

**PRINCIPALS' PERCEPTIONS AND
EXPERIENCES OF SCHOOL GOVERNING
BODIES IN RURAL AREAS**

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**PRINCIPALS' PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF SCHOOL
GOVERNING BODIES IN RURAL AREAS**

by

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PRETORIA
October 2013

The study is dedicated to

my wife, Sipiwe Nonhlanhla Dladla,
and sons, Lindani and Lindelani,
for their understanding and sacrifices in
giving me space to pursue my studies.

my mother, Maltha, and father, Henry,
for giving me the solid foundation for my education.

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---oOo---



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CLEARANCE NUMBER :

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DEGREE AND PROJECT

MEd

Principals' perceptions and experiences of school governing bodies in rural areas

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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This letter serves to confirm that I have edited and proof-read Mr T.A. Dladla's master's dissertation entitled: "**PRINCIPALS' PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES IN RURAL AREAS.**"

I found his work easy and enjoyable to read. Much of my editing basically dealt with obstructionist technical aspects of language which could have otherwise compromised smooth reading as well as the sense of the information being conveyed. I also formatted the dissertation. I hope that the work will be found to be of an acceptable standard. I am a member of Professional Editors Group and also a lecturer in the Department of English at the University of South Africa.

Thank you.

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ABSTRACT

The South Africa Schools Act (Act No. 84 of 1996), which came into effect on 1 January 1996, and the National Education Policy Act (Act No. 21 of 1996), introduced a new approach to the South African Education system. These acts, and many policy documents produced by the National Department of Education, provide for the active participation of parents, and other members of the community, in the governance of schools. Whilst policy mandates stakeholder participation, this study revealed that in practice parent participation is problematic.

The aim of this study was to explore principals' perceptions and experiences of school governing bodies in three selected rural primary schools in the Nkomazi area, Mpumalanga. A qualitative research approach within the parameters of the interpretivist paradigm was applied. The study utilised a multi-site case study research design focusing on three primary schools in different localities. Document analysis and structured interviews were employed to collect data at the three sites that were purposefully sampled.

It was found that principals experienced some parent members of the school governing bodies as having low levels of education and not being able to cope with their roles as stipulated by SASA. Principals revealed that the ignorance and incompetence of parents regarding their roles causes conflict, that they provide insufficient support and do not attend meetings regularly. Principals dominate their parent school governing body (SGB) members, initiate innovations and make decisions without consulting the parents. Parents' incompetence, insufficient cooperation and poor contribution towards the operation of the school increases the principals' workload and results in principals' frustration. Principals revealed that they experience difficulties in trusting the parents with confidential matters discussed at SGB meetings.

The study found that principals experience less conflict and better cooperation with parent SGB members who are educated. Parents who are able to read the policies

have understanding of their roles, support the principals in their respective roles, optimise the operation of the school governing body and alleviate the workload of the principals.

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LIST OF KEY WORDS

- Schools
- School Governance
- School Governing Body
- School Management
- Parent members
- Parent support
- Principals' roles
- School policy

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

SGB	School Governing Body
SMT	School Management Team
SASA	South African Schools Act.
AGM	Annual General Meeting
HOD	Head of Department
DoE	Department of Education
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
RCL	Representative Council of Learners
DG	Director General
GDE	Gauteng Department of Education
ECD	Early Childhood Development

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Educational reform to democratic schooling was enacted through a series of legislations, including the South African School's Act (SASA), 84 of 1996. It is mandated by SASA that every public school should establish a school governing body (SGB) consisting of parents, learners (in the case of secondary schools), co-opted members of the community and the principal as an ex-officio member. Through this Act, the new government accommodated the participation of the school community into the decisions affecting the education of its children. This practice is based on the notion that the community knows the needs of the school, and is in the best position to solve its problems (Calitz, Fuglestad & Lillejord, 2002).

Governance in public schools is placed in the hands of parents and the principal of the school as stipulated in the SASA, 1996 ACT (SGB section 16/1). However, the idea that parental involvement in the school governance is in the majority, and that the SGB be chaired by a parent could be problematic in rural schools because of the high rate of illiteracy in rural areas and that the parents have not been prepared for this task (DoE, 2004:42). Mbatsane (2006) found that although the SGB provides both written financial reports to the parents and also take pains to explain the report in detail, this seems to be a self-serving exercise as parents, due to low levels of literacy, cannot engage with the report or understand the financial information. Van Loggerenberg (2005:9), nevertheless, unequivocally confirms that parental involvement in schools, despite educational background or social position of the parent, is an essential component for successful education and training at school level. This parental involvement manifests itself in organised structures as school governing bodies (SGBs). Section (20) (1) of SASA stipulates that school governing bodies are endowed with the decision making authority to determine the policies and rules by which schools are organised and controlled.

The introduction of SGBs and their functioning in rural schools seems to be problematic to some principals. A study by Karlsson, McPherson and Pampallis (2001:169) and Zafar (2004) revealed that parents have no clear understanding of their role as members of the SGB, and they are ignorant with regard to education policies. Their inability to carry out some duties makes it difficult for the SGB to perform effectively and then functions only as a crisis committee. Furthermore, principals find it difficult to perform their duties because of the interference of the school governing body. There seems to be an overlap of governance and management duties. For instance, the control of finance is the responsibility of both the principal and SGB (Mestry, 2003). Through this overlap, there are possibilities that conflict might evolve between the members of the SGB and the principal when such duties are performed.

Accordingly, this study aimed to investigate principals' perceptions and experiences of the SGB in the rural areas.

1.2 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

The decentralisation of authority in education was the promulgation of the SASA, Act No. 84 of 1996, which provided parents as community members with the opportunity to have a voice in school governance. The SASA (1996) enabled parents to elect a group of parents who would represent them in the SGB. My observation as a principal indicates that members of the SGB hold unique sets of expectations when serving on this governance structure. These expectations may influence the way in which the school should be managed, the nature and type of education to which a particular school community aspires and it may consequently influence the relationship between the SGB, the principal and the staff of the school.

My interaction with other principals in meetings and workshops when discussing issues concerning SGBs, coupled with my experience as a principal, has motivated me to undertake this study. It seems that principals have different experiences with SGBs because their experiences vary from good to poor and conflicting relationships. Principals often find it hard to relinquish or share their power and authority especially in poorer schools in the rural and township areas. Principals in most schools that have highly educated and knowledgeable governing bodies are often reduced to the lowest level of the 'admin clerks', having little say in the governance of their schools.

Some principals attempt to democratise school governance by inviting the SGB to participate in the decision-making processes of the school (Brijraj, 2004).

In our circuit management team meetings and workshops, principals also mention that most SGB members are illiterate (they do not have the required skills to understand what is going on in the SGB and what their duties are). They are thus ineffective and of little significance to the school. Others reveal that SGB members do not understand their role and function and some tend to have a domineering attitude. However, there were also principals who expressed their satisfaction with the SGBs.

I have been a principal of a combined school from 2004 to date, and held an ex-officio position in the SGB. I have gained some experience in working with SGB members and during this period, I observed how much the parent SGB members often rely on educators. Duku (2006) notes that parent SGB members seem to be reliant on the principal and educators in matters of school governance. Mabasa and Themane (2002) associate the parent SGB members' reluctance to participate in some roles with illiteracy.

In some instances, educators, especially the principals, seem to dominate SGB members. Principals seem to have a better understanding of policy formulation issues. The SGB chairperson (a parent), on the other hand, tends to overstep the role of the principal. This is what Heystek (2004) calls 'power plays and domination' which usually bring about tensions and the deteriorating relationships. Hence this study aims to explore the experiences of principals with the SGB members of schools in the rural areas.

Van Wyk (2004:49) stresses that the new way of school governance and participatory decision-making presents schools with enormous uncertainty and challenges because in South Africa, neither parents nor educators have had much experience of participatory decision-making. In the past, principals were generally considered to be the only people with the required knowledge and authority to make decisions. Mabasa and Themane (2002:113) report that participatory decision-making has been in place for years in developed countries, but there is little information about challenges with respect to participation of stakeholders in school governance in South Africa. This study therefore will attempt to explore how

principals in rural schools experience the co-management and participatory decision-making with SGBs.

This study revealed important findings with regard to principals' contact with SGBs, their observations of how SGBs cooperate, the knowledge and skills they acquire over time, the challenges they encounter and the perceptions they have about SGBs. The study made recommendations from the findings that will be useful to the Department of Education, principals, schools, SGBs and parents in South Africa.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Arising from the above-mentioned problems, the research question that guided this study is formulated as follows:

1.3.1 PRIMARY QUESTION

How do principals in rural schools of the Nkomazi area perceive and experience the participation of parents as members of the SGB?

1.3.2 SECONDARY QUESTIONS

The following secondary questions are formulated to provide answers to the main research question:

- *How do education policies outline the implementation and roles of SGBs?*
- *How do principals understand and experience the parents and educator members of SGBs' contributions towards development in schools?*
- *How do school principals understand and implement their roles within the SGB?*
- *What challenges do principals encounter with parent SGB members about the implementation of their duties?*
- *Is there a disjuncture between practice and policy with regard to operations of the SGB?*

1.4 DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

1.4.1 SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY (SGB)

This research adopts Xaba's (2004) definition of SGB. The SGB is a body elected as "representatives of certain interests connected to the school, which by implication means that governors represent the interests of their constituencies, i.e. parents represent parents' interests, educators represent educators' interests and learners, in the case of secondary schools, represent learners' interests (ibid, 2004:313). SASA refers to the SGB as a committee that is democratically elected by parents, learners, and non-teaching staff in a particular school to deal with the governance of that school.

Mothata, Lemmer, Mda and Pretorius (2000:152) define the SGB as "a democratically elected body charged with the governance of public schools that is regarded as the mouthpiece of parents of the learners, educators and learners of the school on all matters apart from the administration and the professional management of the school".

1.4.2 EXPERIENCE

According to the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (2005), experience means knowledge that you gain about life and the world by being in different situations and meeting different peoples, or the process of gaining this. In this study, experience will mean how principals feel about the presence and functioning of the SGB members at the school as he/she worked with different members in different terms.

1.4.3 PERCEPTION

The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (2005) defines perception as the way you think about something and your idea of what it is like.

In this study perception would mean the way in which principals see and understand the functioning of the SGB members at the school, and his or her idea of what it is like to have an SGB at the school.

1.4.4 PRINCIPAL

The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (2005) defines the principal as someone who is in charge of a school, colleges and universities. In this study, the principal is referred to as an educator acting or appointed as head of the school and is responsible for the overall functioning of the school, including that of the school governing body of his school.

1.4.5 GOVERNANCE

In this study, Maile (2002) definition of governance is accepted. He refers to governance as the exercising of power of the management of resources. It involves the nature and extent of authority, as well as the control and incentives applied to deploy human and economic resources for the well-being of an organisation.

1.5 AIMS OF THE STUDY

The main aim of the study is formulated as follows:

To investigate how principals in the rural schools of the Nkomazi area perceive and experience members of the SGB.

The following are the secondary aims for the study. These are formulated to provide answers to the main research question:

- *To explore how education policies outline the implementation and roles of SGBs?*
- *To investigate how principals understand and experience the roles and contributions of the members of the SGB?*
- *To determine how school principals understand and implement their roles within the SGB?*
- *To investigate the challenges that principals encounter with members of the SGB?*
- *To determine whether there is a disjuncture between practice and policy with regard to the operation of the SGBs?*

1.6 LITERATURE REVIEW

1.6.1 DECENTRALISATION OF SCHOOL GOVERNANCE IN SOUTH AFRICA

Decentralisation is an idea which originates from the belief that schools cannot be managed by the state alone, but its power should be shared with other stakeholders, particularly those who are closer to the school on the basis of partnership (Marishane, 1999:78). It is argued that the devolution of authority will lead to a stronger and healthier relationship between communities and schools, and provide an alternative form of accountability to bureaucratic surveillance (Gamage, 1994:45-46). This is based on the premise that when communities collaborate in making vital decisions about educational alternatives, a true mutual responsibility will grow. Thus, advocates of decentralisation base their reforms on the assumption that to ensure improvement in schools, those closest to the learners should be offered the authority to make key decisions (Parker & Leithwood, 2000:38). Godden (1996:21) adds that the development of a learning society needs the reclaiming of education by all communities in the country. However, in South Africa, no parents have had much experience of participatory decision-making, and only principals had the authority to make decisions (Heystek & Paquette, 1999:191).

In South Africa, the concept of the School Governing Body (SGB) came with the advent of democracy after 1994 general elections. Previously, schools were governed by the so-called school boards or by school committees (Mbatsane, 2006). These committees were mainly expected to serve the interests of the government, more than those of the community they represented. In simple terms, the agenda of the government for that particular community regarding the education of the community was implemented by the committee of the school. It was not concerned with, nor did it represent the interests of the community in schools (Ibid, 2006). This resulted in school committees being unpopular amongst the general members of the community as they were government agents rather than community representatives. In turn, this enmity resulted in them being opposed during the liberation struggle until 1994 (Mbatsane, 2006). School committees were frowned upon as legitimising the apartheid system and were therefore not beneficial to the school and the communities they represented (ibid, 2006: 1).

After 1994, the debate around the democratisation of education emerged and it brought about the South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996 (SASA) promulgation. This democratisation of education, unlike in the past, meant the involvement of relevant stakeholders in a particular society in matters of school governance (Mbatsane, 2006). The philosophy behind the democratisation of education was that, in a democratic South Africa, education should be driven by the people themselves. This was done in a manner that addresses equity and redresses the imbalances of the past, inequalities and discrimination. SASA, which promulgated the establishment of SGBs, was used as tool to democratise South African education (ibid, 2006).

The idea of introducing SGBs in the Republic of South Africa after 1994 was the actualisation of the idea of community involvement (Bush & Heystek, 2003). Literature reveals that the democratisation of school governance is viewed differently by the different authors and this resulted in the emergence of a number of concepts such as decentralisation, collaboration and community involvement. In addition, Brown and Duku (2008) view the introduction of SGBs in South Africa as an opportunity for South African parents to participate in school governance and as a shift from authoritarian rule, coupled with racial divisions and socio-economic inequalities to an atmosphere of democracy. Furthermore, Motimele (2005) noted that in the past, school governance in South Africa was characterised by a top-down approach in which parents, educators, communities and learners were not involved in making vital decisions in schools. Principals and inspectors were regarded as persons who made decisions in the school (ibid, 2005).

1.6.2 MAPPING OF SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

The following school governance map outlines the framework within which SGBs should work. There is interaction between different levels in which policies are formulated, implemented and adopted. The National Department of Education is in charge of the formulation of policies, at national level. These policies are to be adopted and implemented at the provincial and district level. At the provincial level there is a Head of Department who is working directly with the Circuit Managers at the district level. From the district level, the line of communication moves straight to schools.

Section (16) (3) of the SASA stipulates that professional management must be undertaken under the authority of the Head of Department by the principal. The governing bodies are responsible for school policy formulation and implementation at school level. These policies formed at school level must be in line with provincial and national policies and legislation.

Figure: 1.1: Mapping of school governance and structure of the SGB.

1.7 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A theory is a story that gives you a new insight and broadens your understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Anfara & Mertz, 2006). A useful theory is the one

that tells an enlightening story about some phenomenon. The meaning of a theory in any scientific field is to provide a framework useful to explain relationships among the phenomena being studied and to provide insight leading to the discovery of new relationships (Tudge, Mokrava, Hatfield & Karuik, 2001:3). The participative management theory, which is discussed in length in Chapter Two, was found relevant to this study.

1.8 RESEARCH PARADIGM

This study made use of the interpretive paradigm. The interpretive paradigm is about understanding the everyday lived experiences of people in the specific area or a historical setting (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delport, 2002). Interpretivism is about epistemology that advocates that it is necessary for the researcher to understand the meaning and humans' roles as social actors. This research falls within the parameters of the interpretive paradigm in that it sought to explore how principals perceive and experience the functioning of the parent SGB members in the rural schools. The explanations and descriptions the principals gave about the operation of the SGB will serve as a source of the meaning they give to their roles as school governors. This paradigm advocates that the world be studied in its natural state, rather than in controlled laboratory-type experiments, and with minimum intervention by a researcher (ibid, 2000).

This paradigm is relevant to this study because the actions and functioning of the parent SGB members were explored through interaction with the principals. Their actions and experiences were explored in a manner that establishes their roles as parent members of the SGB.

1.9 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

This study focuses on how principals perceive and experience the functioning of the school governing bodies of the selected rural schools in the Nkomazi area in Mpumalanga Province. Calitz and Beckmann (1994:7) say that delimitation of the field of study refers to the continuous narrowing and precise definition so that the field becomes more specific through the process of particularisation. Similarly, White (2003:40) explains that delimitation of the research addresses the scope of the research.

The focus was on investigating the perceptions and experiences of principals of the functioning of the SGBs of rural schools in the Nkomazi area with special reference to the Nkomazi East Circuit. Three primary school principals in this circuit participated in this research. The three schools were selected according to purposeful and convenient sampling of primary schools in the Nkomazi East Circuit. School A is headed by a female principal and the school is progressing very well. School B is headed by a male principal who is very strict in his work. The SGB has only a few members left out of those elected by parents. All the SGB work is carried by the few remaining members and the principal. In school C, the SGB is non-functional. Members are called to a meeting but they do not attend the meeting. The different schools were purposely chosen because the different communities in which they are situated plays a role in the type of parents to be elected to the SGB in terms of literacy level as well as the ability of parents to comply with the legislative expectations regarding budgetary and policy functions.

1.10 RESEARCH APPROACH AND METHODS

This section aims to unpack the research approach (qualitative approach) and methodology used in this study. It further explains the relevance of the qualitative research approach to this study, its strengths as well as its limitations. In unpacking the relevance of the qualitative research approach, its definition is also outlined below.

As this study follows the qualitative approach, the interpretivist paradigm was found relevant and is discussed. Sampling methods and data collection strategies to be used in this research are also being discussed. The method of analysing data is also dealt with in this chapter.

1.10.1 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH APPROACH

Qualitative research is an approach in which researchers are more concerned with understanding the meaning which people attach to their experiences or phenomena within their society (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). In this research, I have used qualitative research because this study is about exploring through interviews the way in which principals perceive and experience their SGBs.

The qualitative approach puts emphasis on the knowledge and practice that are studied at the local level (Flick, 2006). In emphasising the usefulness of principals' experiences of their SGBs, Mouton (2005: 53) noted that qualitative researchers have always been primarily interested in:

- describing the participants' research actions and
- attempting to understand these actions in terms of the actors' own history, context and beliefs.

One advantage of the qualitative approach is that it gives a researcher the opportunity to create a deeper and clearer picture of what is going on in a particular situation (Elliott, 2005). Interviews and documentary analyses have helped the researcher to have a better understanding of the principals' experiences and perceptions with regard to the functioning of the SGB members in schools.

