardianship’ structures and procedures in the school that could facilitate the creation and maintenance of personal links with parents in far-off areas. He indicates that, given the specific niche of the school – to cater for learners with particular disabilities – the feeding area of the school is not ‘demarcated’, ‘children come from all over South Africa, even as far as Angola and Nigeria’. According to him, he goes to great lengths not to impose his will on the SGB:

*‘As principal I don’t want to put myself in a position where it seems I favour people. I ...instruct the guardian teachers to consult with the parents. We arrange a social to introduce the parents to each other and allow them to nominate each other. It then is over to the sitting SGB. We don’t hand pick people’.*

The principal of School B, on the other hand, seems to think that he is a member because of his legal knowledge.

*‘If you want to be on the SGB it’s very important, that you must know the school’s laws and regulations and all the stuff to run a school properly. And I think I have educated myself in that regard. I think I know enough to be of assistance to the people on the governing body and the school’.*

His comment that ‘it’s the one thing that I decided myself’ seems to suggest that he thinks he could choose not to serve on the governing body of his school when, in fact, principals are legally obliged to attend and contribute to SGB meetings (SASA, 1996).

He is not the only principal interviewed who seem to think so. The two principals serving on the governing bodies of sampled black schools indicated that they think they were members of the SGB because 'people' see them as leaders and knowledge workers. According to the principal of School D, the SGB realizes that it is 'a team' and, because team members 'support one another', they 'appreciate' his 'involvement'. This 'appreciation', according to him, had been lacking until the SGB were trained.

*'At first it was difficult because of the parents who did not understand their functions as defined by section 16 of SASA. They would interfere with the functions that had to be performed by the principal. This was a big clash. But now with the training they have undergone, I think they have improved and understand their position. I don't see any difficulty, even with the coming SGB elections'.*

Not only do these comments suggest tension between the principal and parent SGB members but they also confirm my earlier inference (see 4.7.2) regarding parental interference in the way the management functions re allocated to principals in terms of SASA (1996). Although the principal of School E also indicates that he is on the SGB because people regard him as someone who is knowledgeable in governance matters and can therefore 'lead' the SGB in this regard, the tension mentioned by his black equivalent is not a factor in his case. His response seems to suggest that the lack of tension could be ascribed to the high levels of illiteracy in the area, a factor that could lead to governing body members looking to him to 'play the role of' a guide, 'ensuring that the School Governing Body does what is correct and nothing else' and that it implements policy 'as expected'.

#### 5.6.4 SGB Agendas

As regards differences in the agendas of general and extraordinary SGB meetings, with specific reference to meetings related to teacher selection/short listing, the principal of School A, the special school, indicated that the focus of general/ordinary SGB meetings is on the learner and that they discuss 'only what is in the interest of the child'. What that is, he does not say. The teacher selection meetings are, however, 'totally different' in that not all the SGB members are in attendance, only the elected committee. This committee scrutinizes applications, short lists applicants, conducts interviews and makes the requisite recommendations regarding possible appointment.

The principal of School B indicated that each person serving on the SGB of the school that he manages is responsible for a 'specific portfolio' and that the agenda is drawn up with that in mind. A typical meeting, according to him, would start with the principal's report, followed by the financial report and discussions on legal issues, school maintenance, extra-mural activities, dress codes, et cetera, all of which is the responsibility of some or other portfolio committee. One of the portfolios deals with teacher development and accepts responsibility for initiating and reporting on teacher training activities. According to this principal the portfolio system works because all SGB members are experts in some or other field.

Extraordinary meetings related to teacher selection and appointment, however, focus primarily on 'matters related to the interview'. As required by law (SASA, 1996), the SGB appoints a selection committee that is responsible both for the sifting and interviewing of applicants. In this school (School B), the selection committee consists of the principal, the Head of Department responsible for the



subject or learning area concerned, an educator, 'somebody from the sports staff', and parents. The selection committee does the sifting, formulates interview questions and criteria that are 'related to the vacancy' and has them typed up. According to the principal he then prepares committee members for the interview by informing them of 'relevant legal stipulations as to non-discrimination'. He then issues a copy of the interview questions and criteria to each committee member. Having done so, he, as the principal, allocates one or two questions to each committee member, who will ask these at the interview. The rule, according to the principal, is that the same person asks these questions of each candidate. When asked how many candidates are short listed at these meetings the principal laughed and said,

*'It is many years since we were given a department post. Our appointments are governing body posts. I know legislation says not less than five candidates, but in this case the SGB feel that they are not bound by the legislation and concentrate on the people that they think qualify but it is usually not less than three'.*

The SGB of School C also operates in terms of committees that raise issues and/or make recommendations to the full SGB. A typical SGB meeting would, according to this principal, first focus on matters arising from the previous meeting before moving on to finances – 'I think that is very important' – and committee reports. Meetings typically close with a discussion of general matters and an indication of urgent matters that the governing body should attend to.

