



**UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA**

**Management and governance decentralisation in public schools: Principals'
perspectives on recentralised decentralisation.**

by

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at the

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October 2021

Declaration

"I declare that the dissertation/thesis, which I hereby submit for the degree Philosophiae Doctor in the Department of Education Management and Policy Studies in the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution."

....*J.H.C. Kruger*.....

J.H.C. Kruger

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Best wishes

Prof Funke Omidire
Chair: Ethics Committee

Dedication

I dedicate this study to my dad for whom I have the highest admiration.

Acknowledgements

First and above all, I praise God, the Almighty for giving me the health and ability to undertake a study like this.

I also wish to express my appreciation to the following persons who made this dissertation possible:

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 - My wife, for all her encouragement during my study. You are my rock.
 - To my parents and sister for all their support.
-

ABSTRACT

The principal is the role player in the management structure of a school that will be the most affected by government's recentralisation tendencies. I explore the impact these recentralisation actions have on the principals by asking: "*What are public school principals' perspectives of recentralised decentralisation regarding their management and governance functions?*" To understand exactly how South Africa arrived at this present juncture where recentralisation is taking place, I explored the governance functions of school governing bodies and the professional management functions of the principal during the periods before and after 1994.

In this regard the thesis makes an argument that the vision of the Schools Act to establish a decentralised education system where power is allocated to the local school community (the principal and the SGB) is being restricted by the DBE.

The thesis explores the constant interferences (through *ultra vires* actions) in school admission policies, language policies, suspension and expulsion of learners, the governance and professional management of public schools, the functions and responsibilities of the principal and the functions of governing bodies that have been curtailed/recentralised through amendments of the law during the recent years. The thesis also discusses the Education Laws Amendment Bill of 2017 that was published in Government Gazette No 41178 that further proposes impairments of the powers of schools.

This phenomenon of recentralisation is both an international and a South African phenomenon. Du Plessis' (2019) indicates "*that education decentralisation will increase the efficiency and effectiveness of regional local sites if such sites are held accountable for the results. On the other hand, recentralisation of power by government will make it difficult for principals to execute leadership functions and responsibilities*".

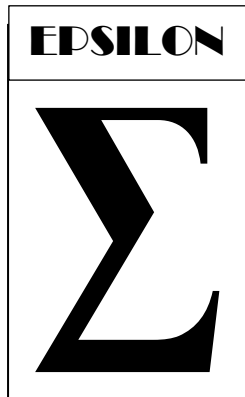
Consequently, the principals must always ask how much discretionary decision-making authority he/she has at his/her school. The data revealed that principals had negative experiences regarding incidents of recentralisation in the form of interference in their decision-making by SGBs, departmental officials and politicians. Most of these recentralisation measures are motivated by political agendas and ideologies.

Key concepts:

Recentralisation; centralisation; decentralisation; professional management; governance

Language editor

Letter from language editor to indicate that language editing has been done.



Kommunikasie/Communication

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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to confirm that I have completed the language editing of the mini-dissertation **Management and governance decentralisation in public schools: Principals' perspectives on recentralised decentralisation** by Johannes Hendrik Cornelius Kruger submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree **Philosophiae Doctor** in the Faculty of Education (Education Management and Policy Studies) at the University of Pretoria.

Yours faithfully

Isobet Oberholzer

October 2021

List of abbreviations

| | |
|---------|---|
| ANCOPPS | All-Nigeria Confederation of Principals of Secondary Schools |
| AITSL | Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership |
| BELAB | Basic Education Laws Amendment Bill |
| BOG | Boards of Governors |
| BOS | Boards of Study |
| BOT | Boards of Trustees |
| CC | Curriculum Councils |
| DDAC | District Development Advisory Committees |
| DDC | District Development Committees |
| DEO | District Education Officer |
| DSO | District Staffing Officer |
| ELRC | Education Labour Relations Council |
| ERO | Education Review Office |
| MCEETYA | Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs |
| MEC | Member of the Executive Council for Education |
| MoE | Ministry of Education |
| NDBE | National DBE |
| NZQA | New Zealand Qualifications Authority |
| PAM | Personnel Administrative Measures |
| PTA | Parent Teacher Associations |
| SACMEQ | The Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality |
| SASA | South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 |
| SDB | School District Boards |
| SGB | SGB |
| SMC | School Management Committees |
| SME | State Ministry of Education |
| SMT | School Management Team |
| TRB | Teacher Registration Board |
| TSC | Teachers Service Commission |
| TQM | Total Quality Management |