Lincoln and Norman (2000) argue that "qualitative researchers deploy a wide range of interconnected interpretive practices, hoping always to get a better understanding of the subject matter at hand". It is understood, however, that each practice makes the world visible in a different way. Researchers using the qualitative approach strive to know the ways in which individuals interpret their lives. Qualitative research is based on an unstructured and flexible approach that seeks to explore the nature of the problem, not its extent (Kumar, 2005). Leedy and Ormrod (2005) also assert that one of the most important things about the qualitative approach is that it serves as an interpretation as it enables the researcher to get new insights on a particular phenomenon, and thus, the researcher is able to develop new concepts about that particular phenomenon.

According to Mouton (2005), the qualitative research approach is the one in which research starts at the point when insiders or participants give their views or perspectives on social action. Mouton (2005:53) noted, "The research goal is defined as understanding and describing rather than the prediction and explanation of human behaviour." Through the interviews, the researcher was able to understand the participants' experiences and perspective in school governance and management. One of the features of a qualitative inquiry is that it is naturalistic in essence (Maharaj, 2005). In this approach, the researcher does not manipulate the research setting and is never sure of the outcome of the research.

1.10.2 CASE STUDY RESEARCH DESIGN

The case study approach is recognised by researchers as an effective qualitative design because it focuses on experiential knowledge and the social context of individuals (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011:256). I chose to make use of a case study because I aspired to gain a deeper understanding on the perceptions and experiences of principals regarding the SGBs of rural primary schools. Kuper and Kuper (2004:92) state that the objective of the case study research is to obtain 'a thick description'.

The case study is descriptive and utilises one or two instances. In this study, it is exploration of the perceptions and experiences of principals of three schools in the Nkomazi district.

1.11 SAMPLING

The process of selecting a particular sample for particular entities in a study is called sampling (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). Flick (2002) notes that the issue of sampling is about deciding which persons to focus on when a researcher makes an inquiry. Sampling deals with deciding on the site or place, and the person or respondent from whom the data will be collected (Punch, 2006). For instance, in an interview study, the researcher should decide which persons to interview (ibid, 2000). Samples are chosen because of the findings of researchers in a particular situation and time, and apply these findings generally. Schwandt (2001) notes that in purposive sampling, the units or characters are not chosen for their representativeness but for their relevance to the research question, analytical framework and explanations given in the research.

This research will use a purposive sampling method because the selected principals have sufficient experience of working with SGBs. The purpose in this case is to study the principal's perceptions and experiences of the functioning of the SGB in the Nkomazi area. In purposive sampling, the researcher's interest is important and the participants must satisfy the study's specific needs (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). In this study, purposive sampling was used to select the research site and the respondents as follows:

1.11.1 SAMPLING THE RESEARCH SITE

Primary schools have been used for this investigation in different locations under the Nkomazi East Circuit. The three schools, School A at Ngwenyeni location; School B at Block C location and School C at Block B location were selected purposefully. In School A, the SGB and the principal are very united, and the SGB is functioning very well. School B is headed by an autocratic principal and all the operations are carried out according to his plans. The SGB in School C is non-functional. The three schools are essential for this study because the communities in which the schools are located are different from one another. The researcher believes that these schools will yield good results.

For the purposes of this study, the rural primary schools are schools situated in areas that are far away from an urban centre (approximately 40 kilometers) and where there is a high level of unemployment and poverty.

1.11.2 SAMPLING THE PARTICIPANTS

In sampling the respondents, the researcher used purposive sampling where each sampled element is chosen for a specific purpose (Wysocki, 2004). Furthermore, in purposive sampling, “samples or respondents are selected because they are informative, representative and knowledgeable about the phenomenon the researcher is investigating” (O’Leary, 2004).

Principals of the sampled schools were selected as respondents because they are the professional heads of the institutions and therefore have an ex-officio status in the SGB. The principals were interviewed about their views and experiences of the roles of the members of the SGB and how they experience the execution of these roles by the SGB members.

The researcher has sampled these principals because they are the key persons in school governance and, therefore, they should be more conversant with their roles as they have hands-on experience in school governance.

1.12 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

In the spirit of qualitative research, this study has made use of multiple data collection methods as follows:

1.12.1 SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

The researcher has used semi-structured interviews for the selected principals. Semi-structured interviews are neither fixed nor fully free and yet they are a flexible research technique or method (O’Leary, 2004). This means that the order of the questions as advised by Robison (2002) could change, depending on the situation the researcher encountered.

In following up with the structured interviews researcher wanted the respondent to expatiate as much as they could on certain points. This also gave a chance to the researcher to probe the respondents’ reasoning and to ask clarity seeking questions (Bless & Smith, 2000).

1.12.2 DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

Document analysis is the situation in which the researcher reads and analyses important documents such as minutes of the meetings, policies of the school, newspaper articles and historical archives (O’Leary, 2004). The process of documentary analyses is done with the aim of understanding the participants’ actions and the meaning they attach to their actions or events (Mouton, 2005; Plummer, 2001).

1.13 ETHICAL CLEARANCE

Ethical issues are important in every research; thus, considering the research effect on participants was my role as a researcher.

Bassey (2002:110) mentioned that it is important that the people who are being studied are interested in the study; the researcher also needs to ensure that what they say is properly reported without any bias. Anonymity and confidentiality was guaranteed by having names of participants coded during data presentation.

Participants were allowed to go through the data obtained during member checking, and the data were stored securely.

1.13.1 INFORMED CONSENT

Informed consent was established at the outset of the research regarding the purpose of the study and the participants' envisaged role, the procedures that would be followed, as well as a description of the benefits that they could expect from the study (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2005:51).

The ethics in research is very important, more especially when the research involves human beings. Bertram et al. (2003:70) state that collecting data from respondents often gives rise to ethical concerns. It is imperative that respondents' rights to privacy are protected. It is therefore important that all research studies follow certain ethical principles. According to Durrheim and Wessena (2001:66), ethical principles include:

- autonomy;
- non malefic (non-hurtful); and
- beneficence (doing good).

Bertram et al. (2003:72) advise researchers that they must respect the autonomy of all the people participating in the research. The researcher thus assured participants that information given would be confidentially treated. The researcher included the covering letter that assured the respondents that the names of persons participating in the research would remain anonymous and that confidentiality would be guaranteed.

The researcher sought the consent of every person to be part of the study and explained that their voluntary participation in the study implied their freedom to withdraw at any time. However, according to Cohen, Manion & Morrison, (2000:123), researchers need to reflect attitudes of compassion, respect and gratitude without being too evasive.

Reassurance was also extended to respondents on matters of anonymity, and that the data would only be used for the aforementioned research purposes. After this kind of assurance, respondents willingly agreed to participate.

1.13.2 ACCESS TO SCHOOLS

Access to the schools for conducting the research has been facilitated through the Circuit Managers of each of the schools that took part in the research. The procedures of how the research process would be conducted were discussed with the Circuit Manager particularly in terms of gaining access to interview the principals and to use facilities such as the office of the school.

1.13.3 PROTECTION FROM HARM

In this research, harm might entail disturbing the participants' development of self-esteem and stress (Deiner & Crandall 1978 in Bryman 2001:479). To ensure that participants are protected from harm, the research process discussed the matter with the Circuit Managers of schools as well as with the participants prior to engaging in the research, as a preventative measure. Chabilall (2004:34) maintains that people have the right to anonymity and should the data collection process compromise this right, information will be withheld even if it were to benefit the public at large. During the research process, the participants were continually reminded of their right to leave the study should they wish to do so for any reason. This ensured that their rights were protected at all times and that they remained participants voluntarily. The researcher also gave them his contact details as well as those of the researcher's supervisors in case they needed to alert anyone of any issues that may be of serious concern to them.

1.14 CHAPTER OUTLINE

CHAPTER ONE

This is an introductory chapter which gives the background of the study. The rationale, research questions, problem statement, methodology and ethical concerns of the study are outlined in this chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

This chapter is a detailed discussion of the literature that has been reviewed. Concepts that come out of the reviewed literature are discussed in detail and the theoretical framework in which this study is based is also discussed.

CHAPTER THREE

This is a detailed account of the research design and methodology choice of the study. The interview, case study and document analysis were used in the data gathering process.

CHAPTER FOUR

This chapter presents a discussion of the results of the data collected, and the key themes that emerged from the data gathered through the methods discussed in Chapter Three. The results are then analysed according to themes and each theme is given an interpretation. Thematic discussion gave a holistic understanding of the results and the findings.

CHAPTER FIVE

Chapter Five provides the summary, conclusions and recommendations for the meaningful perception by principals of the roles played by the parent SGB members in school governance.

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CHAPTER TWO REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

in this section, I review the literature about principals' perceptions and experiences of school governing bodies. This literature review has helped me to form the basis of my research as it revealed the already accumulated knowledge in this area of study.

This chapter presents the review of what the situation was before the election of the first school governing bodies after 1994 where the principal had all the powers to exercise his own decisions, and also look at the rationale for the school governing bodies in South Africa. The position and functions of the school principals and the school governing bodies is explored.

The democratisation of schools and its consequences in the running and performance of schools will be discussed in detail (decentralisation and collaboration).

2.2 SCHOOL GOVERNANCE BEFORE 1994

The concept of the school governing body (SGB) in South Africa came with the advent of democracy after 1994 general elections. Previously, schools were governed by the school committees (Mbatsane, 2006). These committees were mainly expected to serve the interests of the government, more than those of the parents in the community they represented. In the past, schools operated according to the policies and procedures laid down by the government. Principals were only accountable to the Department of Education for the things that happened in schools. Other stakeholders like educators, parents, learners, community and non-educators had little or no say in the policies of the school. The agenda of the government for that particular community regarding the education of the community was implemented by the committee of the school. It was not concerned with, nor did it represent the interests of the community in schools (ibid, 2006). This resulted in school committees being unpopular amongst the general members of the

communities as they were seen as government agents rather than community representatives. In turn, this enmity resulted in the committees being opposed to school management structures during the liberation struggle prior to 1994 (Mbatsane, 2006). “School committees were frowned upon as legitimising the apartheid system and were therefore not beneficial to the school and the communities they represented (ibid, 2006:1).

After 1994, the debate around the democratisation of education emerged and it brought about the promulgation of the South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996 (SASA). This democratisation of education, unlike in the past, meant the involvement of relevant stakeholders in a particular society in matters of school governance (Mbatsane, 2006). The philosophy behind the democratisation of education was that, in a democratic South Africa, education should be driven by the people themselves. This was done in a manner that addresses equity and redresses the imbalances of the past, inequalities and discrimination.

2.3 THE FORMATION OF SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES IN SOUTH AFRICA

The huge disparities among South African schools required a new structure of school system of governance and organisation, which would be workable as well as transformative. This new system of governance is underpinned by the principles and values of democracy and makes allowance for participatory decision-making.

According to Looyen (2000:67), school principals had in the past controlled schools in South Africa with little or no parent-teacher participation. The principal’s leadership frame and style of reference were the main drivers of the school’s ethos, culture and impetus. Parents, teachers and students contributed very little to decision-making and policy, as their role was to be most supportive in nature. As a result, this system was met with strong opposition and criticism from the school community and the general public.

Van Wyk and Lemmer (2002:124) report that in most cases, black communities rejected the governance structures that the government instituted as they offered them little say in the running of their schools. By 1976, parents in urban areas had

started to establish their own representative committees, precisely because they felt that the school committees and boards were not representing them adequately.

The alienation of the communities from the education system under the apartheid regime created dissatisfaction and tension between the schools and the communities. However, this has changed since the promulgation of the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 which made the introduction of SGBs in all schools mandatory. While parents in this country have for many years been voluntarily involved in school-based activities, their role as entrenched in the South African Schools Act has since become more pronounced. Not only are they accountable to those who entrusted them with the task of school governance, but they also need to master skills in dealing with issues such as finance, control, religious rights, personnel, curriculum, school policy, natural justice and discipline (Van Wyk & Lemmer 2002:141). The South African Schools Act gives all the stakeholders an equal opportunity and chance to participate in school affairs, and also new rights and responsibilities regarding the education quality offered by the school. As a result, the Schools Act assisted in driving the democratisation and transformation of education governance.

2.3.1 RATIONALE FOR THE FORMATION OF THE SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY

The rationale for the formation of the school governing body is to make sure that parents, educators, non-teaching staff and learners will participate actively in the management and governance of schools with the aim of providing a better learning and teaching environment. The provisions for school governance included in the SASA took effect in May 1997 when the school governing bodies' first officials were elected and that was the same time the first officials assumed duties (Karlsson et al., 2001:163).

2.3.2 POSITION OF THE PRINCIPAL

The South African Schools Act (1996) has radically changed the relationships between the school, principal and the school governing body. They have now been given regulated freedom and their areas of operation are now defined, although there are still some grey areas in the South African Schools Act (1996).

For a school to achieve its aims and objectives, various people with different responsibilities in the school have to plan, organise, lead and control. Leadership and management are part of the role of all principals. Leadership implies identifying direction, sharing goals and persuading other people to work on them.

Management refers to the carrying out of responsibility together with accountability (Pritchard, 2001:83). It is the fostering of positive job-related attitudes by helping to sustain and create work contexts that are conducive to motivation, high morale and job satisfaction (Wright, 2001: 303). Management can also be defined as carrying out traditional management functions, namely, organising, planning, staffing, control, budgeting and problem solving (Rami nee Shani & Lau, 2000:45). The principal as a manager is there to carry the following duties:

- Getting things done through people, with the most effective use of all available resources;
- Setting of overall objectives, formulating policy and plans designed to achieve the objectives and establishing standards for measuring the activity that puts people and money to work in the production of goals and services;
- Planning the activities of the school in relation to its goals, procedures and the task of the personnel; and
- Planning, leading, co-ordination and evaluation.
- Managing school finances in accordance with decisions made by the SGB;
- Making sure that the code of conduct is respected in the school, to maintain order and good behaviour;
- Dealing with complaints about individual staff members;
- Managing and supervising the work of staff;
- Deciding on teaching and learning activities during school hours; and
- Administering and organising the learning and teaching activities at the mission statement of the school as developed by the SGB (Gauteng Department of Education, 1997:7).

The principal and his/her staff are in charge of the professional management of the school, under the Head of Department authority – a person in charge of the implementation of the curriculum in schools (Joubert & Prinsloo, 1999:7). This means that there are matters that the SGB decides on, and other matters that the principal and the professional staff decide on. In general terms, management of the school by

the principal refers to the day to day organisation of teaching activities. The main aim of having a school principal is to ensure that the school is managed in compliance and satisfactorily with applicable regulations and legislation as prescribed by SASA (1996). It is also to make sure that the education of learners is implemented in a proper manner.

The educators and the principal are responsible for the organisation of the teaching activities. However, the areas of management and governance sometimes overlap. The difference in roles between principals and their staff and the SGB is clearly defined by law. The principal and the SGB must work as partners because the success of the school depends on their relationship, and on the other hand, the SGBs should know their functions and how they relate to the principal's functions (Gauteng Department of Education, 1997:6-7).

2.3.3 THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY

According to De Groof, Bray, Mothatha and Malherbe (1998:102), prior to 1994, governance and management resided mainly in the principal, with minimal participation of other stakeholders, for example, parents, educators, learners, non-teaching personnel and community leaders. The school principal generally viewed the school as his or her domain, and managed and organised the school according to his or her leadership style and particular frame of reference. The role of the school committee had largely been of a supportive nature to the principal with limited decision-making powers.

South African schools have moved towards decentralisation of power. According to Squelch (1998:107), the South African Schools Act of 1996 brought about the school governing body (SGB) in schools. The purpose of having a school governing body, amongst others, was to increase the autonomy of schools, to curtail the principal's role of primary decision-maker and to make parents and the community responsible and accountable to their schools, to enhance shared decision-making at local school level and to reduce bureaucratic control, to allow parent involvement on substantive issues that extend beyond the traditional fundraising activities and tuck-shop duties (De Groof et al., 1998:107-111). The devolution of responsibility from education authorities to SGBs is there to manage and govern the schools better so that the SGBs and the school principal could be held accountable (Farrel & Law, 1999:5).

SASA (1996) has now placed parents in a strong position, and SGBs have the authority to influence fundamental decisions, for example the religious policy, language policy, school budget, admission policy and discipline of learners. In terms of SASA (1996), primary decision-makers are no longer principals. Principals are members of SGBs which are predominated by parents. According to Section 23 (9) of SASA (1996), the number of parents is more than all the other members forming the SGB. The school reform legislation (SASA) allowed parents, educators, non-teaching personnel and community leaders to come forward through SGBs to help deal with education challenges affecting their children and their schools. When more collaborative forms of decision-making are operative, all stakeholders contribute knowledge and gain deeper understanding about the reasons for decisions and their implied actions (Bizar & Bar, 2001:238).

The SGB is there to make parents aware of their role of supporting their children's education with regard to facilities and opportunities the same way they must provide at home (Conradie in De Groof et al., 1998:86). Before the implementation of SASA in schools, parents often lacked information about their children's school activities and operations. According to Goldring and Sullivan (in Leithwood, Chapman, Corson, Hartinger & Hart, 1996:201), parents are often uncomfortable questioning professionals, and the SGB may create opportunities for parental involvement and participation in schools.

2.3.4 FUNCTION OF THE PRINCIPAL AND THE SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY

The principal serves as SGB ex-officio member. Other members are parents, non-educators, educators, and in secondary schools, learners. The SGB is a statutory body, and public schools are therefore obliged to establish (SGBs) for effective school governance. The following subsection deals with the principal's different roles as compared to that of the SGB.

The democratisation of education involves the active participation of all stakeholders like educator, parents, non-educators, community members and the learners in all school activities. The rights to education and the duty to transform education mean that all the above-mentioned stakeholders have new rights and responsibilities regarding the way schools are managed.

According to Section 20(1) (a) of SASA, the governing body of a public school must strive to ensure its development through the provision of quality education for all learners in the school and promote the best interests of the school. The first and foremost duty of the principal and the SGB is to provide the best possible education for all learners irrespective of race, colour, creed, religion, age and gender. Parents, as members of the SGB, are often in a better position to know what their schools need and what problems the schools experience (SASA, 1996, Section 20 (1)). This is why parents and other members of the school governing body find it easy to play a meaningful role in the school. So, there must be a partnership between the principal and the SGB. The South African Schools Act, 1996 has made it a requirement that every public school must establish an SGB.

The principal should put into practice policies agreed by the SGB. The SGB is not supposed to take over the functions of the principal, but should support the principal. This is necessary because in terms of SASA, Act No. 84 of 1996, Section 16 (1–3), the governance of every public school is vested in its governing body. A governing body stands in a position of trust towards the school (this means that the SGB must act in good faith towards the school). The professional management of a public school must be undertaken by the principal under the authority of the Head of Department. It is necessary for the principal to help the SGBs because there must be cooperation between the principal and the members of the SGB for a school to run smoothly. The principal is there in a school to manage and the SGB is there to govern. Since all stakeholders are represented on the SGB, all these groups have a direct voice in the formulation of policy (GDE, 1999:13)

The SGB members should be made aware of the fact that the organisation and coordination of learning and teaching activities in the school is the principal's responsibility. In turn, the principal must manage the school in accordance with the mission, vision and policies developed by the SGB. If both groups have a clear idea of this division of tasks, the principal and the SGB should work hand-in-hand effectively (GDE, 1999:13). The SGB has to know that the principal, educators and learners have a right to know what is happening in the school and should be consulted before policies are developed by the SGB. They are full members of the SGB, and must work to achieve the goals decided on by the SGB.