As regards extraordinary meetings related to teacher selection and appointment the principal of School C first wanted clarification about the kind of teacher appointment I was referring to. He reminded me that there are 'two kinds of teachers' those employed by 'the GDE' (Gauteng Department of Education) and those employed 'by the SGB themselves'. He then limited himself to a discussion

of GDE employed teachers, indicating that the school governing body plays no role in deciding which applicants qualify for selection – that is done by the Department. The School Governing Body ‘can only make recommendations’. The recommendation process, according to him, involves a number of steps:

- At the beginning of the year the Department of Education sends out circulars to all schools.
- Schools then have to indicate whether or not there are or will be any vacancies, indicating which they are and what the requirements for each are. Having done so the school returns the forms to the Department.
- The Department then publishes all available posts – in all public schools - in the Government Gazette – the ‘vacancy list’ – and ensures that each school has a copy.
- Educators who want to apply for any of the posts advertised in the gazette have to do so in accordance with the ‘rules’ and time schedules contained in the gazette.
- The Education Department then sifts and sorts all the applications according to the posts and the schools and on a specific date they send all those applications to the schools. Accompanying the applications is a circular inviting the principal and one of the governing body members usually the chairperson, to attend a meeting with the Education Department so that they can ‘educate them on how to handle the whole system of applications and so on’.
- The school governing body then has to select an interview panel that is going to handle the whole process. Any governing body member who has ‘a

personal interest' in the outcome must excuse her/himself from the panel but union members must be part of the process.

- The panel conducts its business 'according to certain laws and regulations like Resolution 2 of 2005, and...Resolution 5 of 2005' which stipulates that the 'IDSO must handle the principal's application and that kind of stuff'.
- The envelope with the names of the applicants identified by the Department must be opened in the presence of 'everybody, and then they decide how they are going to handle the interview'.
- Questions that have no relation to the post must be avoided during the interview and each panel member individually allocates a mark to applicants' answers. These marks will eventually determine who is short-listed or not.
- No discussion of the allocated mark is allowed since 'a strong character on the SGB might influence the other people'. Instead, the 'papers ' are handed to the 'secretary' who, with the union members, arranges these in rank order.
- The results are then put in an envelope, which the chairperson 'seals with the school stamp' and sends off to the Department. The HoD then chooses 'one of the three' names submitted, and 'must give the SGB a good reason' for his/her choice.

The SGB meetings at School D also consist mainly of committee reports. These include reports on finances, sport, teaching and learning support material, and SGB plans. The meetings could also include a discussion of short-listing criteria 'in relation to the needs of the school' but not all SGB members participate in this discussion, only the elected – primarily parent - interview panel. Extraordinary

meetings dealing with teacher selection differ from the general SGB meetings in that they are 'specific' rather than committee-related. According to the principal of this school the SGB looks at 'the needs' of the school and discusses post-related issues.

While also discussing 'finance, policy matters' and governance issues, typical SGB meetings at School E, according to its principal, also include discussion on ways 'to make our school a better school' and the role that the SGB can play in ensuring that 'quality teaching takes place'.

Contrary to what was said by the (white) principal of School C, the (black) principal of School E indicated that the school management team is responsible for advertising the post and informing the district office in this regard. They must, however, according to the respondent, work through the principal, who represents the DoE. If the district office approves of the SMT's 'advertisement, it will be placed in the vacancy list of the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) and people can apply.

The Department will then, according to the respondent, determine deadlines for short-listing, interviews, and submission of recommended candidates. Only on receipt of this information – the 'management plan' – will the SGB convene a short-listing meeting. The short-listing panel, which does not necessarily consist of all the SGB members, conducts interviews in accordance with guidelines provided by the DoE. Panel members are identified by the SGB but must include the principal, parents, teachers and non-teaching staff. The SGB also decides on the roles each panel member is to play – 'one will be the secretary; one will ask questions, one will be the usher'.

### 5.6.5 Selection criteria

As regards selection criteria the principal of School A, the 'special school', simply stated that these depended on the 'demarcation' of the post while the principal of School B indicated that the SGB on which he serves usually draws up criteria and 'typically put a value' to these. The principal of School C emphasized the candidate's ability to fit into the school culture while the two black respondents highlighted subject/learning area competence above all else. These two respondents stressed the importance of choosing the right person for the job, arguing that it is up to the candidate to 'satisfy' the SGB that s/he is the 'best' of the bunch – 'the ability shown by the applicant during the interview is quite key'. Acknowledging that, the final decision is often 'subjective', the principal of School E highlighted the fact that, while the short-listing process is aimed at reaching 'consensus' on the best candidate, the SGB does its best to select candidates 'suitably qualified for the post', i.e. it would only consider teachers who have the maths qualifications for a mathematics post, not someone who 'specialises in history'.