The SGB members are also representatives of their respective interest groups, all the parents and educators, and are expected to communicate fully with the SGB on issues raised by their groups and to keep the SGB fully informed about the ideas and views of these groups. They must also report back to, and keep their groups informed of the functioning of the SGB (GDE, 1999:13).

Members of the SGB have a difficult task because they are representatives of particular interest groups and official members of the SGB. For example, a school principal might be expected to serve the interest of educators and the Education Department at the same time. They must represent their groups effectively and still work as SGB members. The new system of school management and government has allocated the functions of running the school to both the principal and the SGB (GDE, 1999:3).

The SGB must make sure that it sets an excellent example of commitment and efficiency to the principal. It is the function of the SGB to make sure that the school and its welfare is more important than any other factor (GDE, 1999:3).

The principal cannot be the chairperson of an SGB because in terms of Section 23 (1) (b) of SASA, the principal is the SGB member in his/her official capacity (Department of Education, 1997:20). The principal should give a report at each SGB meeting. The report could include the following aspects:

- Changes in learner numbers;
- Immediate problems and needs of the school;
- Issues being considered by the educators;
- The school's achievements; and
- Issues outside the school that affect the school.

The functional areas of the principal and the governance of the SGB sometimes overlap. The difference in roles between the principal and the SGB can sometimes be very difficult to decide on, but the principal and the SGB must work as partners. The SGB must know its functions and how the functions relate to the functions of the principal.

2.3.5 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Governance and management are two concepts that are dependent on each other to ensure the success of an organisation. Similarly, in schools, as in any other organisations, there is governance and management. Governance includes the school governing bodies, and management includes the school management team and the principal. These two structures are involved in the control and organisation of all activities of the school. The school governance is given the authority and responsibility to adopt and formulate school policy on a range of issues, for example, the ethos and mission of the school, learners' code of conduct, curriculum programme development and school community relations (Maile, 2002). Governance responsibilities therefore are the areas of influence of the school governing bodies and chairpersons who oversee its functions, while principals have to assist the SGBs in the performance of their responsibilities.

Professional management, on the other hand, is responsible for the management of the day-to-day instructional and administrative functions of the school by ensuring effective learning and teaching, and efficient use of the school's material and human resources (Sithole, 1998; Shaba, 2002; Van Deventer & Kruger, 2003). The SGB members are not supposed to be involved in professional management activities such as learning materials decisions, class assessment or teaching methods; these should be left to the professional staff because they are trained for such activities (Heystek & Louw, 1999). However, SGB members must assist the principal and his management team in performing their responsibilities. Though the two concepts, school governance and education management are used interchangeably, they are in no way synonymous (Karlsson, 2002). It is clear that chairpersons of the school governing bodies are expected to render support to the principals with regard to the implementation of decisions taken.

There seems to be a clear separation between governance and management activities. However, Karlsson (2002) argues that, despite this separation, real practice indicates that there is conflict between principals and chairpersons when the roles are performed. Heystek (2004) attributes this to the fact that school principals were previously the only figures where authority was vested. He further points out that most principals were used to a situation in schools where they virtually had all powers and were in charge, and that democratic governance was new to them. The

question that arises is: what could be the possible causes of such conflict? In an attempt to answer this question, it becomes essential to investigate the role relationships of SGB chairpersons and principals when performing their responsibilities. The purpose, among other things, is to understand the nature of conflict between them. This will help to strategically plan for solutions in dealing with this problem, especially because both chairpersons and principals have roles to play in governance activities of schools.

2.4 RESEARCH ON SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

Dean (2001) studied the work of the governing bodies in 43 schools in Britain. The study was conducted through the use of questionnaires as well as interviews to the chairpersons as methods of collecting data. The findings of the study reveal that most chairpersons participating in the research regarded themselves as very useful in the leadership roles. They felt that it was their job to be available to advise, support and listen to the principal and always be available to help and solve problems. A study of this nature is useful as it shows that, where roles and responsibilities are clear, there are harmonious working relationships between principals and chairpersons. The findings further reveal that in some cases where the principal and chairperson of the governing body were at odds, roles were not clear. Suffice therefore to say that in a school where the chairperson and principal work together, the outcomes of decisions taken are profitable for the school.

Gamage and Sooksomchita (2004) studied the effectiveness of the education reforms involving School Board Members (SBMs) in education. Research methodology consisted of both quantitative and qualitative dimensions with an empirical survey. The sample consisted of 1000 SBMs from 100 co-educational primary schools. A series of interviews were conducted with principals on the basis of a specially developed semi-structured interview schedule. Questionnaires were administered with School Board Members.

The findings reveal that though principals welcomed the support of the school governing bodies and the important role they were playing, principals preferred the board members to have a better understanding of their roles, accountabilities and responsibilities. Most participants expressed uncertainty regarding the roles, responsibilities and accountabilities of the school governing body members. This

seems to suggest that where roles are not clear, there is a possibility that conflict may occur between parent governors and principals, thus adversely affecting the effective functioning of the school.

Gamage and Sooksomchita (2004:300) report that principals interviewed agreed that it was important for school principals to undergo leadership and management training because “the ability to delegate authority was an essential skill of a principal”.

Whilst the training of the principals is viewed as a necessity, the training of the SGBs is also important. It is widely accepted that school leaders need specific preparation if they are to be successful in leading and managing their self-managing and empowered schools (Esp & Saran, 1995). Moreover, the SGBs are empowered to make important decisions regarding, among others:

- Developing policy articulating school vision and goals;
- Composing mission statements;
- Managing the school budget; and
- Managing performance management.

Mazibuko (2004) studied the role perceptions of SGB and school management team members on school governance. Both quantitative and qualitative approaches were used to collect and analyse data. Questionnaires were administered to the educator component, SMT members and the principal of the school in order to identify the level of participation of the SGB and SMT in school management. The findings of the study revealed that members of both the school governing body and the school management team indicated a relatively good understanding of their roles and responsibilities in the school. The findings further reveal that poor training hindered all members from the SGB and SMT respectively from performing their roles and responsibilities effectively. The findings seem to suggest that SGBs and SMTs needed to be trained in all areas of responsibilities because the schools find it difficult to involve all stakeholders in the affairs of the school. Conflict between principals and chairpersons may affect the general function of the SMTs and SGBs, especially because principals and chairpersons are leaders within these structures respectively.

Bhagowat (2001) conducted an investigation on how democratic school governance has redefined the functions of a secondary school principal. Structured interviews were used as a method for data collection. Bhagowat (2001) reports that the principal

did not resist the inclusion of other stakeholders but decided to gradually bring them on board and still had much to attain in this regard. The principal was used to a situation in the school where he/she was in charge and had virtually all powers. However, with the introduction of democratic governance, the inputs of other stakeholders are to be considered (Heystek, 2004). It is possible that the principal may still regard him/her as the only authority figure, thus monopolising power. In view of the fact that democratic school governance entails other stakeholder participation, we may find a situation where the SGB chairperson might not accept the principal's domination. Subsequently, conflict could ensue between the principal and chairperson. The kind of conflict may be destructive towards the functioning of the school, to affecting teaching and learning activities (Heystek, 2004).

Heystek (2004) studied the relationship between the principal and the parent in the school governing body. Heystek (2004) reports that although many principals have many years of experience as SGB members, the participative and democratic management approach is new for most of them. He further mentions that not even their experience can prepare them for this changed situation. Since a democratic management approach may be a new experience to some principals, it is possible that they may resist sharing power with other people. Such resistance may result in disagreements between principals and parent governors, thus throwing the school into chaos. However, where principals are willing to share power with other role players, schools experience harmonious working relationships between role players a condition conducive to effective teaching and learning activities (Heystek, 2004).

2.5 DECENTRALISATION

Decentralisation was the strategy used by the state to divide its authority with other stakeholders, especially with those who are close to the school, to bring about improved control of the schools (Van Wyk, 2004). The debate around problems that seem to prevail in education, especially at a primary level, resulted in an approach that was to bring about reforms (democratisation) in the schooling system. These reforms were done within the parameters of decentralisation (Maclure, 2004). The intention of the Department of Education was that decentralisation of education would bring about greater responsiveness to the needs of the particular local people in that school community. A high level of participation was also a focal point in the

decentralisation of education (ibid, 2004). This means that the Department of Education wanted to delegate some of its tasks to community members. Parents were made to participate in school governance by becoming members of the SGBs. The SGBs were expected to deal with all the issues of school governance. As mentioned before, these include among other things developing the school mission statement, determining the language policy, deciding learners' code of conduct and the school's admission policy within the framework of the South African Constitution (Van Wyk, 2004).

Generally, educational decentralisation is the situation in which the interests of the local people are represented in a schooling system (MacLean & Lauglo as cited in Maclure, 1994). Cohn and Rossmiller as cited in Maclure (1994) further assert that, a more focused view is that educational decentralisation means the existence of schools that are more responsive to community life than those which are solely responsive to the Department of Education. A better orientation to life, community, values and occupations could facilitate greater participatory input from local people as well as more flexible and adaptable management strategies friendly to the community (ibid, 1994).

From this assertion, it is crucial that the school responds to community needs and for the community to contribute towards the well-being of the school. Decentralisation brought enhanced community involvement. In this study, decentralisation is one of the key principles, and I have sought to establish the way the parent SGB members apply this principle in harmony with the principal's functions. This means therefore, that at the end of this study, I would have explained how principals perceive and experience their school governing body in rural schools.

The service delivery delegation makes decisions at the level of the school wherein the stakeholders at the community level are involved. Service delivery delegation is a situation in which school autonomy is important and the school governing body is established to provide an oversight (ibid, 2005). "Decentralization may give people greater say in schooling decisions as well as a greater ability to hold service providers accountable and moves decision-making closer to them" (USAID, 2005). It is noted that insufficient funding, weak management capacity, relevant support system and inadequately trained teachers make it difficult to realise the positive potential of decentralisation. USAID (2005:1) further noted that "giving teachers the

right to select their own text books, granting directors the authority to recruit teachers and increasing participation of parents in school governance contributes positively to education quality”.

2.6 COLLABORATION

Collaboration involves integrating and identifying appropriate services and resources from the community to support the learner, learning process and the family. Collaboration is also defined as the working together by the parents, educators and learners (secondary schools) in school governance to promote the best interest of the school (Heystek, 2004). The nature in which the SGBs are constituted allows greater space for community members to collaborate with educators in school governance. It is of primary importance that each component in the process of collaboration understands its line of operation within the SGB. Where there is a lack of understanding of one’s responsibilities and roles, the relationships within the SGB are negatively affected.

Connection of parents with community resources to support their child's learning can be achieved by the school principal in different ways, for example:

- Give parents information concerning their child's activities in school and in the community;
- Encourage participation and provide for opportunities outside of the school;
- Connect parents with the local resources of institutions such as the universities;
- Distribute the announcements of activities in and around the school;
- Arrange for families to attend school activities;
- Provide resources such as computer software or web sites and reference books;
- Advise parents on issues pertaining to their child; and
- Guide parents.

Collaboration also means developing meaningful opportunities for the community to learn about what is being taught at school, and meaningful opportunities for learners to demonstrate that learning to the community. Collaboration also denotes that the school provides services to the community, such as community projects and other services. Epstein's framework provides a powerful tool in helping school principals to

understand involvement of parents and to design activities that are comprehensive and meaningful. With this tool, school principals can refine and analyse their efforts to build strong partnerships with communities and parents on behalf of their learners (Smar, 2002:4).

Collaboration is more than communication, and is needed to effectively ensure that implementation and policy formation is carried out to everyone's best interest and satisfaction.

From the above discussion, one may deduce that for the school to achieve good results, parents should be involved in taking decisions about their children's education. It also implies that collaboration between the school and the community brings about the development of the school towards the desired goals. The unearthing of the roles of parent SGB members in the SGB might bring forward the debate about the significance of collaboration between the school and the community in general and between the SGB educators and parent SGB members in particular.

2.7 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.7.1 PARTICIPATIVE MANAGEMENT THEORY

2.7.1.1 The overview of participative management theory

In the days of apartheid, educational policies and instructions were taken from political authorities in Pretoria. Only those who were involved in decision-making in the country at that time could decide on who could be involved in the decision-making in the educational sector. The South African Government saw the need for decentralisation in the early 1990s. Parents, community members and teachers had been receiving sensitisation about the roles they should play in adherence to their democratic responsibilities since 1991 by the National Department of Education (Ministry of Education). The Ministry of Education (n.d.) emphasised that it had been working assiduously in ensuring that the decentralised activities of the education in regions was repaired and standardised. The aim of the Ministry of Education is to ensure that local and regional authority is given to people at the grass roots level so that they can partner in decision-making with relevant authorities. The Ministry made it known that it is essential that the decision should extend to all school levels in

every community. The Ministry of Education and Culture accepts the fact that the best way to maximise local contribution of people and also improve the quality of the school educational system is through decentralisation. The establishment of South Africa Governing Bodies and decentralisation activities reflects the current theory of management.

In the process of shaping practice, the management models that lay importance on democracy, participation and collegiality will be of great assistance in improving practice. Bush (2003b:64) opined that decision-making and power should be made the responsibility of all or some of the members of the organization. Supporters of collegiality believe in participative approaches as a tool in the institution of education (Ibid, 81). Collegiality was introduced into management in the 1980s and 1990s (Bush, 2003b:64). Collegiality emerged when participative management crushed bureaucracy and the centralised systems in many countries' educational system. The origins of collegiality developed from the participative management approach of Kurt Lewin. Lewin proclaims that behaviours can be modified when people participate in problem solving and analysis and will naturally contribute in ensuring that plans see the light of the day when people jointly make decisions (Weisbord, 1987:89).

Anthropologist Margareth Mead and Lewin came together to reduce the consumption of food that are being rationed by civilians which later brought about the development of participative management during World War 11 (Weisbord, 1987:88). It was Lewin who stressed the formation of democratic groups in education and members of such groups actively contributed in decision-making and they were more fruitful in terms of both the attainment of goals than dictatorial groups and human satisfaction (Lunenburg & Ornstern, 1991:9). Weisbord (1987:71) contends that in the process, when Taylor tried to get rid of authoritarianism and conflict in work places through scientific managing. Lewin took a step to ensure that the world is free from prejudice, ignorance and self-hate through social science. The contribution of Lewis to management could be said to be his philosophy by emphasising that to achieve any and very change, it requires a new participative experiment" (Weisbord, 1987:89). The bureaucracy theory of Karl Marx took over Lewis' theory in the 1900s.

The bureaucracy of Marx's has deals with the state and not straight with the management of organisations. Thereafter, it evolved into the bureaucratic forms of organisation of Max Weber. Weber's idea of a constricted hierarchy obstructed all

social institutions including schools. It was well supported in South Africa through the apartheid government as an effective way of managing the educational sector because it emphasised authority.

Lauglo (cited in Bush, 2003b:11) specified that bureaucratic centralism is inescapable in many developing countries and it links this to both former colonial rule and the emphasis in central planning on many postcolonial governments. However, bureaucracy and centralised systems is not limited to countries that were colonised. Greece, France and the United Kingdom have all experienced bureaucratic and centralised educational systems over the past 30 years (Bush, 2003b:11).

In the 20th century, bureaucracy started receiving criticism and some people see it as abuse of power. Abuse of power could be internal to an organisation which could be a lack of democratic decision-making, or over-centralisation or external in its relation to society (Rogers & McIntire, 1983:11). The philosophies of bureaucracy were labelled as negative, that it is a pest and exploitive force, unfair and an extension of unlawful power (Abrahamsson, 1993:20). Shared governance, collaborations and collegiality are replacing transformation and traditional management in an effort to reach bureaucracy.

Bureaucracy and participative forms of government/management have been having friction for decades. McLagan and Nel (1995:23) also argued that there is the need to understand the forces that are responsible for the changes and gain a full picture of the length and breadth of the forces at work that are responsible for the changes. In addition, Masschelein and Quaghebeur (2005:51) emphasised that towards the end of 1980s, the public began asking for the participation of parents and some stakeholders to improve educational practices for children, teachers and students. Participation is seen as a necessity for the involvement of people in making suggestions and actively getting involved in decision-making to better their lives. Participation is aimed at making people live and have a better life.

McLagan and Nel (1995:26) are also of the opinion that people everywhere should see it as a point of duty to participate in joint decision-making.

Participation has then become an important subject to me and the majority of the stakeholders in the society and in research. As argued earlier, participation has been

a long and convoluted journey but it has reached its destination in most schools, also in rural schools. The difference between participative decision-making and other management approaches is presented in detail below.

2.7.1.2 The characteristics of participative management

Participative management has to do with inviting people into a decision-making process. Karstanje (1999:29) emphasises that “decentralization involves the assignment of decision-making tasks to lower levels”.

An important feature of participative management is participative decision-making. It involves a situation whereby all members of an organisation or school are involved in decision-making processes. Du Preez (2003:70) mentioned that joint or participative decision-making will promote a pleasant work climate and also assist in promoting job satisfaction. It involves the readiness of all people in the organisation to cooperate and develop mutual understanding in order to achieve the aims and objectives set for the organisation. Such aims and objectives could be set by the people and they will jointly achieve them.

Yukl (2002:95) agreed that people usually feel comfortable when they are sure that their contribution in decision-making usually counts at the end of any activity. Hence, participation can be said to lead to empowerment. When encouraged to participate in decision-making in an organisation, people feel empowered and, most of the times, motivated.

Davidoff and Lazarus (2002:174) state that empowerment has two processes, namely, objective empowerment and subjective empowerment. Objective empowerment, according to David and Lazarus, involves the process of taking of power and building structures of a situation where people can participate and also get involved in decision-making processes.

Davidoff and Lazarus (2002:175) also emphasise that empowerment has a relationship with participation, and that it is needed because people usually have the tendency to feel relaxed when they have control over their life and decisions. They further argue that empowerment promotes human satisfaction, sense of belonging, and confidence among people in their place of work and the society. Davidoff and

Lazarus (2002:176) also discovered that the capacity of people is enhanced when they participate in making decisions that can shape or add meaning to their lives. Other characteristics of participative management include teamwork, cooperation, openness, transparency and trust. The core of participative management is teamwork. Everard, Morris and Wilson (2004:168) argue that teamwork involves effective decision-making, effective delegation, effective communication and identification of roles in a team. Stofile (2005:15) emphasised that synergy is easily achieved in organisations where teamwork is in place. It is the secret of high achieving organisations because the work of one person or few people is being managed and deliberated on by the cooperation of a great number of people. Collegiality and participation is being enhanced by teamwork. Personal and team goals is being realised through team work and organisational goals are easily achieved.

Senge (2006:9) introduced another characteristic of participative management which he termed 'learning organisation'. He stated five components of learning which include personal mastery, systems thinking, team learning, mental models and shared vision. According to Senge (2006), each component allows individuals and groups to learn and build their capacity to reach and realise aspirations. Moloji added that a school should be a learning organisation where learning should be facilitated at four levels, namely, individual, team, organisation and society levels (Moloji, 2002:15). The lesson to be learnt here is that when efforts are combined to facilitate learning, the aims and goals of any educational system will be achieved. Efforts of the parents, stakeholders and community, when combined, will result in a better educational system for the society.

2.7.1.3 How the theory relates to the study

A democratic education system is organised around broad participation in decision-making, and the clear accountability of the people in leadership positions and those involved in decision-making. Decentralisation was one of the top priorities of the new South African government in the early 1990s. The decentralisation of authority in education came as a result of the promulgation of SASA, Act No. 84 of 1996, which provided parents an opportunity to have a voice in school governance.

This study looks at how principals perceive the parent SGB members as they perform their roles in school governance. Parents in the SGB had to be part of the overall running of the school in terms of decision-making, especially regarding governance. However, in South Africa, neither parents nor educators have had much experience of participatory decision-making as previously only principals had the authority to make decisions (Heystek & Paquette, 1999:191). School principals were used to a situation where they were taking all decisions about the school unilaterally, and today such decisions need to be taken in consultation with the parent and educator members of the SGB.

The participative management theory is about inviting people into the decision-making process. This is what principals will have to do with all the members of the SGB. The more the members of the SGB are invited into all decision-making, the more the principal gets exposed to the performance of governance duties by the SGB members. This participation requires cooperation and mutual understanding among all participants.

2.8 CHALLENGES TO SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES

It is essential to note that decentralisation of school governance resulted in the formation of integrated structures, for example, SGBs and School Management Teams (Squelch, 1999). These structures are legitimate and have equal participation in the management and governance of schools (Davidoff & Lazarus, 2002). Chairpersons and principals, as leaders of SGBs and SMTs respectively, have influential roles to play within these structures. Their role relationships therefore, determine the tone that exists in the two structures.

The chairpersons have to motivate governing body members, learners and members of the community to render services voluntarily to schools. On the other hand, principals have to render assistance to the SGBs to help them to perform their functions as per provisions of the SASA. This has been compounded by the fact that previously principals had all the decision-making powers while the parent component acted in an advisory role (Heystek, 2004). Mutual assistance between SGB and principal in general, chairpersons and principals in particular, poses a serious challenge to both structures in that such responsibilities require a clear understanding of responsibilities and duties to be performed. The fact that conflict

seems to exist between the parent governors and educators as they perform their responsibilities in some schools is an indication that both SGBs and principals have not managed to handle their joint responsibilities.

Beckmann and Blom (2000) contend that, in terms of the Personnel Administrative Measures, principals have duties regarding financial record keeping at the school. The SASA, No. 84 of 1996 states that the governing body of a public school may, with the approval of the Member of the Executive Council (MEC), invest money in another account (Section 37 (3)). In the light of these statements, both chairpersons and principals, through their respective constituencies (SGB and SMT) have financial responsibilities at the school. Again this remains a serious challenge to both leaders as to how best they could fulfil their financial obligations without conflict between them, taking into account that they lack expertise with regard to financial management background (Mestry, 2003).

One of the serious challenges facing the principal and school governing body concerns the employment of educators. According to the SASA, the SGB recommends the employment of an educator and also appoints an SGB educator. However, Heystek (2004) points out that the parents' component is not knowledgeable about the intricacies of the teaching profession and lack expertise to evaluate professional educators. Subsequently, the employment of educators is characterised by a high incidence of nepotism. In this way, "educator posts are awarded to people who have friends and family members on the SGBs" (Vandeyar, 2000, cited in Calitz et al., 2002:101). Such practices may not be in the interest of the school, and thus contradicts Section 20 (1) (a) of the SASA, which states that the SGB must strive to ensure its development through the provision of quality education to all learners in the school and promote the best interests of the school. Some SGB chairpersons are under the impression that, since SGBs recommend the appointment of an educator, it makes them the employers.

Subject to the SASA (RSA, 1996a, Sections 20 and 21), the SGB of a public school must, inter alia, adopt a code of conduct for learners of the school after consultation with the learners, educators and parents of the schools; develop the mission statement of the school, and determine the language policy and admission policy of the school within the framework laid down in the South African Schools Act (RSA, 1996a), the Constitution (RSA, 1996b) and any other applicable provincial laws.

Moreover, the SGB may suspend learners from attending the school as a correctional measure for a period not exceeding one week. The SGB is also tasked with recommending to the Head of Department of the province the appointment of teaching (and other) staff at the school and dealing with the disciplinary hearings of educators. However, Heystek (2004) mentions that many members of SGBs are not sufficiently competent and knowledgeable to implement the policies.

The SGB must also support the educators, principal and other staff members of the school in the performance of their professional functions. SGBs are tasked with supplementing the resources supplied by the state in order to improve the quality of education provided by the school. In this regard, parents may be asked to pay school fees. Such funds are administered by the SGB. The SGB must also plan a budget each year which shows the school's estimated expenditure and income for the following year. The planning and budgeting are a challenge to SGBs especially in the rural areas where parents are not trained to participate in such activities.

2.9 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, an overview of parents' involvement in school governance has been presented, starting with the historical background of apartheid and moving to the current situation. I have shown how the Constitution, democracy and the Acts underpinned and supported the notion of parent involvement in decision-making in schools. I presented a picture of SGBs in rural schools and I discussed them in relation to my current local research. Finally, I looked at the theories that underpin the whole idea of democracy, participation of parents and decentralisation in the education system. In the next chapter, I present the methodological approach used in this research.

SGBs have been in existence for years in South Africa and yet it seems that when one is considering South African history in education, there could still be challenges that they grapple with. The high level of illiteracy and the fact that many SGB members are not trained for their roles could be factors that raise challenges for principals. Principals should help them to function meaningfully. In this study, the principals rather ignore the parents and make decisions on their own.

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CHAPTER THREE RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The study investigated the principals' perceptions and experiences of the SGB members in primary schools in rural areas. This chapter presents the research strategy that was used for the study. It first outlines the research design, which is then followed by sampling the research sites and the participants, then the data collection methods used. This chapter gives a detailed explanation of data capturing and analysis. A profile of all three schools used is given, and also all the details of the respondents (principals). The last section of this chapter discusses ethical, as well as validity and reliability, considerations.

3.2 RESEARCH APPROACH

3.2.1 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH APPROACH

This study is located in the qualitative research approach. The qualitative approach looks at the events in their natural setting and the meanings people attach to them (Keeves, 1988). This entails no social reality, but different interpretations held by individuals and groups. The qualitative researchers therefore are concerned with the interpretive understanding of human experiences of the phenomena (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). In agreement, Ishak (2004:26) asserts that qualitative research typically investigates behaviour as it occurs naturally in non-contrived situations, thus there is no manipulation of experiences or conditions. In the qualitative approach, the researcher collects data as whole entities which are forthcoming from the participants in a freer and less controlled way, with much of it occurring naturally (Henning & Van Rensburg, 2004). The qualitative approach was perceived as the most suitable for this type of inquiry. It helped in capturing the richness and complexity of behaviour from the perspective of the principals. Subsequently, the data consisted of words in the form of rich verbal description. Within this qualitative design, this investigation included interviews with principals of three primary schools in the Nkomazi area in

Mpumalanga. The schools include School A at Ngwenyeni; School B in Block C; and School C in Block B Trust.

Denzin and Lincoln (1994) define qualitative research as “naturalistic approach to its subject matter, a multi-method in focus and involving interpretivism”. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research involves the collection, study and use of a variety of empirical materials, case studies, personal experiences, observations, introspection, and life story interviews, interactional historical and visual texts, which describe problematic and routine moments in individuals' lives.

This study explored the personal experiences that principals have with regard to the participation of teachers and parents as members of the SGB.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

3.3.1 CASE STUDY

A case study is a research in which the researcher explores a single entity or phenomenon within a specified space of time and using a variety of data collection procedures to gain detailed information about such an entity or phenomenon (Punch, 2006; Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). Furthermore, a case studies “is a way of organizing social data so as to preserve the unitary character of the social object being studied” (Goode & Hatt, 1952 in Blaikie, 2000:215).

This study followed a case study design in that the researcher explored how principals view and understand the participation of SGB members in the three selected rural primary schools of the Nkomazi area. In exploring the experiences and perceptions of principals of SGB members, the researcher hoped to have a deeper understanding of what happens in rural schools in matters of school governance. Huberman and Miles (2002) noted that a case study focuses on understanding the dynamics that prevail within one entity.

The researcher hoped that the information that he gets from the selected schools would be transferable to similar situations. This means that a case study was necessary because context-based knowledge served as the basis for the broader

knowledge in a field of SGBs (Seale, Gobo, Gubrium & Silverman, 2007). In the process of exploring principals' perceptions of their SGBs, the factors that affect school governance were also considered. In the case study, the focus is on the understanding of the particulars of the evaluated case (the principal's perceptions and experiences) in its depth and complexity.

3.3.1.1 Schools in the case study

Schools were selected by purposive sampling as this allows the researcher to choose cases that illustrate some features or processes in which he/she is interested (Silverman, 2000:105). The researcher handpicked the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of his judgment of the typicality and the suitability of the schools of his study (Cohen et al., 2000:103).

The schools in the study were chosen from Mpumalanga Province, Ehlanzeni region and specifically in the Nkomazi area. Nkomazi area is rural and it is one of the most disadvantaged areas in Mpumalanga. The illiteracy rate amongst parents is quite high especially with the immigration of former refugees from Mozambique. The unemployment rate is also very high. For those parents who were fortunate to secure employment, most of them work in nearby farms in Komatipoort, while others work in far away areas such as Malelane and Nelspruit. Despite working in nearby places, most of them are unable to come home on a daily basis; hence children head many families in the absence of their parents who may come home on weekends or only during their leave days.

3.3.1.2 The school site visits

The researcher visited the selected school to inform them about the research, and also sought permission and cooperation from the school principal to conduct the study. The researcher briefly outlined the following points during the visit:

- The subject of the research;
- The benefit the school would get by being involved in the research;
- The main aim of the research; and
- The duration of the research.

The available opportunity to the researcher was used to acquaint the principals with the research topic before the start of the interviews, also to arrange suitable dates for the interviews and to ensure the respondents (principals) of their anonymity and confidentiality.

3.4 RESEARCH CONTEXT

3.4.1 OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH PARADIGM

Researchers are always associated with paradigms. The term ‘paradigm’ has been defined by many experts in the field of research.

According to Mertens (2005:7), paradigm is defined as “the way of looking at the world”. It is composed of “certain philosophical assumptions that guide direct action and thinking.”

Bassey (1995:12) defines a paradigm as “a network of coherent ideas about the nature of the world and of the functions of researchers, which, adhered to by a group of researchers, conditions the patterns of their thinking and underpins their research actions”.

3.4.2 INTERPRETIVE/CONSTRUCTIVIST PARADIGM

The constructivist paradigm emerged with a different underlying methodology and assumption. In contrast to the fact that the post-positivists and positivists believe that the reality ‘is out there’, the constructivist basic ontology or belief is that reality is constructed socially.

The interpretive and constructivist paradigms are similar since both of them tend to be anti-positivist. According to Cohen et al. (2000:22), “the central endeavor in the context of the interpretive paradigm is to understand the subjective world of human experience to retain the integrity of the phenomenon being investigated”. Mungunda (2003:31) emphasised that “in the interpretive paradigm reality is seen as multiple and subjective, seen through the eyes of the participants within the context of their frame of reference”. The features of the interpretive paradigm such as the social construct of knowledge and subjectivity of reality are some of the major reasons that attracted the interests of most researchers to base their studies in these paradigms.

However, the interpretive paradigm has been criticised by some scholars. For instance, Mertens (2005:16) claimed that the constructivist paradigm has been criticised not only by post-positivists and positivists, but also by the transformative paradigm that represent a third paradigm of research.

3.4.3 WHY THE INTERPRETIVE PARADIGM

My research is oriented in the interpretive paradigm. It seeks to interpret the principals' experiences and perceptions of parents functioning and involved in SGBs. The interpretive orientation fits my personal reason for conducting this study as I believe in the assumption that "knowledge is socially constructed by people active in the research process and the researcher should attempt to understand the complex world of lived experiences from the point of view of those who live it" (Schwandt, cited in Mertens, 2005:12; Bassey, 1999).

As an interpretive researcher, I want to share the feelings and interpretations of the people in my research, especially the school principals of selected schools, and to see things through their eyes. Merriam (2001:6) noted, "Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how they make sense of their world and the experience they have in the world". This agrees with my purpose to understand and explore the experiences and perceptions of principals with regard to SGBs in rural primary schools through perceptions of people involved in the study, that is, the principals.

3.4.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE INTERPRETIVE PARADIGM

Like other paradigms, many authors have been criticised for the interpretive paradigm. "The interpretive approach becomes hermetically sealed from the world outside the participants' theatre of activity" (Cohen et al., 2000:27). Bernstein (cited in Cohen et al., 2000) stated: "Subjective reports are sometimes misleading and incomplete". The validity of interpretive research is questionable since human bias can never be underestimated in research. However, since there are certain ways of reducing validity threats (for example member-checking and triangulation), one of the major paradigms applicable for my current research is the interpretive paradigm.

3.4.5 DIMENSIONS FOR PARADIGM

- ❖ **Ontology** – Refers mainly to the nature of reality.
- ❖ **Epistemology** – The nature of the relationship between researcher and what can be known.
- ❖ **Methodology** – The actual practice of research.

3.4.6 A PARADIGM

The table below explains the “basic beliefs associated with the major paradigms” (Mertens, 2005:9), for instance, ontology, epistemology and methodology of each paradigm. In other words, the table summarises the core principles of the paradigms, which may provide a better understanding of their differences.

Table: 3.1: Beliefs associated with major paradigms (adapted from Mertens, 2005)

	Ontology	Epistemology	Methodology
Positivist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ One reality ▪ Knowable within probability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Objectivity is important ▪ The researcher manipulates and observes in a dispassionate, objective manner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Experimental ▪ Quantitative ▪ Hypothesis testing
Interpretive	Multiple, socially constructed realities	Interactive link between researcher and participants; values are made explicit; created findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Qualitative ▪ Interactional

3.5 SAMPLE SELECTION

“One cannot study everyone everywhere doing everything, even within a single case”
 (Maxwell, 2005:87).

Sampling is about deciding the site or place and the respondent from whom the data will be collected (Punch, 2006). Sampling is known as the process of selecting a particular sample for particular entities in a study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). As

indicated in Chapter One, Flick (2002) noted that the issue of sampling is about making a decision about what to focus on when a researcher makes an inquiry. For instance, in an interview study, the researcher should decide which persons to interview (ibid, 2000). Samples are chosen due to the fact that researchers want to have findings in a particular situation at a particular time and apply these findings more generally. Sampling will be done in this study because the researcher would want to have a detailed interpretation of the principal's experiences of school governing bodies in rural areas in order to generalise them to other similar situations.

The sampling employed a convenience and purposive sampling procedure in which the researcher "handpicks the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of their judgment of their typicality" (Cohen et al., 2000:103) and on their experience of the central phenomenon being studied. Purposive sampling fits well with the interpretive paradigm that I use in this study. Mertens (2005:317) emphasised that "researchers working within the interpretive paradigm typically select their samples with a goal of identifying information-rich cases that will allow them to study a case in depth". Furthermore, Merriam (2001:61) stated that "rich-information cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research".

This research used purposive sampling because the selected (schools) and the selected respondents were chosen for a specific purpose regarding the principal's experiences and perceptions of SGBs in rural schools. (School A where there is order in the SGB and the principal is a female, School B where the principal is very strict in his work, and School C where both principal and the SGB do as they wish). In purposive sampling, the researcher's interest is important and the researcher satisfies the study's specific needs (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005).

Purposive sampling has been adopted (Creswell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:370; Miles & Huberman, 1994) to select the three primary schools and their principals. I focused on these people because they were found to have certain attributes relevant to the phenomenon in that they were involved in the implementation of the subject area in different portfolios. They then became the rich samples for an in-depth study of the topic under investigation to acquire deep understanding or solid appreciation of principals' experiences of SGBs in rural areas. The use of purposive sampling increased the utility of information acquired from the participants (Creswell, 2007).

Schwandt (2001) notes that in purposive sampling, the units or characters are not chosen for their representativeness but for their relevance to the research question, analytical framework and explanations given in the research.

Purposive sampling was used in this study to select the research site and the respondents as follows.

3.5.1 SAMPLING THE RESEARCH SITE

The researcher identified three primary schools in the Ehlanzeni District. These schools were chosen because they are all in black, rural and formerly disadvantaged villages. UNESCO (2006) noted that rural villages are the areas where there is a high incidence of undernourishment and illiteracy. It further argued that rural villages are the areas where there is a high level of gender inequity and a high concentration of poor people (ibid, 2006).

For the purposes of this study the rural primary schools are schools situated in areas that are far away from an urban centre (approximately 40 kilometers) and where there is a high level of poverty, unemployment and illiteracy.

Table 3.2: The sampled research sites

Name of School	Name of Location	Name of principal	Number of learners	Number of SGB Members	Number of Teachers
School A	Ngwenyeni Trust	Mrs A1	712	07	19
School B	Block C Trust	Mr B2	1182	09	35
School C	Block B Trust	Mr C3	599	07	19

According to the information from the different schools, School A and School C have five members from the parents' component and two members from the educators' component in the SGB. School B, because of the higher number of learners at the school, qualifies for six members from the parent component and three members from the educator component.

The size of the school in terms of learner numbers determines the size of the SGB (DoE, 1997), and the number of educators in a school is also determined by the number of learners (DoE, 1997). The Department of Education guidelines in electing SGBs specify the number of parents to be elected to the SGB according to the number of learners in that particular school. In a primary school where the number of learners is less than 160, the number of parents elected to the SGB is four. A primary school that has more than 160 learners but less than 719 learners qualifies for five elected parent SGB members. A primary school that has more than 719, qualifies for six elected parents as SGB members (DoE, 1997). These policies explain the number of SGB members in the sampled schools as indicated above.

3.5.2 SAMPLING THE RESPONDENTS

With sampling of respondents, the researcher used purposive sampling because each sampled element was chosen for a specific purpose (Wysocki, 2004). Furthermore, “in purposive sampling, samples or respondents are chosen because they are representative, informative and knowledgeable about the phenomenon the researcher is investigating” (O’Leary, 2004).

In each school, the researcher sampled one principal as a respondent. Principals were sampled because they are the professional heads of the institutions and therefore have an ex-officio status in the SGBs. It was hoped that the principals would give their version of what the parent SGB members do in their roles and what they, as principals, think parent SGB members should do in executing their roles.

The researcher sampled these principals because they are the key persons in school governance and, therefore, they should be more conversant with their roles as they have hands-on experience in school governance.

The three school principals would provide data based on their administrative and leadership roles in the functioning of the school governing bodies of their various schools. Hence, they were seen as credible sources of data because they are always there in all meetings of the SGB.