#### 5.6.5.1 Personal attributes

The principal of School A did not answer this question, moving straight into a discussion of qualifications (see 5.6.5.2). The principal of School B indicated, however, that they would 'like to see dedicated people' but that if they thought the person 'has what it takes to become a very good educator' they will consider him/her. The principal of School C, on the other hand, indicated that the successful candidate would be one that they thought would easily fit into our community and with our kind of children'. According to him, there are 1500

'kids' in the school. Included in these 1500 are children 'different cultures and backgrounds' like the DRC, Malawi, Botswana and Zimbabwe', as well as a lot of children from single parent families. According to a survey conducted at the school the children speak fourteen different home languages. It is important, therefore, he argued, that the successful candidate will have to be 'outgoing and friendly' enough to 'get ... and keep (the children) together'.

Neither of the black principals who participated in my study answered this question. Both of them focused only on subject or learning area competence, making no mention of personal attributes. Later on, though, they indicated that they chose 'the right person', one that they could 'believe in'. Later on, in responding to my question on the effectiveness of SGB selection processes the same black principal indicated that such a person would be someone who is 'passionate', and understands the learners and their 'circumstances' since many of the learners come from 'problematic backgrounds' and/or live in 'HIV infected communities'.

#### **5.6.5.2 Qualifications**

The principal of School A succinctly indicated that the qualifications they regarded as minimum were the 'same as in any school'. The principal of School B, on the other hand, seemed to suggest that the higher the qualification the better the chance the candidate had of being short-listed – 'the better the qualifications the better for the school'. Therefore, although they "follow the guidelines', especially as regard the minimum qualifications and experience for PL1 and PL2, they prefer a post-graduate qualification (Honours or Masters) to a first degree and a first degree to a diploma. However, he qualifies this statement by adding that if the person 'has what it takes' to become a good educator, they would accept one with the 'most basic qualifications' and pay for him/her to

study further. This seemingly dual standard, he indicated, is because they not only have 'high academic standards' but also place a high premium on 'the teaching of values ...most problems in our communities are because of a lack of values'.

The other three respondents, one white and two black, indicated that the minimum qualification they looked for depended on the post level at which the successful candidate would be employed.. The principal of School C indicated that the minimum requirement would be a qualification which placed a teacher at REQV 13 given that the 'government, together with the unions, has decided to phase out all teachers who have matric plus two years'.

The principal of School D, a black school, was of the opinion that a post level 1 (PL1) educator needs only a basic professional qualification of REQV 13 – 'matric plus a three-year diploma' but that this would be different for posts at higher levels. The principal of School E agreed, indicating that, as regards post levels 2 (Head of Department) or 3 (deputy-principal), it is important to remember that they are management positions. This implies that the incumbent should be committed to 'lifelong' learning, something that would be evident if they have more than the basic qualification.

### **5.6.5.3 Professional experience**

As regards the role that experience plays in the short-listing of candidates, the principal of the special school, School A, indicated that, given the target group of learners that his school caters for, it would be 'an advantage' if the applicant had experience with children 'with special disabilities'. The principal of School B, while acknowledging that experience is 'usually' important, indicates that his SGB is not that 'concerned about experience'. He qualifies this statement by

explaining that a teacher 'must start *somewhere*'. Therefore, if s/he has the qualities they are looking for, and they think they can 'develop those qualities' they will short-list and/or recommend him/her for appointment.

The (black) principal of School D indicated that, while an REQV 13 qualification would be suitable for post level 1 deployment; this should be complemented by at least five years teaching experience in the case of post level 2 and seven years in the case of post levels higher than this. The principal of School E agrees that at post levels higher than PL1, experience is a must but disagrees with his colleagues about the number of years' experience that should be required. According to him, a prospective HoD (PL2) should have three years' teaching experience and a deputy principal 'no less than five'.

#### **5.6.5.4 Race as a factor**

The principal of School A, the 'special' school, indicated that 'district at the moment is very strong on equality – both gender and race'. He seems to realize that the ideal is that the composition of the teaching staff should reflect learner composition: 'looking at 10% black children in the school means 10% teachers of colour'. According to him the reason for this not being the case at his school is that LSEN schools (schools for learners with special educational needs) is not 'well-known' in 'rural areas' or amongst 'teachers of colour'. Given the countrywide teacher education training programs on inclusive education subsidised by the national Department of Education – the *Sisonke Project* comes to mind – and the increasing number of teacher education students who study this aspect, this seems to be an entirely false assumption.