3.6 DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES

I decided to use different methods of collecting data because I wanted to have valid data and because my objective was to obtain the principals' experiences and perceptions of the school governing body, and understanding of the involvement of parents. As a result, there is a need to use different data collection techniques. I decided to use structured interviews and document analysis as the main data collection methods.

3.6.1 PROCEDURES IN DATA COLLECTION

Before the actual collection of data began, the researcher had to secure permission to conduct research from the Education Department, the Circuit Manager and the School principals to conduct research. The researcher needed to personally conduct semi-structured interviews with principals of selected schools. Interviews were guided by the prepared semi-structured interview schedules. In adherence to the principle of anonymity, schools were referred to in symbols and no names were used in reference to any responses. These interviews were arranged to take one hour at the most and the researcher ensured that participants were not kept very long, which could lead to boredom. Through structured Interviews, all respondents were asked the same questions and probes were used for all respondents. However, the order in which respondents were questioned changed because of the manner in which individuals responded. The researcher altered the sequence in order to probe more deeply and overcame the tendency for respondents to predict questions. In this way, some kind of rapport between the interviewee and interviewer was developed and also gave room for further expansion, discussion and negotiations of the interviewees' responses.

Questions were posed in the preferred language of the respondents so as to secure their good understanding. The venue and time for the interviews were planned and agreed upon in advance by both the researcher and the respondents. Prior to the interview, the researcher maintained constant contact with the respondents through telephone calls to ensure that they were ready for the interviews and to honour interview appointments. Before the interviews began, the respondents were assured about the confidentiality of the information given and that it would solely be used for

research purposes. The respondents were also informed that they could withdraw at any stage should they wish to do so without any prejudice.

With regard to document analysis, the researcher requested permission from the school authorities (SGBs and principals) to undertake such activities. When the permission was granted, the researcher personally drove to the sites to do observation and to analyse the documents.

3.6.2 SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Most of the data were collected by conducting interviews because I was interested in capturing people's experience, understanding and knowledge of the phenomenon. According to Patton (cited in Merriam, 2001:72), an interview is conducted to obtain information that cannot be directly observed. Perspectives of people can be understood during the interview.

The semi-structured interview was chosen because it guides and shapes the interviews maintain focus and also obtains more than the required information. In addition, the interviews offered the opportunity to ask probing questions that emerged from the interviewee's responses and allowed the generation of new ideas that would lead to richer data. The interviews were focused on the understanding of roles, challenges and experiences of principals about the parent involvement in the school governing body.

Cohen et al. (2000:278) emphasised the advantages of interviews as follows:

“The framing of questions for the interview considers probes and prompts. Probes enable the interviewer to ask respondents to elaborate, extend, add to, provide detail for, qualify or clarify their response, thereby addressing richness, depth of response, honesty and comprehensiveness that are some of the hallmarks of successful interviewing. The prompts enable the interviewer to clarify questions or topics.”

All participants (principals) were permitted to choose the language in which they comfortably express themselves. As a result, all three principals accepted that the interviews should be conducted in the English language. I am fluent in the languages

used, since English is my second language and the same language I am using in this study.

3.6.3 DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

The second set of data was document analysis which was used mainly to support the interview data. To provide quality and rich data, I probed how parents have been involved in school governance by reading some school documents such as previous school governing body minutes of meetings. Merriam (2001:126) emphasised that “documentary data are particularly good sources for qualitative case studies because they can ground an investigation in the context of the problem being investigated”.

The following school official documents, the records of minutes of SGB meetings and constitutions of the school governing bodies have been analysed. According to Cohen, et al. (2000), data collection from non-human sources includes documents and records. Such documents showed the official chain of command and provided clues about how people interacted with regard to matters of school governance. The objective behind analysing documents is to investigate the evidence of relationship and cooperation amongst the SGB chairpersons, other SGB members and the principals, and what could be the possible sources of conflict.

3.7 TRIANGULATION

A researcher needs not be tied to a particular technique or method when carrying out research because there are many methods available (Robson, 1993:291). Cohen et al. (2000:112) define triangulation as a condition or situation whereby a researcher uses two or more methods for collecting data while studying human behaviour. Triangulation can simply be stated as gathering data using many techniques. Likewise, Patton (2002:247) defines methodological triangulation as a system of using multiple methods to solve a single problem.

There are two purposes of triangulation in this study: first, methodological (using multiple data techniques) and second, as a validity measure. Robson (1993:290) asserts that “one important benefit of multiple methods is in the reduction of inappropriate certainty”. In addition, Fielding and Fielding (cited in Maxwell,

2005:112) emphasise the need to “recognize the fallibility of any particular data or method and to triangulate in terms of validity threats”.

It is as a result of this that I decided to combine two data collection techniques, namely, document analysis and interview. I did this to avoid weaknesses of one data and strengthen the data collected with each instrument in order to have a valid and rich data. Furthermore, I used triangulation to examine this single phenomenon from more than one vantage point to validate my data. This strategy reduced the risks of validity threats such as bias from my research.

Patton (2002:248) puts the advantages of triangulation in this way: “Studies that use one method are more vulnerable to arrows linked to that particular method (e.g., biased or untrue responses and loaded interview questions) than studies that use multiple methods in which different types of data provide cross-data validity checks”.

However, triangulation has been criticised for some weaknesses. Flick (2004:179) views triangulation “less as a validation strategy and more as a strategy for justifying and underpinning knowledge by gaining additional knowledge”. Fielding and Fielding (cited in Cohen et al, 2000:115) contended that “methodological triangulation does not necessarily increase validity, bring objectivity to research or reduce bias”. Whereas those criticisms might be true, the use of triangulation allowed me to cross-check my data using different data collection techniques.

3.8 DATA ANALYSIS

Creswell (2007:150) views data collection, recording and analysis as interrelated, simultaneous procedures that are ongoing. At the onset of data collection, I took note of the suggestion by Coffey and Atkinson (1996:1-2) that data should not be collected without substantial analysis taking place simultaneously by the researchers. The verbatim transcripts of interviews were analysed.

The analysis of data has been conducted according to practices normally used in qualitative research. Data were grouped according to the views of the principals and then analysed. Data analysis was continuous from the first stage of collection and after collection. The respondents were notified that the findings of the study could be made available to them on request.

3.8.1 ANALYSIS OF DATA FROM THE SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

A semi-structured interview has been used as a data collection method in this study. This method was used as a follow-up to augment the gathered information from the document analysis. In analysing the interviews data, the researcher categorised the information according to themes that were identified in the semi-structured interviews. This simply means that data were grouped into themes and analysed according to such themes. Hardy and Bryman (2004) noted that the major preoccupation of the data analyst is the paring down and condensing of the data that have been collected by a researcher during fieldwork. This means that the researcher has categorised the information and removed what is irrelevant from what is relevant for this study. As this research falls within the phenomenological study, the researcher has identified statements by participants that relate to the topic and grouped them into meaningful units.

3.8.2 ANALYSING DATA FROM THE DOCUMENTS

The documents that were used as another source in this research are minutes of the SGBs' and parents' meetings and the attendance registers. The researcher made notes by summarising these minutes. The summary of these minutes has helped the researcher to be able to interpret them. In interpreting these minutes, the researcher was able to identify related themes. These themes were connected to the themes that had already been identified in the other research methods. By analysing the minutes, the researcher was able to get the detailed information related to parent SGB members' performance of their roles. Leedy and Ormrod (2005) noted that analysis of data in the case study involves the organisation of details about the case, categorisation of data, generalisation and interpretation of single instances, synthesis and identification of patterns.

3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

3.9.1 INFORMED CONSENT

Informed consent constitutes the foundation of ethical procedures (Cohen et al., 2005:50). Therefore, before any data collection commenced, I sent a letter to the circuit office as well as each school principal to request informed consent to conduct

this study in these institutions. I obtained an informed assent from the participants and also explained the following to them:

- the purpose of the study;
- that participation is voluntary; and
- the assurance that they could withdraw from the study at any time (Clasquin-Johnson, 2011).

3.9.2 ANONYMITY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality involves the manner in which the information is safeguarded and the identity of the people and the institutions involved are protected (Punch, 2006). According to Kumar (2005:214), “Sharing information about a respondent with others for purposes other than research is unethical”. This means, therefore, that the researcher collects or identifies a person’s responses and does not essentially do so publicly. In this research, the interviewees were assured that their names and those of their schools would not be publicised. Issues of confidentiality were taken care of. Codes and numbers were used to ensure a better performance based on this guarantee.

3.10 CONCLUSION

The research methods and design that were employed in this study were effective in that all of them provided answers to the research questions that were asked in chapter one. These methods also helped the researcher gather the information that is relevant to the title of this research. Moreover, the use of different methods helped the researcher to have an insight into how the parent SGB members perform their roles in this structure.

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CHAPTER FOUR DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter Three the researcher outlined the research methodology and gave all the reasons for the selection of the research participants, research sites and the data-gathering instruments. The instruments the researcher used to gather the data include individual interviews with principals, case studies and document analysis to collect data that enabled me to answer the research questions.

In this chapter, the researcher presents the analysis of the data collected and its interrelatedness. As indicated in previous chapters, the researcher generated the data relating to the principals' perceptions and experiences of SGBs in rural areas. The schools have been coded as School A, School B, and School C. In presenting the findings that responded to the research questions, this chapter is structured as follows:

4.1.1 CASE STUDIES

This is the section in which the information about the respondents and the research sites is presented. The biographic information from both schools has been outlined by means of tables. The issues of gender, age and educational qualifications have been shown in each table.

4.1.2 PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

This section is divided into the following subsections:

4.1.3 THEMATIC DISCUSSIONS

Themes and related sub-themes which emerged from the data analysis are presented. There are five themes which emerged, beginning with Theme 1 which

deals with SGBs' lack of knowledge of policies and functions regarding school governance.

4.1.4 RESULTS OF THEME ANALYSIS

In this section, results from each theme are analysed in depth to try and answer the research questions. The different responses from respondents (principals in this case) are looked at thoroughly.

4.1.5 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

In this section the researcher discusses the findings and relates them to the literature that was discussed in Chapter Two.

4.2 CASE STUDIES

Table 4.1: Case study 1

RESPONDENT A1	
Age	53 years of age
Education level	PTD (Primary Teacher's Diploma), BA degree ACE in Management
Gender	Female
Experience as principal	9 years as a principal
Where the principal stays	The principal stays in the same village where the school is situated, about 500 meters away from the school
SCHOOL A	
School category	It is a primary school
Size of the school	The school has an enrolment of 712 learners, and the grades include Grade R to Grade 7 (Senior Phase)
No. of educators	There is a total number of 19 educators in the school
Condition of the school	The school has old buildings that were renovated by the SGB. The SGB had to build new classrooms because they received no support from the Department of Education. The staff room and one block with four classrooms were built by the SGB using big self-made bricks. The school is well electrified through the fundraising by the SGB

Size of the SGB	There are seven members of the SGB in total which are categorised as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parent members: 5 ▪ Teacher members: 2
Functionality of SGB	The SGB in this school is not fully functional; they rely fully on the principal for direction as to what to do
Frequency of SGB meetings	The SGB meetings in this school are held once per term according to the set itinerary. Practically, the sitting of the SGB is determined by the principal's calling; if she does not call members for a meeting then the term will end without any meeting being held
Employment status of parent members	Only one of the parent members is employed by the farmers around Komatipoort. The parent will leave very early in the morning for work and come back late when the children are asleep. The other members are unemployed and are dependent on the grant (money freely given by the government because of a person's unemployment status) to make a living

Table 4.2: Case study 2

RESPONDENT B2	
Age	39 years
Education level	SSTD (Senior Secondary Teacher's Diploma), BEd ACE in management
Gender	Male
Experience as principal	10 years as a principal
Where he stays	The principal is staying in different location from where the school is, about 16 kilometers away. He is only able to visit the school as he comes to work and during the week-end meetings
SCHOOL B	
School category	The school is a primary school
Size of the school	The school has an enrolment of 1182 learners. The school has the highest number of learners amongst the three selected schools
No. of educators	The post establishment (educators allocated to a school) of this school allows them to have 35 teachers. The number of teachers is determined by the number of learners at the school. The higher the number of learners, the higher will be the number of teachers at the school

Condition of the school	The school was built before the South African government was formed in 1994. The staff room is small and is unable to accommodate the management team and staff members of the school. The school is well electrified but does not have water supply. The road to the school is bad for cars and is inaccessible on rainy days
Size of the SGB	The SGB has a total of nine members which are categorised as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parent members: 6 ▪ Teacher members: 3
Functionality of SGB	The SGB in this school is functional; but not all members are active and always willing to work and improve the school physically. Only the chairperson is always available to do work at the school. The SGB in this school built a feeding scheme kitchen, a store room for the school, and two ECD classes. This was made possible by the ability to raise funds by the SGB and proper planning. Although the plan was the principal's initiative, members supported him
Frequency of SGB meetings	The SGB managed to meet every term of the year. This meeting plan excluded all the emergency and un-planned meetings, and also the finance committee meetings. The finance committee met almost every Monday to review funding of the previous week and also plan for the forthcoming week
Employment status of parent members	Only two members of the SGB are employed. One is a teacher from a different school, and the other one works for the Department of Health. Four parents are unemployed and fully depend on grants for the survival of their families

Table 4.3: Case study 3

RESPONDENT C3	
Age	46 years of age
Education level	BPaed (Baccalaureus Paedonomiae) arts degree ACE in management BEd Hons. in management
Gender	Male
Experience as principal	11 years as a principal
Where he stays	The principal stays far from the schools, he stays even outside the circuit to which his school belongs. The distance is 56 kilometers from the school

SCHOOL C	
School category	The school is a primary school; it accommodates grades from Grade R to Grade 7
Size of the school	The school has an enrolment of 599 learners distributed over the different grades
No. of educators	As the number of educators is determined by the overall enrolment of learners, the school has only 19 teachers
Condition of the school	The school was newly built in 1997 and has good facilities and infrastructure. It is well electrified. The only challenge was the lack of water. This problem was also solved by the former principal who raised funds to install a borehole
Size of the SGB	The total number of SGB members is seven, divided as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parent members: 5 ▪ Educator members: 2
Functionality of SGB	The SGB of this school is, from my observation, non-functional. Members do not collaborate and do not operate effectively due to poor communication among them. Members will not meet until the principal calls for a meeting if there is something to be done and it is labelled an urgent matter
Frequency of SGB meetings	It is required that SGB members should meet at least once every term, but at this school the SGB meeting happened once a year when there was pressure to report to parents on their learners' performance before the final exams
Employment status of parent members.	All of the parents in the SGB are not employed. They live by temporarily cleaning the educators' houses. Their main source of income for their families is the state grant

4.3 PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

4.3.1 DATA FROM INTERVIEWS AND DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

The data was combined and grouped into themes, and sub-themes were identified from the data.

Table 4.4: The themes and the sub-themes

Themes		Sub-themes
Theme 1	SGB members' knowledge of policies governing their functioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Knowledge and understanding of school governance roles ▪ Control of school finances ▪ Selection and appointment of teachers ▪ Development of school policies ▪ Development of the school
Theme 2	Trust among the members of the SGB and the principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Handling of confidential matters ▪ Mutual trust ▪ Cooperation
Theme 3	Literacy levels of SGB members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parent SGB members' qualifications ▪ Supporting the SGB operations
Theme 4	Communication with parent SGB members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Communication with parents ▪ Principal's functions in communication
Theme 5	Challenges faced by principals with parent SGB members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Governance of schools ▪ Attendance at meetings. ▪ Principals are overworked ▪ Lack of support

4.4 RESULTS FROM THEME ANALYSIS

In this section, the themes and their related sub-themes which emerged from data analysis are presented. The available data were derived from the interviews and document analysis used to collect the data. The analysis started with Theme 1 which was based on the core issue in school governance, the legislation and policies that guide the overall functioning of the SGB and the school. The sub-themes from Theme 1.

4.4.1 THEME 1: SGB MEMBERS' KNOWLEDGE OF POLICIES GOVERNING THEIR FUNCTIONING

4.4.1.1 Knowledge and understanding of school governance roles

The first part addresses the viewpoints from the principals' perspective. Principals are expected to render all necessary assistance to governing bodies to help them to perform their functions effectively as stipulated in Section 19 (2) of the South African Schools Act (SASA), 84 of 1996. It is imperative therefore that there should be a sound working relationship between principals and the parent SGB members.

Principals were asked what they understood regarding their governance roles. All three respondents indicated that their roles were to act as link between the Department of Education (DoE) and SGBs and assist with the interpretation of policies to ensure effective functioning of schools. On this, principal C3 had this to say:

“Principals act as liaison officers between the SGBs and the DoE and also see to it that SGBs function according to stipulated regulations and procedures”.

From the response it seems that principals were aware that their presence in governing bodies was to provide information regarding school governance matters to parent governors. The findings seem to corroborate Heystek's (2004) study, who maintains that the principal and the chairperson of the SGB should work collaboratively because both have been assigned school governance duties. The response from the principals suggests that they understood that it was imperative for them to have sound working relationships with parent SGB members. Though the Schools Act does not compel principals to train SGB members, the principals felt that there was a need for them to assist in this regard.

However, due to their busy schedules they are unable to educate the members. In this regard Principal A1 reported that:

“I would love to assist in training the members of the governing body about their roles, especially because some are not adequately abreast with their governance duties. However due to the huge amount of work before me as the head of the school, it is not possible”.

Concurrent to that, Principal B2 stated that:

“I wish I could assist them to differentiate between the school governance and professional management because that is where the problem lies. Unfortunately time does not allow me to do so”.

These responses seem to suggest that principals understood the need for the clarity of governance roles on the part of parent governors. The findings seem to be

consistent with the study of Gamage and Sooksomchita (2004:300) who revealed that, “though principals welcomed the support of the School Board Members and the important role they were playing, they preferred members to have a better understanding of their roles, accountabilities and responsibilities”. This implies that principals realised the need to provide what Karlsson (2002:330) calls “a neat separation of governance and management responsibilities” to avoid interference into the others’ area of jurisdiction which might lead to unnecessary conflict. The findings concur with Maile’s (2002) study who maintains that it is important for everyone to be aware of his or her respective functions, and should take care not to interfere with the duties and areas of responsibilities of others to avoid conflict.

In terms of the SASA, 84 of 1996, one of the functions of the SGB chairperson is to control SGB and parents meetings. Chairpersons are also representatives of the governing body at important school activities. Interviews with principals regarding their understanding of the roles of the SGB chairpersons reflected that chairpersons’ roles were to call both parents and SGB meetings and to chair such meetings. For instance, Principal A1 mentioned that:

“The SGB chairperson discusses with the principal issues to be dealt with prior to the SGB meeting”.

In agreement, Principal B2 mentioned that:

“The chairperson liaises with the principal at school; calls parents and SGB meetings; chairs such meetings and also states the agenda of such meetings”.

The responses indicate that principals understood that governance matters require them to work jointly with the chairpersons and all the parent SGB members. A notice of the SGB meeting of School A dated 10/08/2011 corroborated this claim, as it was signed by the chairperson with the principal countersigning. This seems to suggest that the principal and chairperson worked together on the issues to be dealt with during the meeting.

However, evidence emerged that though there was an understanding of roles by principals, the practice of Principal C3 suggested otherwise. When examining the minute book of School C, it emerged that an SGB meeting dated 14/07/2011 was chaired by the principal without any reason given.

The above finding seems to suggest that this particular principal sometimes interferes with the chairperson’s roles when school governance duties are performed.

This could be indicating that somehow the principal regarded himself as the figure where authority is vested. It can be argued therefore that such actions of the principal may become a source of conflict with the SGB chairperson, especially because governance falls under his sphere of authority.

Principal C3 revealed that:

“The SGB chairperson’s role is related to the principal because even if there are to be meetings, chairperson talks to the principal and they will agree to the agenda of the proposed meetings”.

4.4.1.2 Control of school finances

From the above topic, it is apparent that the school’s financial management lies with the school governing body. In terms of Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM) (Section 4.2 (e)(i), the principal has to have various kinds of school accounts and records properly kept and to make the best use of funds for the benefit of the learners in consultation with the SGB finance committee. From the above-mentioned statements, there appears to be an overlap of financial responsibilities between the school governing body and principals. It means that both the governing body and the principal are legally entrusted with the financial responsibilities in terms of SASA and PAM provisions respectively.

Whilst the financial responsibilities have been placed on both principals and governing bodies, the Schools Act does not provide the guidelines as to how this responsibility can be carried out without causing conflict on the part of the role players. The Act further fails to provide any solution in the event of conflict occurring between the governing body and the principal. It becomes imperative therefore that the school governing body and the principal reach an agreement on how this responsibility can be successfully carried out for the benefit of the learners and the school.

Principals were asked as to how they worked with parent SGB members in controlling school finances. The interview responses showed that all principals acknowledged the formation of finance committees, whose members are elected from among the SGB members. For instance Principal B2 mentioned that:

“The departmental procedure states that schools must have the finance committees; therefore it is these committees that are responsible for the control of school finances, neither the principals nor the SGB chairpersons”.

In examining minute books of all three schools under study, evidence emerged that schools have indeed managed to form finance committees. This suggests that principals and SGB chairpersons could not be isolated for the financial duties. What remains to be known now is, are these committees functional? That is, do they meet to discuss issues relating to finance and give a report to the entire SGB?

Minutes of an SGB meeting of School A1 concurred with this where the principal explained the importance of budget planning. She further requested different stakeholders to prepare their needs to be presented to the finance committee for the preparation of the school budget.

However, though finance committees have been established, principals indicated that SGB chairpersons at times did not follow the laid-down procedures regarding the utilisation of school funds. In this regard Principal C2 reported that:

“At times the chairperson would request that the school finances the teachers’ party since educators have requested so, something which is not part of the needs of the school”.

This particular response suggests that there is a lack of understanding of how the budget operates on the part of the parent SGB members. It further indicates that the principal and the SGB chairperson did not see in the same way how funds are to be utilised. It seems that the poor cooperation in terms of the utilisation of funds is likely to cause conflict between the principal and the parent SGB members.

However, Principal B2 regarded such actions as minor disagreements which are caused by ignorance on the part of SGB chairpersons, which after discussions are ironed out. For instance Principal B2 mentioned that:

“We do not actually disagree to the point of conflict; but it is just those minor misunderstandings which are over after discussions when issues are clear to both of us. He will say, Principal, I did not know. He does not create problems for me”.

To corroborate this viewpoint, Principal of school A1 stated:

“We explain the need for the money to be spent on particular items because it is our responsibility as well to ensure that the school is cared for. We have realised as

the finance committee that what is going to help is that school monies must only be used for school work to continue and the chairperson of the SGB will then agree”.

This statement does not mean that the rest of the SGB members are ignored, the resolutions taken from the finance committee sitting are reported to the SGB. The resolutions taken by the finance committee are informed by the financial status of the school reported by the treasurer.

The above response indicates that Principal A1 and parent members of the SGB were able to discuss issues, communicated their differences and were able to reach certain agreements. With Principal C2 disagreement seemed to create tension and showed no collaborative working between the principal and chairperson of the SGB. In this regard Principal C2 reported that:

“The principal is the actual person that knows the needs of the school, so he decides on how the money is to be utilised and the chairperson is informed later”.

The clash of viewpoints regarding the utilisation of funds did not augur well with the relationship between the principals and the parent members of the SGB regarding the carrying out of financial duties. It can be concluded that not all schools experience good collaboration with SGBs because conflict exists between some principals and SGB chairpersons regarding the control of finances at schools. Furthermore, it seems that principals and SGB chairpersons ignore the rest of the SGB members when planning utilisation of funds.

4.4.1.3 Selection and appointment of teachers

Section 20 (1) (i) of SASA, 84 of 1996 stipulates that, subject to this Act, a governing body of a public school must recommend to the Head of Department (a person at District level effecting the appointment of educators), the appointment of teachers at the school, subject to the Educators Employment Act, 138 of 1994, and the Labour Relations Act, 66 of 1995. Principals were asked as to how they worked with the parent members of the SGB in the selection and appointment of teachers.

The interview responses revealed that principals and SGB chairpersons could not solely be responsible for the selection of educators. Interview committee members are elected from among governing body members to conduct interviews. On this note, Principal C2 stated that:

“The governing body convenes to elect members of the interview committee which becomes the sub-committee of the school governing body. It is this committee that deals with the selection of educators, neither the principal nor the SGB chairperson”.

An examination of SGB meetings from the minute books of three schools, A, B and C showed that schools did form interview committees. Interview responses of principals regarding their working with parent SGB members showed that they do work together with the members of the SGB to appoint teachers to available posts at the school.

They mentioned that selection of teachers is done by interview committees. Principal A1 reported that:

“The principal informs the parent SGB members that there is a post, and the SGB meets to form a selection committee. If the chairperson is not part of the committee, as it is not compulsory that he/she should be part, the chairperson signs all documents pertaining to the interview process”.

The responses of principals indicate that the selection of teachers cannot single-handedly be done by principals and chairpersons. The establishment of the interview committees suggests that selection is done by the parent SGB members with principals and chairpersons playing leading roles. For instance, the principal acts as a resource person during the interview process; whilst the chairperson calls and chairs the meeting of the full governing body where the work of the interview committee is ratified.

However, there are difficulties from parents whenever they recommend new teachers. The principal of School A expressed her view as follows:

“We experienced difficulties. Especially when it comes to recommending teaching staff, parents do not know which candidate is suitable for the post, therefore principals have to play a role and explain things to parents or direct them, otherwise they cannot make a meaningful contribution and choose the right person for the job”.

Another problem that the principal of School B identified was that English was the language used in conducting interviews for teaching vacancies at the school. According to the principal of School B:

The interviews are done in English, which is the official language, and since most of the parents on the School Governing Body do not understand English, only teachers ask questions during interviews while parents observe. Parents can comment only on

the 'behaviours' of the interviewees but cannot understand or comment on how the interviewees answered the questions. Because of the language problem they cannot influence the outcome of the interview. A literate chairperson has only the one who was asking questions and made a contribution with the principal on the side of parent SGB members.

The principal of School C stated that:

“I cannot say much about interviews because in my school we have never been involved in the process. In most cases educators leave our school because they are declared to be more than the number required by the department”.

This kind of response indicates that due to the decrease in number of learners enrolling at the school year after year, the Department of Education reduces the number of teachers for which the school qualifies. Teachers are moved from this school to other schools where their number has increased. The number of learners at the school should be proportional to the number of teachers to teach at that school. In School C, there has been an annual decrease in the number of teachers at the school for the past four years, so they never had to recommend the appointment of any teacher.

However, evidence emerged that there were problems when the interview process occurred. The interview response from principals A1 and B2 revealed that interview processes are characterised by favouritism and nepotism practiced by some parent members of the SGB, particularly the SGB chairpersons. Principals believed that SGB chairpersons have their own preferred candidates and they would go to the extent of interfering with the scores to ensure the success of their candidates. Principal A1 mentioned that:

“At times the SGB chairperson fails to follow the laid-down procedures, for instance talking about an issue related to the interviewee in his/her presence and interfering with the scores preferring a certain candidate”.

In agreement with the statement, Principal B2 reported that:

“It happens that the SGB chairperson has his own preferred candidate because of certain motives which are not based on the needs of the school”.

These responses suggest that sometimes equity and lawful practices are not practiced when interview processes are conducted. In this way, the selection of candidates is not done along the lines of whether a person is capable in terms of post

requirements, but instead it is through favouritism. This statement concurs with the findings of Calitz et al. (2002:94) when they claim that “Educator posts are given to people who have friends and family members on the governing bodies”.

However, despite such ambitions from chairpersons, principal A1 mentioned that they were able to convince chairpersons to accept that no preferential treatment would be given to any candidate, and that he would have to perform well during the interview process. For instance, Principal A1 stated that:

“I intervened by stating that nobody has a right of telling others to change scores because one’s score is his own judgment. In most cases I would say it is through ignorance because after explanation, the chairperson understands and accepts my viewpoint without any bad blood between us”.

4.4.1.4 Development of school policies

Policies are guidelines for action in the day-to-day running of a school and are useful in that they ensure fair methods which all stakeholders know and agree to, of dealing with issues and problems (Understanding School Governance Policies).

The School Governing Body is entrusted with the responsibility and authority to formulate and adopt school policies on a range of issues, such as the mission and ethos of the school, code of conduct of learners, school community relations and curriculum programme development.

Principals were asked as to how they worked with the parent SGB members in the formulation of school policies. All three principals of the selected schools indicated that the parent component played a minimal role in policy formulation. The low levels of education and unfamiliarity with educational activities were given as some of the reasons for the failure by parent SGB members to take an active involvement in formulating school governance-related policies. This lack of capacity therefore results in the formulation of governance-related policies being done by the management teams of schools, the educator component of SGBs and principals. In this regard, Principal C3 stated that:

“Due to low levels of education, parent members leave this responsibility with educators because they feel that they could not offer much. In fact it is the SMT, educator component of the SGB and the principal that mainly formulate governance-related school policies”.

Principal A1 concurred with this point of view by revealing that:

“In terms of the law, this is the responsibility of the SGB, but parent members of the SGB leave this with the educators because they feel that they are not familiar with the educational activities”.

From the principals’ perspective, it was clear that principals were aware that policy formulation is the responsibility of SGBs, but parent governors lack sufficient knowledge to perform this task. This seems to suggest that school governing bodies have delegated policy formulation to principals and educators because of their knowledge in this regard. Principal B2 quoted his chairperson’s remarks one day when they were called for the policy formulation duty in their SGB:

“To be honest, there is nothing much that I can do regarding the policy formulation task because I know very little about matters pertaining to the teaching profession. Moreover, my standard of education is low. This is the area of the professionals and, as parents, we rely on the principal and educators to lead us”.

Immediately after the chairperson made this remark to the principal, the principal said another parent SGB member could not hold herself with this matter. She put forward her comments as follows in the same meeting:

“I am willing to help but my little knowledge of educational matters makes it impossible to perform effectively since I am not trained as an education officer. In most cases educators lead us in this regard because they are trained for their job”.

From the responses it appears that the parent SGB members were comfortable to have policy formulation done by the principals and educators. This suggests that agreements have been reached between principals and governing body members that policy formulation should be done by principals and educators.

The findings therefore suggest that the area of policy formulation is not an area of conflict between principals and parent SGB members because, due to lack of expertise, governing bodies have delegated this responsibility to principals and educators.

4.4.1.5 Development of the school

According to Section 20 (1) (a) of SASA, 84 of 1996, the SGB must promote the best interests of the school and strive to ensure its development through the provision of quality education for all. Principals were asked during interviews as to how they worked with the parent SGB members in school development. Principals' interview responses indicated that they cherished the same ambitions with the parent SGB members regarding school development, except for the Principal of School C3.

Principal B2 mentioned that they wished to have schools of higher learning standards with fully equipped centres of learning such as computer and science laboratories and fully resourced libraries. In the issue of school development, Principal B2 reported that:

“Actually we envy the school to match the standards of former model C schools. For instance we are planning to have a new administration block, computer and science laboratories and we include all parent SGB members in the developmental planning structure of the school”.

In disagreement, Principal C3 mentioned that:

“Theoretically and in principle we wish to take the school to greater heights. Practically it fails because of the way parent SGB members conduct themselves in as far as issues of governance are concerned”.

The principal of School A concurred with the principal of School B, and she mentioned that:

“When the school was to be fenced to protect the properties of the school, we were up and down with the chairperson of the SGB persuading the physical planning unit of the DoE to allocate tenders for the fencing of the school”.

In examining minutes of the parents meeting of School B dated 27-02-2011, evidence from document analysis emerged that a resolution was taken that the chairperson of the SGB, who is a parent, should supervise people who were installing the fence at the school. This indicates that the parent SGB members took part in the development of the school. This seems to suggest that principals and the parent SGB members were able to work together in the development of their school except in some schools like School C, where the meetings between the principal and the parent SGB members were very rare. Consequently, development in such schools was hampered.

4.4.2 THEME 2: TRUST AMONG THE MEMBERS OF THE SGB AND THE PRINCIPAL

Trust was one aspect that emerged from the responses that were given by the three principals involved in this study. They further confirmed that if SGB members work in the spirit of trust, conflicts would be avoided. Trust, to me as a researcher, means that one acts in good faith towards me or towards the school.

4.4.2.1 Handling of confidential matters

The school principal needs to report everything taking place at the school to the SGB members, especially to the parents because they are not always at the school. There are issues that are said to be sensitive and confidential like HIV and AIDS, drunkenness by an educator, learner raping or being raped and child abuse. These issues need to be treated with sensitivity. The principal must make sure that all evidence is given before taking matters to the SGB committee. This is to avoid false information being spread. Principal A1 said the parent SGB members will complain that they are not informed of things happening at the school, which means they are not trusted by the school principal.

The principal of School C quoted the SGB chairperson saying that:

“We often hear through learners that certain things are happening at school, the principal at times hides things especially if they involve teachers”.

The principals of Schools A and B revealed it was difficult to maintain trust especially with confidential matters. The principal of School A alleged that when the SGB members were on the school premises, they gave the impression that they can maintain the principle of confidentiality, but it sometimes happened that sensitive information leaks to the community. She added that:

“There are certain types of information with which, you as the principal cannot trust the SGBs [that you, as the principal, cannot entrust to the SGB members]. You can have a confidential issue that you are going to deliberate [on] 'with the SGB, rest assured [somewhere] along the line during the months you will hear that it has leaked [out]-Trust is a very deep-seated thing; it comes from within the person”.

4.4.2.2 Mutual trust

Trust must exist amongst parent SGB members and the principal to maintain team spirit.

Principal of School B indicated that:

“The principal must have good understanding with the SGB chairperson, while the SGB chairperson on the other hand has to have good understanding with the principal. There must be that mutual understanding between both because their work demands that they operate jointly”.

The principal from School A added that:

“The principal's feelings must be put aside. You must remain the same person. I have to be straight (outspoken) sometimes because people are not the same as you see them. They act differently all the time. What you see is not what you get from the SGB members”.

A relationship is a partnership that depends on mutual trust. The governance of every public school is vested in its governing body (Section 16 (1-2) of SASA, 84 of 1996). A governing body should stand in a position of trust towards the school; this confirms what the principal of School B said during the interviews above.

“It is the responsibility of the school principal and the SGB to establish the culture and ethics that will ensure that the relationships are conducive to effective communication and decision making”.

4.4.2.3 Cooperation

The principal must cooperate with the school governing body with regard to all aspects as specified in the South African School Act, 84 of 1996.

The principal of School B commented that:

“The principal’s role is related to the chairperson because even if there are meetings to be called, the chairperson talks to the principal and we will agree to the agenda of the proposed meetings”.

In addition, the principal of School A declared that:

“The most important thing was to maintain openness and that the communication channels must always remain open between the principal and the other SGB members”.

The school principal of School C indicated that it was difficult to obtain cooperation from the parents of learners; this is one of the factors that made it difficult for the SGB of this school to meet. There is no cooperation between the principal and the parent SGB members. He did not think that the problem lay with the educators because they had been in the field for the past three years; they were re-elected to serve in the SGB. He indicated that the SGB members wanted to impose their authority on the educators and non-teaching staff. This led to considerable resentment and conflict amongst the members of the SGB. He also had the following to say:

“Once the chairperson has drawn [up] the agenda or whatsoever, please let us adhere to it and please let us give him the necessary respect. To some people it sounds ok but to others it is taboo. It is surprising [the reasons] why people fight while they don't know one another, but we are really trying, we think we will win them at the end of the day, we will get there, and we also want to work with them together”.

School A’s principal further added that since she arrived at the school, she had not experienced any problems. If the principal is honest with SGB members, there would be a feeling of mutual trust and cooperation amongst all the members.

4.4.3 THEME 3: LITERACY LEVELS OF SGB MEMBERS

According to Van Wyk and Lemmer (2002:137), the main problem which besets parents in the previously disadvantaged communities in South Africa is high levels of illiteracy. This would obviously impact negatively on the Department of Education's capacity building programmes for the SGBs.

This theme looks at how the literacy levels of the parent SGB members affect the understanding of their roles and responsibilities in governance.

4.4.3.1 Parent SGB member's qualifications

Table 4.5 Education level of SGB in School A

	Age of SGB member					Gender		Education level		
	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61 & above	M	F	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
Chairperson			✓			✓			✓	
Deputy Chairperson			✓				✓		✓	
Secretary	✓					✓				✓
Parent member		✓				✓				✓
Treasurer			✓				✓		✓	

The fact that there are a few parents who have only a primary education may be an indication that parents view school governance as something that should be done by those who are literate. The majority of parents have a secondary education level, only the educator component of the SGB has tertiary education. Perhaps, when electing members for the SGB, parents considered those who have secondary education to deal with school governance matters. This is in line with Heystek (2004) who argues that where parents have limited skills, knowledge and low levels of literacy, they may find it impossible to assume responsibility for governing the school. The principal of School A pointed out that:

“The main problem is the language in use; I mean English is the official language. All circulars are always written in English and most parents have difficulties expressing their views in English”.

According to the principal in School A:

“Parents in the rural areas seem to feel that they have little chance to participate in school governing bodies, and in many instances they are either silenced or withdraw altogether from school governing body activities because of their low literacy levels”.

Table 4.6 Education level of SGB in School B

	Age of SGB member					Gender		Education level		
	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61 & above	M	F	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
Chairperson.				✓			✓		✓	
Deputy Chairperson				✓			✓		✓	
Secretary			✓			✓				✓
Parent member			✓			✓				✓
Treasurer			✓				✓		✓	

The analysis of the composition of this SGB indicates that most of the parent members are well literate, and because of their literacy levels, they can easily read and understand policies related to school governance.