The principal of School B, seemingly reading a criticism of the staff composition of his school into my question, vehemently denied that they were 'racist'. While



acknowledging that he does not have a 'person of another colour on his staff, he indicated that the SGB had previously appointed a black teacher with a Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) in an SGB post to teach Sepedi. However, 'after three months, she decided to leave'. According to the principal the SGB had subsequently interviewed people for that post but has not as yet 'found the right person'. The SGB had also in the past interviewed people 'of another colour, even an Indian' but they did not satisfy the criteria 'that we put up' because 'to us it is all about the *best* person'.

The principal of School C echoes this sentiment, claiming that the SGB of his school also looks only at 'the best teacher', not at race. He also reiterates that it is not the SGB who employs the teachers; the SGB only indicates its preference but it is the Department of Education that makes the final decision.

The responses of the two black principals differ radically, though. Acknowledging that the 'teacher profile' at his school is 'all black' the black principal blames the fact that they 'have not had any applicants from the other races'. His insistence that qualifications and the 'needs of the school', not 'race', are the determining factors in teacher selection is in direct contrast to the acknowledgement of the principal of School E that 'race plays a huge role'. This principal unashamedly admits that it 'would be difficult to opt for a Coloured, Indian or white person because we are a 100% black school' that is determined to preserve its 'African' culture. Defending his stance, he argues that 'culture and race' are important.

*'For example, when coming to the issue of culture, there are certain ways that we use cultural aspects to deal with certain situations within our culture as blacks. We have a way of addressing issues like learners going to initiation schools on the mountain. It will therefore be important for someone to have that cultural awareness and acceptance.'*

In order not to be accused of breaking the law, the school has made ‘certain arrangements with the community’. In terms of the law, according to this black principal, a learner who is absent for more than ten days, should be withdrawn’. This is not true because the Schools Act is silent on absenteeism while the Constitution states that the learner has a right to education. This interpretation reveals that the principal’s understanding of the law is limited. The ‘arrangement’ he refers to entails temporarily suspending the learners concerned for ‘the six weeks of initiation’ and then giving him ‘extra work’ and ensuring that parents support and assist him on his return.

#### **5.6.5.5 Language as a factor**

The principal of School A chose not to respond to the question concerning the role that language plays in the short-listing of teachers but the other two white principals respectively indicated that it did. The principal of School B indicated that, although they are ‘predominantly Afrikaans’ they also use English as a language of teaching and learning although only 5% of the learners in the school are black. He indicated, moreover, that the SGB strives to appoint mother tongue people to teach Afrikaans and English as subjects and that they decided to introduce a 3<sup>rd</sup> language as a subject. Interviews are conducted either in Afrikaans or English depending on the post concerned.

The principal of School C seemed somewhat more defensive, claiming that school governing bodies have ‘rights’, and that those rights include deciding on ‘the language of the school, the hours of the school, the timetable of the school and extracurricular activities of the school’. Given that the school he manages is a parallel medium school learners are placed in either English or an Afrikaans stream but the latter is currently decreasing. Later on, in response to a question I

asked about the effectiveness of the SGB selection process at his school, the principal indicated that language was a thorny issue because at his school they had 'five languages to choose from' whereas 'mostly one specific language' is spoken at the schools they 'visited ... in black areas'. Both of the black respondents indicated that language is a factor, primarily as regards the teaching of the language as a subject or learning area but also as regards the ability to use an appropriate indigenous language as a language of learning and teaching in the Foundation Phase.

#### **5.6.5.6 Gender as a factor**

With one exception, the principal of School B, who claims that gender is not considered at all, respondents across racial divisions indicated that it did play a role. The reasons or explanations they offered for this suggest deeply entrenched stereotypes about differences between male and female educators' roles and abilities.

The principal of School A indicated that he preferred female teachers because they have proved to be the 'best' teachers. Teaching is 'a passion to a woman but a job to a man'. The principal of School B takes a contrary position, indicating that they would 'like more men' because the current ratio of male to female in his school is 1:9. Appointing more men with the 'qualities' they are looking for is, he argues, especially important in the 'higher standards' but they are scarce. Notwithstanding concerted efforts on their side they have not even been able 'to find a male for physical training' hence they contract people 'from outside', paying them with money from the SGB budget.