The principal of School B emphasised the following because of the experience he has with the SGB that is literate:

“If all parents were educated, the school could develop well and smoothly because now when the principal or teachers raise any suggestions, for instance, to build a library, buy an overhead projector or other things, parents do not even understand what an overhead projector is. And remember they, parents, are the majority, so it will take time for them to approve or support the idea. But if they were better educated they could make suggestions or support different ideas when raised by other members in the SGB, Fortunately most of the SGB parents in my school are fairly qualified, they can read and they understand what I want for the school”.

The principal in School B further added that:

“if you take an SGB member who went to school up to Grade 3, to a training workshop, you will always know that even if you can train this person, he/she is going to be overwhelmed by the training materials and the information that is being disseminated during the training sessions so the practical implementation is going to be difficult;, but if you take a person who has gone up to Grade 12, you are saying that that person is able to read, is able to write, is able to argue constructively, and is able to advise. Most schools that have functional or effective SGBs, a greater percentage of the parent component has passed Grade 12 so these people are likely to be very much effective, thus the SGB will be very much functional. The SGB in my school understands and is supportive”.

Table 4.7: Education level of SGB in School C

	Age of SGB member					Gender		Education level		
	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61 & above	M	F	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
Chairperson				☐		☐		☐		
Deputy Chairperson			☐				☐	☐		
Secretary			☐			☐			☐	
Parent				☐		☐		☐		
Treasurer			☐				☐	☐		

There are a large number of parents who have only a primary education and only the secretary of the SGB has the secondary education level. This may be an indication that the level of literacy in the parent community of the school is low.

The principal of School C was concerned about the SGB's lack of understanding of their responsibilities; he referred to how the parent SGB members are elected to serve in governance.

“When we elect them [SGBs] we don't look at the level of their education ... the requirement is just having a child at a particular school irrespective of the educational level of the parent”.

This situation leaves more responsibility on the side of the principal because he must either take all the governance responsibilities or train them so that he will be able to work with them for the remainder of the three years (term of office). The principal is overworked, initiates ideas without informing the parents, formulates policies unilaterally with educators, have very few SGB meetings and the principal relies more on the teachers in the SGB for support on SGB related matters.

4.4.3.2 Supporting the SGB operations

Section 20 (1) (e) of SASA states that the school governing body must support the principal, educators and other staff of the school in the performance of their professional functions. The SGB can discuss the matter with the principal and give him support and advice (Gauteng Department of Education 1997:8).

Principal of School C commented as:

“There is no positive support that I can get from the parent SGB members, those people are illiterate and don't have knowledge about their roles and responsibilities in governance”.

A completely different view was received from the principal of School B who responded as:

“The chairperson works mostly with the principal because the SGB does not administer the school; it is the principal who does that. The principal is there as the head of the school”.

From this discussion with principal B, it is clear that if there is support that comes from the SGB members to the principal, then the school is run very smooth and

progresses because the support he needs is always received. Principals with cooperative SGBs will not feel any stress of having to take over the entire governance role. Principal from school B added that:

“We all make decisions both parents and teachers on the School Governing Body. When there is something to decide on we all do it. When we are not happy with the decision taken we always express our concerns, and since parents are the main members of the school governing body, their concerns normally get considered.”

4.4.4 THEME 4: COMMUNICATION WITH PARENT SGB MEMBERS

Communication means the informal and formal interaction between the principal and the parent SGB members with the aim of imparting and delivering on the respective duties of each party. The ability of the principal to communicate regularly with members of the SGB can establish a good working relationship between himself (the principal) and the school governing body. Against this background, participants were asked to respond with regard to communication with parents’ and principals’ functions in communication at school level and they had the following to say.

4.4.4.1 Communication with parents

One of the fundamental aspects in any institution is to encourage all stakeholders to establish and ensure that continuous vertical and horizontal communication takes place. In this respect, an open door policy can enhance communication by cascading information to the appropriate role-players (from the principal to the parent SGB members, and from the parent SGB members to the principal).

Principal C3 of School C commented that:

“Even a few days ago one parent SGB member visited the school to report some learners that were found playing truant. I, the principal used this opportunity to show the parent the new photocopy machine that the school has bought”.

During the interview it was clear that there is no or little communication between the principal of School C and the parent SGB members. The quotation above indicates that communication in terms of information dissemination about new developments in the school is not effective. This situation reflects a lack of communication and transparency between the parent SGB members and the principal. It’s important to keep the SGB informed on new developments as information could allow the governing body to evaluate progress made by learners and the school as a whole.

The principal from School B indicated that there is smooth communication between himself and the parent members of the SGB. The information flows very well from the Department of Education to the principal, then to all members of the SGB. The means of communication used (letter writing and information through learners) is the one all members agreed upon.

Communication in School A is not as smooth as policy says it should be. The principal finds it difficult to communicate effectively with parents. The school relies on SMSes as a communication system but parents do not reply because they argue that their cell phones are lost, borrowed or switched off. This may lead to the information being lost completely or misdirected if the cell phone was not with the parent.

4.4.4.2 Principals' functions in communication

Communication can either be verbal or nonverbal depending on the nature of the relationship. It is important because the relationship problems between the principal and the parent SGB members can be minimised if they are communicated. Regular communication could enhance better collaboration between the principal and the members of the SGB. Good communication will also result in a well-informed SGB.

The school principal must use multiple methods of communication in order to reach a wider parent community. For example, in rural areas, materials may need to be bilingual. It is important that in SGB meetings parents are asked what method of communication they prefer the principal to use.

Schools are inundated with information from the Department of Education that needs to be communicated to parents. A number of things also occur in schools either during the week or on weekends which also need to be communicated to parents. The principal has to make sure that the communication gap is closed between him and the parent SGB members. Although Principal C3 only held one meeting per year and has weak communication with SGB members, he said:

“Principals act as liaison officers between the SGBs and the DoE and also see to it that the parent SGBs function according to stipulated regulations and procedures”.

The above implies that Principal C3 knows his function as SGB theoretically, but fails to act properly in practice. His communication and collaboration with parents' members of the SGB is minimal.

Principal B2 has put forward his feeling that:

“In any institution, positive communication with the stakeholders is healthy and essential so that different stakeholders can work together as a team towards the attainment of the organisation’s aims and objectives”.

All three schools indicated that they communicated with parent SGB members by means of written letters inviting them to SGB meetings to discuss certain issues pertaining to the performance of the school. School A's principal further indicated that:

“We also arranged meetings with teachers to discuss issues that affected the teachers. He added that they also made use of the teacher component of the SGB to pass information on to the educators”.

From the above discussions, it is clear that communication is crucial for any organisation to run smoothly and perform well. The only way through which any kind or form of information can be passed on to the parent members of the SGB is communication. It is the responsibility of principals to keep communication healthy.

4.4.5 THEME 5: CHALLENGES FACED BY PRINCIPALS WITH PARENT SGB MEMBERS

The school thrives very well if both the professional functions of the school management and governance functions and objectives of SGBs complement each other. The three respondents A1, B2, and C3 identified a number of challenges that hinder the effective involvement of parents on school governance activities.

4.4.5.1 Governance of schools

The major purpose of school governance, as a function of the SGB, is to set the tone and ethos that will drive the vision and mission of the school. The SGB has therefore a significant function of assisting the school principal to organise and manage the school activities in an effective and efficient way. However, the SGBs in the rural areas seem to be hampered by their lack of capacity and knowledge to support the principal in the management of the school.

The principal in School C asserted that the members of the SGB accept and follow his initiatives. They do not come up with their own initiatives nor do they criticise the management's decisions. They do not as yet understand their roles as parent SGB members and or as executive members, and instead they should be the ones who call meetings as it is directed by the SGB constitution. He also mentioned that he has decided to continue on his own without communicating with the parent members, which is why there are no meetings held. This is what the principal of School C had to say:

“In this school, it is the principal who will end up calling the SGB meetings, draft the agenda, chair the meeting, and also come up with all that needs to be done. The duty of the SGB will only be to rubber stamp what the principal said”.

The running of the schools, in some instances, virtually hinges on the principals' volition. The principal of School A complained about the multiple tasks he has to perform when he said:

“The crucial challenge that faces the principal is to take over the SGB functions. [T]he principal does [the] management and governance tasks of the school. [T]he principal is supposed to advise the SGB and they should work on their own, but the SGB is not in a position of being advised because of their lack of capacity. [T]he principal has to do all the work, in other words the principal with this type of SGB has to work double shift. [H]e has to do all the tasks of the SGB, something that is very difficult for him. The poor principal is overworked, his work is going to be affected negatively, and the performance of the school in general will be affected adversely”.

4.4.5.2 Attendance of meetings

All principals with the exception of the principal of School B reported on the issue of poor attendance at SGB meetings. The principal from School A stressed the point that:

“Some parents do not attend school governing body meetings or give their apologies. So the SGB was forced in many instances to postpone the meeting. High absenteeism does happen, even in general parents’ meetings that we usually have at school”.

The principal further indicated that:

“Out of six parent members who were elected to the SGB committee, only two are always attending to all the SGB activities. They avail themselves for interviews, and even in times when the school is facing serious challenges that needs the intervention of the SGB”.

From the response above, high absenteeism among parents SGB members leads to an assumption that they do not understand and respect their duties on the school governing body. The principal of School C explained that parents do not realise the importance of their roles on the school governing body. The principal of School C experienced the same problem about poor attendance of meetings.

“They even failed to attend school governing body meetings”.

He added that another challenge was that most parents had other responsibilities either at home or in the community and they paid more attention to those than their responsibilities to the school governing body. Some do also have responsibilities at work.

My observations on document analysis confirmed that parents were absent more than other members, without apologies in most cases, and seemed to lack an understanding of the significant role they needed to play on the school governing body. Despite the poor attendance of parent SGB members, the new members felt confident and promised according to minutes to do their best during their term of office. Principal B2 held at least one meeting per term (within three months period) and it seems that he has fewer problems.

“I do not foresee any problem in attending school governing body meetings since most of the responsibilities on SGB are not on a daily basis, and that the school governing body meetings will only be attended once a term except in emergencies”.

This statement encourages all parent SGB members to attend meetings because they are not a daily activity. They can only plan for one meeting a term except the urgent and unplanned meetings.

4.4.5.3 Principals are overworked

Most principals in the rural areas seem to grapple with both the management and governance functions with little or no support from the SGB. The principal of School A argued that:

“The principal is indeed looked upon by the SGB members to support them in governance activities. He must do everything on their behalf.”

Principal B2 suggested that:

“Although my SGB members can read, the principal, as an ex-officio member, has to train the SGB members, educate them and help them to interpret the policies so that they can assist with the governance of the school”.

For principals to release the load that they have, the principal of School C said that:

“During the [SGB] meetings the principal should create a slot in which he should educate these parent SGB members on what roles and responsibilities they are to play in the school”.

4.4.5.4 Lack of support

The SGB has a significant function of assisting the school principal to organise and manage the school activities in an effective and efficient way. However, parent SGB members in the rural areas seem to be hampered by their lack of capacity and knowledge to assist the principals in their management of the schools. The principal of School C argued that:

“I cannot run the school alone; he has to have people who assist him in managing the school in terms of advice and decision-making. The principal on his own is going to crumble. I need empowered and visionary SGB members to help me run the school. [I]f the SGB members are not empowered and visionaries, then the school is going to be run by the principal, which is going to be burdensome. [S]ome of the projects are not going to be accomplished. Things are not going well at school with the SGB and at the end I am going to be blamed for running the school alone”.

The principal of School A argued that:

“Schools are unable to perform up to the expectations not because the poor principal is failing to manage the school, but because the support that he should receive from the SGB is not forthcoming, I am struggling with poor cooperation of parents”.

It seems that the principal of School B is satisfactorily supported. Support from SGB members comes in many ways to the principal depending on the existing situations at the school. For instance, the principal of School B stated that:

“When there are repairs to be done, for instance plumbing problems, the chairperson helps as a local person in getting people to do such repairs and in most cases he assists us during school vacations to check if everything is in order”.

This principal further said that:

“The chairperson visits the school regularly and volunteered at one of the parents meetings to organise parents that were not working to come to school and clean the school yard and some of the untidy classrooms”.

The principal of School A mentioned that:

The SGB chairperson is a member of the discipline, safety and security structure of the school and he assists to a certain extent with the discipline of learners. He is given time to address learners about how they are expected to conduct themselves within the school premises.

With the SGB of School C3 there is absolutely no support given to the principal by members. This is the reason why there are no meetings held at the school for the better part of the year. The principal struggles alone with all the management and governance duties on his shoulders. The principal might have good ideas and intentions to develop and improve the school and its performance, but if he does not receive the necessary support from the parent SGB members, then all the good intentions will never be realised.

4.5 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

There appears to be a disjuncture between policy and practice. There are strong indications in the findings that the participating principals are knowledgeable about the prescribed policies from the Department of Education but the implementation of the policies has not been followed regularly as prescribed. Principals A1 and C3 experienced the parent members of the SGB’s level of education as low which inhibits their effective participation in the operation of the SGB. This causes the

principals to initiate policy matters without consultation of members of the SGB. The expected prescribed collaboration with parents in the policies are minimal. According to SASA (84 of 1996) the principal must take a strong lead for stakeholders like SGB to move forward in policy development.

If the principal must wait for the SGB, which is the body that has been granted by SASA to develop policies for schools, the principal as an ex officio in the SGB and also the manager of the professional side will not meet the Department's deadlines.

There are many policies that the SGB should understand and adjust to suit the context of the school. The low level of education and lack of understanding of SGB members of Schools A and C forces the principals to do the adjustment and implement policies without consulting the parents. These include policies such as the admission policy, language policy, policy on school times and learners' code of conduct. The principal collaborates sometimes with his staff members to draft policies. Where SGB members are more educated this seems not to be a problem. The principal of School B does get the support from SGB in this regard.

The above findings indicate that principals A1 and B2 felt obliged to continue without or with only a few members available to keep the schools running.

Principals struggle with members of the SGBs' low level of education and lack of knowledge about school governance roles as increasing their workload. Principals A1 and C3 in the study had dual roles as chairperson and the handling of finance. Parents acknowledged that they are not educated enough and do not have the knowledge to help the principals with the formulation of the school's policies. Principals also experienced that parents do not effectively cooperate in meetings or they are absent from the meetings. Parents also requested the principals (A1 and C3) to take the lead by doing all the arrangements which cause an extra workload on the principals. This resulted in Principals A1 and C3 having fewer meetings with the members of SGBs, contrary to the prescribed policy.

Principals suggested that parent members of the SGB should be trained to effectively participate in the governance of the school. The participating principals expressed their frustration about the inability and incompetence of parent SGB members when they mentioned that they wish they had the time to train the members of the SGB. It

seems that the SGBs do not get any training or sufficient support from the Department of Education. It is common that many parents in rural South Africa are illiterate and are therefore not competent to effectively participate in school governance.

The lack of trust between principals and parents inhibits the operation of the SGB. Important and confidential issues are discussed at SGB meetings. The principals felt that they cannot trust the members of the SGB with sensitive and confidential matters. One principal explicitly mentioned that important confidential information leaks to the local community. This caused principals to conceal sensitive matters like HIV and AIDS from parents.

Communication with members of the SGB in rural areas is problematic. The low level of education, lack of knowledge about technology (e.g. emails) and poor response and cooperation from members of the SGBs inhibits effective communication with parents. Principals mentioned that parents do not respond to letters or SMSes and it is difficult to contact them telephonically. This might be that parents do not have phones due to poverty. The lack of communication contributes to the absenteeism from meetings. This and the fact that parents expect principals to implement all initiatives about school governance could be the reason why Principals A1 and C3 have few meeting with the SGBs.

Principals face challenges with parent members to effectively participate and contribute to school governance. Principals are frustrated about the ineffectiveness and low participation of SGB members. With the exception of Principal B2, the principals mentioned that it is a challenge to solely govern the school and to overcome the absenteeism of parents from meetings and to train the parents to be more knowledgeable and supportive of their roles in school governance.

4.6 CONCLUSION

It emerged from the data that the level of education influences parents' contribution to school governance. Schools A and C have parents with a low level of education who do not effectively support the principals in the operation and governance of the school. Principals who experience poor cooperation and collaboration are overworked and implement initiatives without consulting parents. They also do not

conduct regular meetings with parents due to lack of knowledge and skills of some parents.

It is apparent that SGBs in South Africa have a statutory responsibility for many critical functions within schools which could make a valuable contribution to ensuring a school's effectiveness and continued improvement. Likewise, it is important to recognise that principals in rural areas assist with the tasks of school management and SGBs. SGB members need training and practical guidance about their roles and functions.

While it may be necessary to distinguish between the role of the governing body and that of the principal, the school management team, and other educators, the distinction should not detract from the constitutional principles for cooperative governance. Cooperative governance is thus best described as an interactive approach to education in which all stakeholders are represented and take co-responsibility for the effective and efficient operations of their schools. Judging by the research conducted, it is a challenge for principals in rural areas.

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CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This study sought to investigate the principals' experiences and perceptions of school governing bodies in rural primary schools of the rural areas. In Chapter Four, the findings obtained from the respondents of this study were presented according to emerging themes. The themes and the sub-themes that emerged from the analysis of data were presented chronologically to showcase the commonalities and the disparities among the perceptions and experiences of principals in rural areas. This chapter presents the summary and conclusions of the findings obtained in Chapter Four in connection with the theoretical perspectives of the literature as discussed in Chapter Two. The last part of this chapter suggests recommendations in response to the conclusions.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

Chapter one has set the scene for the study. In this chapter, I report that Section 16 (1) of the South African Schools Act (SASA), 84 of 1996, places the governance of every public school in its governing body, which should be chaired by a parent. Section (16) (3) of the same Act stipulates that, "professional management of a public school must be undertaken by the principal under the authority of the Head of Department", in this case the Director-General of the Department of Education. This study was, inter alia, driven by the realisation that there is a close relationship between duties of parent SGB members and those of the principal in the school governing body.

The chapter also provides a statement of the problem which argues that as much as many transformational documents give authority to parents to play a central role in the governance of schools, in reality parents do not have adequate knowledge and information or the appropriate skills to be effective role players in the governing of schools. The latter has an impact on principals' experiences and perceptions of parent members of the SGB.

Operational definitions have been provided to facilitate a better understanding of the study. The researcher formulated specific aims to determine the course the study should take. The chapter also consists of a literature review that provides a good background and orientation of the topic under study. A research methodology which describes a research approach and data collection techniques that were followed is also provided.

It was therefore important to study the relationships of parent SGB members who are responsible for governance, and principals who are to do both governance and management duties. The critical question sought to investigate how principals experience and perceive parent members of SGBs in rural areas.

Chapter Two reviewed the literature that is related to the study. Literature encourages positive conflict because it generates new ideas helpful towards the achievement of the objectives of the organisation. This chapter provides the theoretical framework of the principals' perceptions and experiences of SGBs in rural areas. It also provides crucial aspects of national policies that mandate parents' and principals' participation in school governance.

Reference is made to key areas such as position of the principal in governance, the role of school governing body and the relationship between governance and management. The chapter also highlights the central role a principal has to play in communicating with stakeholders. This chapter further emphasises the need for principals and governing body members to clarify roles of members and to reach agreements between them regarding their governance duties and to work in partnership.