The opposite situation is in play at the sampled black schools, according to the two principals who allowed me to interview them. According to the principal of

School D, gender plays a huge role in the appointment of teachers to senior positions. Both principals refer to past imbalances where management positions were dominated by men and to current legislation requiring a correction of such imbalances. To illustrate the validity of these claims, the principal of School D indicated that both deputy principals as well as the principal at his school are currently males hence the next deputy principal needs to be female provided that she has the ability to fill this position. The principal of School E indicated that the SGB at his school considers the 'equity grid of the school' to determine whether the appointed person should ideally be male or female. Having made this decision the SGB tries 'as much as possible' to make gender a priority during the short-listing process.

#### **5.6.5.7 Other contributing factors**

Apart from experience in teaching learners with special needs (School A) the only other factor that could play a role in the short-listing of applicants was computer literacy, mentioned by the principal of School E.

#### **5.6.6 Perceived effectiveness of SGB selection process**

When I asked the principals whether or not they considered the SGB selection process at their respective schools as effective two of the five respondents indicated that they had some reservation about the effectiveness of the process as followed by the SGBs on which they served.

The principal of School A confessed that he would be 'telling an untruth' if he said the process was 'one hundred percent' effective. 'We are dealing with people', he argued, and because of this, a curriculum vitae and a '20-minute

interview' could be misleading, resulting in 'a blind eye being turned'. Although they attend 'annual training meetings' organised by the Human Resources Unit of the district office they – i.e. the SGB members - are not 'expert human resource managers'. All they can do is their 'best' and then to be thankful if the 'appointment' (*sic*) they made turns out to be the right one.

Although the principal of School B also expressed some reservations about the effectiveness of the selection process he does not seem to think that the process itself is flawed. Rather, he ascribes the difficulty in finding suitable candidates from other racial groups to come and teach at his school as a 'cultural' thing. According to him, some of the 'people of colour' that they interviewed and wanted to recommend for appointment in the past seemed to feel 'uneasy at the prospect' of teaching in a 'totally white environment' perhaps because they would be outnumbered by the 'mass of white people in the school'. Another possible reason for no people of colour accepting a post at his school, according to him, was that they lived far from the school – 'travelling from Mamelodi or Soshanguve or whatever place' – and found it difficult to 'get proper transport'. 'You know, to us being on time is crucial; we can't allow late-coming at our school'.

The other three principals all indicated that they were convinced that the SGB selection process at their respective schools was one hundred percent effective. The reasons the two black principals gave for the 'effectiveness' of the SGB selection processes at their respective schools included adherence to the Employment Equity Act (School D), the quality of the teachers the SGB has selected in the past and the fact that the people appointed as a result of this process have 'the same culture as the learners' (School E).

The principal of School C indicated that he believed the SGB part of the selection process is effective because SGB members attend workshops where they are trained how to 'handle the selection process'. He does not, however, think that the selection process as a whole is effective. According to him, the provincial Heads of Department do not know what the schools in their provinces are like because they never 'visit' them. 'They don't even get out of their offices; only if they are invited for a concert or that sort of stuff, they might visit the school'. The only departmental officials who have a sense of what is going on at schools are 'the IDSOs'. To leave the final decision as to which applicant/s should be appointed to the HOD is 'not fair' because the decision is based on nothing more than 'names' on a piece of 'paper'. The HOD should, according to this principal, trust that the SGB has made the right decision and accept its recommendations as they stand. 'Their 1<sup>st</sup> choice must be the 1<sup>st</sup> choice', otherwise 'what was the need for the exercise?'

Given this position the principal concerned believes that SGBS should appeal against a recommendation that is contrary to their own. He also believes that applicants should have the right to appeal 'through their unions' if they are not short-listed. This would be possible, he claimed, because 'some members tell them even if they say it is confidential'. Ironically, by acknowledging breaches in confidentiality agreements, the principal of this school is implying that the SGB selection process at his school is not as perfect as he would like to claim.

#### **5.6.7 Knowledge of the law**

In response to my question on the extent to which the selection criteria used by the SGBs of their respective schools were aligned with legislative requirements, all five the principals indicated that they were not aware of any problems in this

regard. The reasons they gave for this claim suggest, however, that the way in which they interpreted my question differed from person to person.

The principal of School A indicated that the criteria were in alignment because ‘anyone is free to attend the selection meetings or interviews’. This is contrary to his earlier response that only certain SGB members are involved in the sifting and interview processes in this regard. The principal of School B indicated that the Department ‘takes SGBS for training’. Moreover, the SGB of his school typically meets before the interview process where he – the principal – gives them ‘the opportunity to ask questions about legislation’ and to discuss any problems in this regard.

The principal of School C indicated that the SGB of the school he manages goes to great lengths to ensure that the criteria they use are aligned to legislative requirements because, if they do not, ‘you can so easily fall into a trap’ or land up in court. Even so, according to him, it is not easy to satisfy equity requirements because the SGB of his school has to consider not only *one* language but ‘five’ and his experience is that ‘black people find it difficult to accommodate one another’. The way out of this difficulty, according to him, is to leave the matter in the hands of the ‘employer’ or the ‘government’.

The principal of School D believed that their criteria are aligned to legislative requirements because they ‘follow the prescriptions of policy’ in that they ‘recommend’ according to their ‘preference’ but leaves the final decision to the Head of Department. Claiming some of the glory for the effectiveness of the selection process at his school, he indicated that he workshops SGB members himself and that, together, they ‘work with a lot of sample questions to prepare them for the selection and the interview’. The principal of School E is adamant that the SGB at his school does not ‘deviate’ from the law because he provides it

with information and updates on policy changes. According to him he has to 'guide them on ways of doing things with regard to the law' because they are not trained. If he did not do this, 'everybody would not understand their duties and responsibilities'.

When asked to what they ascribe changes in the law regarding the selection and appointment of teachers, principals responded in a number of ways. The three white respondents indicated that they regarded it as political in that, because of the historical 'background of the country' there was a need to establish 'equity according to the learner population of the school' (School B principal). This principal claims not to have a problem with the promotion of 'equity' and representivity', claiming that:

*'We have to prepare in a predominantly white school, our learners for a South Africa of today. It is our responsibility to make sure that our learners come to contact with as many South African cultures as possible'.*

Given that the SGB of this school has to date failed to attract any teachers 'of colour' to the school (see School B) due to 'cultural' and 'transport' problems, this claim is somewhat suspect. The other two white respondents are much more explicit in their criticism of what they perceive to be the rationale for the changes to legislation. According to the principal of School A the Department wants to 'force us to employ blacks'; hence 'policy makers push it down on other people to implement' (School C). This, according to the principal of School C, is a mistake because 'the executive committee of the ANC' is not 'in contact with the people at the grassroots level. They don't see it as we see it, how we experience it'. The principal of School A seems to share the same view, claiming that:



*'There are a lot of good black teachers that would like to come into a more organised environment...If you are living in the past, you have to wake up'.*

The two black principals did not refer to the history of apartheid at all. The principal of School D indicated that he was of the opinion that the law was changed to 'guard against ... irregularities and nepotism', factors that have led to the appointment of 'unqualified people' in the past. The principal of School E, on the other hand, thought the changes were aimed at restoring existing gender imbalances in 'leadership positions', arguing that:

*'The time has come to give our female counterparts the opportunity to showcase their talents, management talents and roles...Legislation tells us that women are important in development'.*

#### **5.6.8 Summary of principal data**

With one exception, the principal of School E, who has only been a principal for three years, all the others have been principals for many years and are assumed to be very experienced. This could be one of the reasons why they enjoy serving on the governing bodies of their schools. Indications are that those principals who most enjoy serving on the SGB are those who are regarded as 'legal' experts, an attribute that allows them to play a leading role in the activities of the SGB. That they capitalize on this knowledge is evident from the role that they, by their own admission, play in the selection and recommendation of applicants for possible appointment at their schools. They are, however, frustrated with parents' unwillingness to get involved in school governance on the one hand and SGB interference in the daily running of the school on the other.

A significant difference between the principals of former HoA and DET schools is evident in the emphasis they claim to place on the letter of the law - procedural correctness – in the case of white principals, and the spirit of the law – the restoration of past imbalances – in the case of black principals. One would assume that this could be ascribed to white principals' fear of being accused of racism or resistance to change and black principals' personal experience of the effect of discrimination in the previous dispensation.

Another marked difference is evident from their understanding of the term, 'effectiveness' and their perceptions regarding the effectiveness of SGB teacher selection processes. While white school principals seem to equate effectiveness with the ability to use sound procedures to select the most competent persons, black principals seem to equate it with the extent to which these processes adhere to equity principles. The opposite is true as regards their perceptions regarding the rationale for legislative change and the extent to which their SGB procedures reflect legislative requirements. White principals tend to equate alignment with the extent to which SGBs succeed in attracting teachers from other races to their schools. Implied in this equation is the belief that the changes are informed by the State's determination to impose racial integration on former HoA schools. Black principals, on the other hand, equate effectiveness with the extent to which the SGBs at their schools adhere to legal 'prescriptions'. Implied in this assumption is the belief that the rationale for the changes is the elimination of all forms of nepotism and malpractice.

## **5.7 Discussion of data**

Informed by my initial research questions, I discuss the data presented in this chapter in terms of four categories only, namely stakeholder involvement in

school governance, SGB governance effectiveness, equity in teacher selection, and SGB interpretation of the law.