Chapter Three outlines the methodology the researcher employed in order to obtain data from respondents concerning the topic under study. The study's research plan is described which includes the qualitative case study research approach; the selection of respondents; the research instrument, namely, the interviews and document analysis; the processing and analysing of data as well as the ethical considerations and clearance that was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the University of Pretoria.

Structured interviews were conducted with principals of the three sampled schools. Case studies were used to give the information about the selected schools where principals and parent members worked together. Finally, the school official documents such as the records of minutes of governing body meetings, attendance registers and policy documents were analysed to investigate roles and relationships between principals and parent SGB members, and how they execute their duties.

Chapter Four focuses on the analysis, presentation and interpretation of data. This was done through key themes, namely, lack of SGB members' knowledge of policies governing their functioning; trust among the members of the SGB and the principal; literacy levels of SGB members; communication with parent SGB members and challenges faced by principals with parent SGB members.

The chapter provides the following information:

- Demographic and background information of SGBs of the three schools.
- The principals' experiences of the parent SGBs.
- The principals' communication with the parent SGB members.
- The principals' perceptions and experiences of trust between him and the parent SGB members.
- The principals' experiences of their leadership roles in facilitating parent SGB members' cooperation in governance activities.

From the research processes described above, what follows are conclusions that were reached.

5.3 SUMMARY OF THE MAIN FINDINGS

❖ **Findings 1: SGB members' knowledge of policies governing their functions**

The following findings were derived from the collected data:

- Parents in the SGBs seem to be unfamiliar with SGB policies and their governance roles.
- Findings indicate that school policies were developed and implemented by principals and educators because parents thought that it was a professional matter to provide schools with policies.

- In terms of school development, findings indicate that parents made no attempt towards this responsibility except approving all the staff and principals' suggestions.
 - Parents do not have relevant skills and knowledge in the appointment of educators. They are easily influenced by favoritism and leave the actual appointment to the discretion of the principal and the chairperson.
 - Findings of this study discovered that parents lack financial management skills hence they abdicate this important role to principals.
 - Parents in the SGBs lack confidence to contribute actively in school governance activities due to their low levels of literacy. Some schools do not conduct regular meetings as prescribed by policy because principals do not find it necessary and initiate and implement ideas without consulting the SGB members.
 - Parent governors transfer their roles to the principal and are often absent in the governance meetings because they have very little to offer.
 - Discussion with principals on the lack of knowledge of SGB members proved that SGB members need training so that they become of assistance to the principal.
 - It is evident from the study that a large number of SGB members are illiterate.
 - Although the Department of Education (DoE) through the South African Schools Act places school governors in a position of power, the DoE usually knows very little about what is happening in the school. Governing body members do not have an understanding of policies that govern their roles. Many parents are indifferent towards their roles as members of the SGB.
- ❖ **Findings 2: Trust between members of the SGB and the principal**
- Parents are not fully involved in all the activities of the school because it seems that there is lack of trust between the principal and the members of the SGB.
 - There seems to be a poor relationship and poor cooperation between the principals and SGB members. The principals mentioned that some parents could not handle confidential matters such as HIV and AIDS and appointments.

- Parents in rural schools are not informed about their roles and how they could assist principals.

❖ **Findings 3: Literacy levels of SGB members**

- It is evident from the study that a large number of SGB members are illiterate. Although SASA places parent SGB members in a position of power, they usually know very little about what is happening in the school. Governing body members do not have an understanding of policies that prescribe their roles. Many parents are indifferent towards taking an active role in providing quality education. Findings about literacy levels are summarised as follows:
 - Most SGB members and their immediate departmental officials seem to have superficial knowledge of the functions of the governing bodies.
 - The SGBs lack knowledge and understanding of their roles and responsibilities and this seems to have a negative impact on principals' collaboration with SGB members.
 - The low level of literacy increases the workload on principals. Principals have to perform all functions of the SGB with little or no support because of a lack of capacity.

❖ **Findings 4: Communication**

The results from interviews indicate that communication between the principal and the SGB is insufficient. The lack of knowledge of SGB members, overload of administrative work coupled with numerous departmental meetings and workshops often hinder the communication between the principal and members of the SGB. As a result, the SGB seldom visits the school to evaluate progress made with regard to planned activities. Communication is unidirectional, that is, communication is directed at parents from the school while very little communication is forthcoming from parents, if there is any. Principals do not conduct regular meetings and one principal C3 mentioned that he only has an SGB meeting once a year. This is not in line with the prescribed policies but the principal might feel that he will be wasting time by having meetings.

❖ **Findings 5: Challenges faced by principals with parent SGB members.**

The challenges faced by school principals with parent SGB members are manifested as follows:

- Principals have problems with parents who do not know the difference between management and governance functions of the SGB.
- SGB members seem to simply endorse what principals have decided with no input of their own.
- Principals are faced with irregular and/or non-attendance of meetings by some parent SGB members resulting in meetings not forming a quorum for proper and legal decision-making on school activities.
- Most principals seem not to be ready to assume their training role of SGB members because of the work load they have in schools.
- SGB members do not maintain the principle of confidentiality.
- Principals take control of both the management and the governance functions with little or no support from the parent SGB members.
- Being involved in school governance requires hard work and sacrifice (DoE, 1997:9). The level of commitment and participation of parent SGB members is very low and that affects the performance of the whole SGB.

5.4 ANSWERING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following section is answering the main questions by addressing each sub-question.

❖ **Research question 1**

How do education policies outline the implementation and roles of SGBs?

Policies clearly outlined the roles of the members of SGBs, and further divided them into management and governance roles to try and eliminate conflict between the principal and the members of the SGB. There are roles that are allocated at school level that are not prescribed in the policy and these differ from school to school. The functions of the school governing bodies according to the South African School Act 84 of 1996 (SASA): 20 (1) (a), is to promote the best interests of schools and to ensure that the learners at the school receive the best education possible.

The findings in Chapter Four indicate that parents in SGBs seem to be unfamiliar with SGB policies and their governance roles. Findings also indicate that school policies were developed and implemented by principals and educators because parents thought that only professional people can provide schools with policies. Other duties allocated to parent SGB members, like appointment of teachers and other staff members and financial management, are given to the principal as members do not have the relevant capacity to execute them.

❖ **Research question 2**

How do principals understand and experience the parent members of school governing body's contributions towards development of the schools?

Principals believe that a positive contribution by parent members of the SGB can lift the school to great heights, setting the tone for the school, making sure there is effective teaching and learning at the school and making the school's environment welcoming and attractive. If members do not meet and discuss issues, as happened in School C, the school will not develop but degenerate. This is the understanding and experience principals have with parent SGB members towards school development.

About school development, findings indicated that parents made no attempt towards school development except for approving all the staff and principal's suggestions. The creativity and initiatives from the parent SGB members would bring variation in terms of school development, and make the school more attractive and welcoming.

❖ **Research question 3**

How do school principals understand and implement their roles within the SGB?

From the data gathered in Chapter Four, it emerged that principals are fully aware of their roles in SGBs and also how to implement them. Principals need to provide guidance to and train the SGB members, need to communicate all information about the school to the SGB. The added load on the principals' shoulders makes it difficult for them to find spare time to train the SGB members, and the low literacy levels and commitment by parent members make it difficult for them to understand the language and terminology used in the SGB.

From the findings in Chapter Four, it became clear that principals do not conduct regular meetings with their SGBs, and this was confirmed by one principal C3 who mentioned that he only had one SGB meeting a year. This is not in line with the prescribed policies but the principal might feel that he will be wasting time by having meetings because of the lack of commitment by parent members of the SGB.

❖ **Research question 4**

What challenges do principals encounter with parent SGB members about the implementation of their duties?

It emerged from the data that principals are faced with a number of challenges which they must live with and gradually try to improve. Challenges identified include a lack of commitment by parent SGB members; a lack in punctuality and absenteeism in SGB meetings, low literacy levels by parent SGB members and a lack of trust between the principal and the parent SGB members. Principals are then forced to take over both the management and governance responsibilities because there is no support from the SGB, which in turn lays a heavy load on the principal.

From the findings in Chapter Four, it became clear that principals have problems with parents who do not know the difference between the management and governance functions of the SGB; they overlap and this might lead to conflicts between the principal and the SGB members. SGB members simply endorse what principals have decided upon with no input of their own as important stakeholders at the school. Principals are faced with irregular and/or non-attendance of meetings by some parent SGB members resulting in meetings not forming a quorum for proper and legal decision-making on school activities.

Findings also indicate that there is a poor relationship and poor cooperation between the principals and SGB members. The principals mentioned that some parents could not handle confidential matters such as HIV and AIDS and appointments. Parents in rural schools are not informed about their roles and how they could assist principal.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

- Training is a must in any organisation in order to advance quality. This is not only limited to awareness and skills training, but it includes an ongoing training that will enable SGBs to continuously improve the quality of teaching and learning within the schools. Training should form an integral part of managing quality and all stakeholders should be involved, and the training must be specific to the needs of the school (Lukhwareni, 2002:89-90).
- The training should be on-going for principals and parent SGB members' development. The training should focus specifically on the key features of relationships such as trust, knowledge of policies governing SGB members' functioning, communication, challenges faced by principals with parents SGB members, cooperation and empowerment. The aim of training: should not only be to ensure the success of SGBs but also to empower principals and SGBs to develop shared values.
- School governing bodies need to have the necessary capacity in order to perform their duties and carry out their responsibilities in an effective and efficient way. The following recommendations should assist in ensuring effective SGBs:
- Training should include many SGB members and not one or two because elections for the executive of the SGB are held on an annual basis. As a consequence of this, the treasurer this year might not be the treasurer next year, hence the importance of all SGB members attending all training sessions.
- Increase training efforts to build the capacity of the SGB members on governance aspects including financial management, discipline, school safety, awareness of the different laws that pertain to school governance including labour laws.
- Introduce clustering of schools and their SGBs in order to share and develop their capacity.
- Make Adult Basic Education available and accessible to SGB members who are illiterate or semi-literate to improve their education.

- Establish and capacitate Circuit Governance Teams consisting of principals to assist in training and monitoring SGB members.
- Include a certain educational level as one of the criteria for becoming an SGB member. Where possible, schools should encourage parents who are enlightened (literate) to stand for elections. This would make these people feel appreciated and might therefore volunteer to serve the school with distinction.
- Reward SGB members in a form of transport allowance when they attend meetings, certificates and trophies at the end of each year for appreciation in order to retain the services of the parent members in SGB activities.
- Provide continued appraisal, monitoring and mentoring programmes for SGB members to ensure accountability for the delegated powers and authority.
- The language used in all the training manuals must be understood by the majority of the parent SGB members. This will result in information being accessible to all members of the SGB.
- The department should also utilise the many education management specialists who graduate from the universities every year as some of them may do a better job than departmental officials as they have expertise and knowledge. These people should be encouraged to open consultancies to assist in training.

5.6 CONCLUSION

The research has indicated that the SGBs in public schools play a major role with regard to their functions at schools. The effectiveness of SGBs to assist the schools within their boundaries depends on the quality of support available to them at school level. This assistance should be received from the DoE, and the principals as members of the SGBs and the SMTs. On the other hand, principals need full support from the SGB to perform all the allocated functions.

It has been shown that the training received by the SGBs from the DoE is aimed at equipping them to perform their duties optimally. However, it is evident from the

findings derived from both the document analysis and the interviews that the training the SGBs receive is insufficient to achieve the required aims, its timing is wrong, and the language used during the training does not suit the parent SGB members in the rural areas.

The SASA (RSA, 1996a) repeatedly emphasises the necessity for training, supporting and monitoring SGBs, however, the ideal situation where SGBs have to access specialised personnel to assist and support them and provide the quality and type of training they need, still lies in the future. Therefore, given the present situation in schools, different stakeholders, especially the principals as DoE representatives, should provide school-based support, share their expertise and make maximum use of all the applicable and human resource skills available to them. This kind of support can certainly help SGBs to: function more effectively in future in the interest of not only the school, but the whole community as well.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Letter to school principals

Appendix B

Letter of consent from principals

Appendix C

Letter to Circuit manager

Appendix D

Letter from Circuit manager

Appendix E

Letter request permission from interviewees (Principals)

Appendix F

Consent form

Appendix G

Semi-structured interviews questions for principals

Appendix H

Document analysis guide

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Appendix A

Letter to school principals

P.O.Box 1540

Malelane

1320

03 January 2010

The Principal
School A Primary School
Komatipoort
1346

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Request to conduct a research study in your school

The above matter refers.

I am an MEd candidate at the University of Pretoria and my student number is 96266296. My research topic is 'Principals' perceptions and experiences of school governing bodies in rural areas. I am due to collect data from April to August. I kindly request you to grant me permission to come and visit your school.

I hope my request will meet your favourable consideration.

Sincerely

TA Dladla

Appendix B

Letter of consent from principals

School A Primary School
Komatipoort
1346
07-01-2010

Dear Mr Dladla

Re: Permission to conduct interviews – School A Primary

I have been authorised by the School Governing Body (SGB) of the above-mentioned school to grant you permission to come and conduct your research in this school. I therefore invite you to come to the SGB meeting that will be held on the 15th of January 2010 to introduce yourself formally.

Wishing you very good luck.

Thank you

Principal A1

Appendix C

Letter to Circuit Manager

P.O.Box 1540
Malelane
1320
03 January 2010

The Circuit Manager
Department of Education
Nkomazi East Circuit
Komatipoort

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Request to conduct a research in your circuit

I hereby request you to grant me permission to conduct a research in School A and School B and School C in your circuit. This is a requirement for the fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Education at the University of Pretoria. The topic of my research in *'Principals' perceptions and experiences of School Governing Bodies in rural areas*.

I trust that you will treat this request favourably.

Sincerely

Dladla TA

Appendix D

Letter from Circuit Manager

MPUMALANGA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Government Building
Kanyamazane
NELSPRUIT



Private Bag X 1014
Kanyamazane 1214
Tel: (013) 794 9006
Fax: (013) 794 3234

EHLANZENI REGIONAL OFFICE

SUB DIRECTORATE GET & FET

Litiko Letemfundvo
wezemfundo

Umnnyango Wemfundo

Department van Onderwys

Umnnyango

Dear Mr Mavuso

RE: PERMISSION FOR RESEARCH- SCHOOL A, SCHOOL B AND SCHOOL C

I acknowledge the receipt of your letter dated 03 January 2010, and I hereby grant you permission to conduct your research in the schools mentioned.

I wish you a good time.

Sincerely

Mr P Shabangu (Circuit Manager)

Appendix E

Letter request permission from interviewees (Principals)

P.O.Box 1540

Malelane

1320

03 March 2010

The School Principal
School A Primary School
Komatipoort

Dear Principal A1

Re: Request for permission to interview yourself

I hereby request you to grant me permission to come and interview you on matters relating to school governance. I am a Masters student at the University of Pretoria and my topic is “Principals’ perceptions and experiences of School Governing Bodies in rural areas”. I am due to collect data during the months of April to August 2010.

Thanking you in advance.

Dladla TA

Appendix F

Consent form

Naas Location
P.O.Box Naas
Komatipoort
1356
10 March 2010

Mr TA Dladla

I....., hereby consent to participate in the interviews that will be conducted with me by the researcher. I understand the topic of the research and I will cooperate with you as long as you are within the requirement of the topic.

Sincerely

School principal

Appendix G

Semi-structured interviews questions for principals

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

INTERVIEW QUESTION	RESPONSE FROM PRINCIPALS	
Does the school have a SGB?	A1.	Yes
	B2.	Yes
	C3.	Yes
Who do you think has the responsibility to call the SGB meeting?	A1.	The principal through the secretary as a member at the school
	B2.	Principal, Chairperson and Secretary
	C3.	The chairperson
Who do you think should speak most in these SGB meetings?	A1.	All members, especially parent members
	B2.	Members who attended
	C3.	The chairperson
Do all SGB members have portfolios?	A1.	Yes
	B2.	Yes
	C3.	Yes
What is your role as the principal in school governance?	A1.	To support the SGB in performance of its duties, to guide the SGB (legislative wise) when executing their disciplinary functions
	B2.	Advise the SGB
	C3.	Accountability and guidance
What is the role of the SGB in school governance?	A1.	Promoting the best interest of the school, striving to ensure its development through the provision of quality education for all learners at the school
	B2.	To ensure that school infrastructure is properly maintained, and that teaching and learning resources are made available at the school
	C3.	To govern the school in totality
How would you describe governance in this school? Is it sound, poor or average?	A1.	It is average; this is due to ignorance; incapacity and term of office
	B2.	It is sound
	C3.	It is sound
Please explain the answer provided in 7 above	A1.	The election of new members from time to time affects progression. Accountability remains the responsibility of the principal when approached

		for decisions that are taken by the SGB. The SGB shift their responsibility to the principal as an ex-officio member. They are sometimes discouraged by the accusations from the community and tend to lose interest
	B2.	Members do cooperate in making sure that their responsibilities are performed; sub-committees are functional
	C3.	Is cooperative
Explain factors that you think affect the school governance positively.	A1.	Their voices are heard by the parent majority and the support is very high. This usually happens when decisions are taken after having been given full motivation by a fellow parent
	B2.	Literacy level does affect the school governance positively. Good communication skills also impact positively
	C3.	None
Explain factors that you think affect the school governance negatively.	A1.	Ignorance. The principal as an ex-officio member always experiences difficulties in educating members how to chair the meeting and how to manage school funds since the treasurer and the chairperson must come from the parent component. Illiteracy is posing a great challenge when such members are there in the SGB.
	B2.	Illiteracy affects governance negatively, such members end up not attending meetings
	C3.	None
Does your SGB belong to school sub-committees as chairpersons in the school?	A1.	Yes
	B2.	Yes
	C3.	Yes
Do they meet with the sub-committees and give reports to the entire SGB?	A1.	Only the finance committee.
	B2.	Yes, they do report to the entire SGB
	C3.	Yes.
According to legislation, SGB must be there to help improve the overall functioning of the school and the performance of learners. Is this the case with your school?	A1.	Yes they are helpful. The furniture problems have been partially addressed through the improvised chairs.
	B2.	Yes, by motivating learners, educators, support staff, make funds available to support the

		educational programmes.
	C3.	Yes.
How do you perceive the presence of the SGB in your school? Is it assisting, adding to your work load, disorganising the school functioning, affecting your performance or there is completely no need for them to be there.	A1.	They are heading in the right direction. They are struggling to get the school moving in the right direction.
	B2.	It is assisting. There are activities that require the SGB to actively participate.
	C3.	They are supporting the school positively.

Appendix H

Document analysis guide

DOCUMENT ANALYSIS GUIDE

ITEM	COMMENTS
1. Minute book of SGB meetings	
2. Attendance register	
3. Policy documents	
4. Minute book of parents meeting	
5. Number of meetings	
6. Attendance at meetings	
7. Participation in the meetings	
8. Discussions in the meetings	
9. Who chairs the meetings?	