### 5.7.1 Stakeholder involvement in school governance

With a view to determining the extent to which school communities participate in the governance affairs of their schools I considered the data I collected on the number of years participants have served on the governing bodies of their schools, the reasons why they think they were nominated and/or elected and the extent to which they enjoyed serving on these SGBs.

- Data indicate that there are marked differences in the experience of different categories of SGB members at the schools in my sample. Whereas most principals have many years of experience, the majority of parents are still relative novices. Teacher experience varies, some serving for the first time; others serving for a third term. While the novice status of parents could, as argued by various parties (DoE, 2003; Ntshangase, 2002), be an indication of a lack of parental interest in school governance issues there is little evidence that this is true for the parents who participated in my study. Rather, indications are that they might well be willing to serve again if nominated because being on the SGB made them feel good about themselves since they had the chance to 'make a difference. The principal of School A does indicate, however, that he is frustrated by parents' unwillingness to get involved and, since the three black members elected to the governing body of his school use distance as an excuse not to attend governing body meetings it might well be that the researchers are right about parents' apathy in this regard.

- Teachers might be less willing to serve again. One of the white teachers indicated that her SGB duties are time-consuming and impact negatively on her teaching activities. Nevertheless all teachers enjoy the confidence and trust that other teachers place in them as their representatives and the fact that they are now at the forefront of what was happening at ‘higher levels’ of the system. Principals, on the other hand, have no choice but to serve on the SGB and, as indicated earlier (see 5.6.2) they seem to enjoy it most when they are given the opportunity to ‘run’ the SGB show.

### **5.7.2 SGB governance effectiveness**

With a view to drawing conclusions about the effectiveness of the governing bodies of former HoA and DET schools respectively, I considered data on the agendas of SGB meetings, complementing such with data collected on participants’ perceptions regarding the effectiveness of the SGBs on which they served.

Indications from data on SGB meetings are that those SGBs included in my study are relatively effective. Not only do their governance meetings focus on school maintenance and development issues but their meetings on teacher selection are focused and, apparently, procedurally sound. Even so, indications are that the SGB of the former HoA School could be somewhat more effective than the SGBs of former DET schools. This is suggested by the rigour of its teacher selection process and the fact that it has seemingly been allocated more than the basic functions allocated to SGBs in terms of the Schools Act. The SGBs of former DET schools in my sample seem, however, to be more democratic than their white counterparts in that they do not exclude any of the SGB members from the

selection process whereas the SGBs of former HoA schools elect specific members to sift and interview candidates for recommendation.

### **5.7.3 Equity in teacher selection**

With a view to determining whether or not the selection and recommendation of teachers for possible appointment at the schools in my sample are essentially fair and non-discriminatory, and reflect a commitment to the creation of equal employment opportunities and the establishment of a diverse staff component at their schools, I focused on the criteria and procedures that the respective SGBs use for short-listing purposes. Indications are that the SGBs in my sample make every effort to ensure that their own bias and/or preferences do not affect the outcome of the selection of teachers for possible appointment to their respective schools. All the respondents, irrespective of their membership category, acknowledge that there was a need to redress past imbalances in terms of gender and race but none of them seemed to think that the lack of change in their schools in this regard was their fault.

As regards gender, everybody agreed that there was currently an imbalance in the gender composition of their schools, with most of the teachers being female and most of the management positions still being held by males. The dominance of males in positions of authority in these schools is reflected not only in the fact that all the principals were male but also in the composition of the governing body sample I interviewed. Indications are that this could be the result of stereotyped/conditioned perceptions of the roles that males and females respectively should be playing in the school as workplace. A number of respondents indicated that females are regarded as more committed, more caring, more concerned with learning and better able to 'connect' to children, while males are regarded as better disciplinarians, better role models (for boys,

especially) and more suitable for the teaching of specific subjects. These stereotyped views might be indicative of participant bias in this regard, a bias that could subconsciously be influencing their decisions.

The lack of racial integration in the staff composition of the sampled schools' governing bodies was also acknowledged by all participants but none of them believed that the blame for this could be laid at the door of the SGBs. The SGB respondents of former HoA schools blamed black people's lack of proficiency in Afrikaans and their unwillingness and/or inability to fit into dominantly white school cultures where punctuality was non-negotiable. The SGBs of former DET schools, on the other hand, ascribed the lack of staff diversity to the location and track records (academic and safety-wise) of their schools, as well as to a commitment to traditional African culture.

Language was an important selection criterion in both groups. Black SGB participants highlighted the need for English proficiency, which they associate with high academic standards and empowerment. White SGB participants highlighted the need for bilingualism, given that their schools use both English and Afrikaans as languages of learning and teaching. Indications are that the use of bilingualism rather than English proficiency only as a selection criterion could be informed by their fear that Afrikaans is systematically being eroded by the increasing number of learners from other races who enrol at their schools and then insist on being taught in English. The recent court case between Hoërskool Ermelo and the Mpumalanga Department of Education as well as a former one between the same department and Hoërskool Nelspruit, with the department wanting to enforce the introduction of English as a language of teaching and learning, are but two examples that provide a rationale for fears like these.

#### 5.7.4 SGB interpretation of the law

In attempting to determine the extent to which participating SGB members of former HoA and DET schools respectively interpreted the intent of the Education Laws Amendment Act of 2005 and the extent to which their selection criteria reflected such intent I focused specifically on the answers they gave to two questions – participants’ perceptions regarding the alignment of their selection criteria with those of the State on the one hand, and the rationale informing the changes to legislation on teacher selection and appointment in the Education Laws Amendment Act of 2005 on the other. However, I also complemented conclusions based on responses to these two questions with references to insights gained from responses to other questions where applicable.

All the SGB members indicated that, as far as they were concerned, their SGB selection criteria and procedures reflected those of the State. They were adamant that the SGBs’ on which they served in no way deviated from the law as regards the procedures or criteria, but used the departmental management plan and criteria contained therein as basis for their own policies and/or procedures. Indications are, however, that the ways in which participating members of the SGBs of former HoA and DET schools respectively interpreted the amendments differed in more than one respect.

As regards the rationale, participating members of the SGBs of former HoA schools seemed to be of the opinion that the changes promulgated in the Education Laws Amendment Act were aimed at forcing their SGBS to ‘sacrifice’ academic quality and school culture (see School B for example) for the sake of racial integration. Those of former DET schools, on the other hand, seemed to think that the changes were made to prevent nepotism and other forms of corruption in the teacher selection process. Black SGB participants explicitly

linked the changes to the State's commitment to redress, with specific reference to current imbalances in the racial composition of teaching staff, the gender imbalance of management staff, and the impact of apartheid on school and governance capacity. White SGB participants, while mentioning historical influences in passing were either ignorant of the real impact of such on the current state of affairs or were unwilling to acknowledge them. It would seem, therefore, that participating SGB members of former DET schools are aware of the need to adhere to both the letter and the spirit of the law while their white counterparts focus primarily on the letter of the law.

This said, it would seem as if it is the former HoA schools rather than the former DET schools that are making an effort to attract teachers of other races to their schools, claiming that they do interview black applicants but that the applicants either turn them down or do not meet the minimum criteria for the posts advertised. Whether their claims can be accepted at face value is not certain because, although at one stage all the applicants at a specific school were black, only one black teacher has to date been appointed. Also, to use punctuality and transport as 'warnings' to successful black applicants may be viewed as a subtle form of intimidation aimed at encouraging black candidates to retract their applications. On the other hand, to use attendance of initiation schools as an excuse not to appoint white, Indian or coloured teachers, who would not 'accommodate these learners' is as hypocritical. Also, it suggests a selective adherence to the law as well as a marked difference in school culture, evident from a comparison of data collected in Schools B and E.

As regards the alignment of participating SGB practices to legislation indications is, therefore, that while both groups not only keep up the pretence of obedience but also believe that what they do is in line with government requirements. Contrary to these beliefs, the evidence of alignment as regards the creation of



diverse staff composition is absent, suggesting that both groups are equally ineffective in changing. Only one of the schools, School C, seems to have moved in the direction of an acceptably diverse staff if its staff component is compared to the current learner population. This might well be because this is the only one of the participating former HoA schools where all the teachers are employed by the State. Given that SGBs are entitled also to employ 'additional teachers' to suit the needs of the schools they govern provided that they foot the bill, there is every chance that the staff composition of those schools will remain very much as it is at the moment.

## **5.8 Summative conclusion**

In this chapter I presented and interpreted data collected by means of interviews with parents, teachers and principals in the Tshwane North district of the Gauteng Province. Indications from data are that the understanding and interpretation of SGBs across racial divides are influenced by their different cultural and linguistic preferences, their different political and educational histories, the contexts in which they work, the roles they perform and the positions they hold in the school governing body. In short, all the school governing body members who participated in my study attach subjective meaning to their realities and their lived experiences.

In the final chapter, which follows, I aim to relate my research findings to my original research questions in an attempt to determine to which extent I have achieved my research purpose. In doing so, I shall be referring to insights recorded in Chapters Three, Four and Five to explain, substantiate and/or critically discuss my own position regarding the understanding, interpretation and implementation of the changes to teacher selection and appointment

promulgated in the Education Laws Amendment Act of 2005. Based on this discussion I shall be offering some suggestions on the way forward regarding the racial integration of teaching staff at public schools in South Africa.