List of Tables

| | |
|---|-----|
| Table 1.1 Linking Archer's theory of power to the research questions..... | 8 |
| Table 1.2 Linking Archer's theory of power to the literature..... | 11 |
| Table 1.3 Proposed profile of participants..... | 31 |
| Table 1.4 Workplan..... | 35 |
| Table 2.1 Undisclosed matric pass as per province..... | 72 |
| Table 4.1 Archer's theory of power..... | 144 |
| Table 5.1 An explanation of the quintile system as contained in the National Norms and Standards for School Funding..... | 163 |
| Table 5.2 Sampling criteria for participating principals..... | 163 |
| Table 5.3 Profiles of the participants..... | 164 |

List of Figures

| | |
|--|-----|
| Figure 2.1: The principal's role as manager and governor..... | 44 |
| Figure 2.2 Changes in the roles and responsibilities of school principals..... | 50 |
| Figure 2.3 The centralisation-decentralisation continuum..... | 53 |
| Figure 2.4 Dworkin's (1978:31) doughnut principle..... | 59 |
| Figure 5 Venn diagram of data differences and commonalities..... | 169 |

CHAPTER 1: GENERAL ORIENTATION

| | |
|--|----|
| 1.1 INTRODUCTION..... | 1 |
| 1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT..... | 4 |
| 1.3. PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH..... | 5 |
| 1.4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS UNDER INVESTIGATION..... | 6 |
| 1.4.1 Linking the theoretical framework to research questions..... | 6 |
| 1.4.2 Main research question..... | 8 |
| What are public school's principals' perspectives of recentralised decentralisation regarding their management and governance functions?..... | 8 |
| 1.4.3 SUB-QUESTIONS..... | 8 |
| ▪ What are principals' understanding of the term "professional school management"?..... | 8 |
| ▪ Describe the type of management style principals implement at school. | |
| ▪ Explain why they implement this style..... | 8 |
| ▪ What are principals' understanding of the term school governance?..... | 8 |
| ▪ What should the relationship between the principal and the SGB be like?..... | 8 |
| ▪ What do principals expect the relationship between the Department of Basic Education, the SGB and the principal regarding school governance to be like?..... | 8 |
| ▪ How do principals describe the relationship that has unfolded between schools and the Department of Education after 1996?..... | 8 |
| ▪ When would the Department of Education be justified to interfere in matters pertaining to school governance and management?..... | 9 |
| 1.5 RATIONALE..... | 9 |
| 1.6 Linking the theoretical framework to the literature review..... | 10 |
| 1.6.1 Linking Archer's theory of power to the literature..... | 10 |
| 1.6.2 PART 1 - NATIONAL PARTY GOVERNANCE (1948 - 1994) - CENTRALISED GOVERNANCE..... | 11 |
| 1.6.2.1 Introduction..... | 11 |
| 1.6.2.2 A unitary government..... | 11 |
| 1.6.2.3 A totalitarian government..... | 12 |
| 1.6.2.4 Authoritarian government..... | 12 |
| 1.6.2.5 Centralisation of education - apartheid education..... | 12 |

| | |
|--|----|
| 1.6.2.6 Centralised education: Impact on the functions and responsibilities of the principal..... | 13 |
| 1.6.3 PART 2: POST 1994 - SOUTH AFRICA: DAWN OF A NEW DEMOCRACY (Decentralised Governance) | 13 |
| 1.6.3.1 Introduction..... | 13 |
| 1.6.3.2 Distribution of government authority..... | 14 |
| 1.6.3.3 Decentralised education..... | 14 |
| 1.6.4 PART 3: CENTRALISED EDUCATION..... | 15 |
| 1.6.4.1 Recentralisation of control - Basic Education Laws Amendment Bill of 2017 (BELA)..... | 15 |
| 1.6.4.2 <i>Ultra vires</i> actions: Government officials and politicians..... | 16 |
| 1.7 INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE – COMPARING CENTRALISED AND DECENTRALISED EDUCATION SYSTEMS | 17 |
| 1.7.1 Overview | 17 |
| 1.7.2 Kenya..... | 18 |
| 1.7.3 Nigeria..... | 18 |
| 1.7.4 New Zealand..... | 19 |
| 1.7.5 Australia..... | 21 |
| 1.7.6 Conclusion..... | 22 |
| 1.8 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK..... | 23 |
| 1.8.1 Introduction..... | 23 |
| 1.8.1.1 Archer's theory of educational change: Centralisation vis-à-vis decentralisation..... | 23 |
| 1.8.1.2 Archer's Theory of the impenetrable state | 23 |
| 1.8.1.3 Archer's Theory: Features of an accessible state..... | 24 |
| 1.9 PARADIGMATIC PERSPECTIVE | 25 |
| 1.9.1 Interpretative paradigm..... | 25 |
| 1.9.2 Ontological perspective..... | 26 |
| 1.9.3 Epistemology..... | 27 |
| 1.10 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY..... | 28 |
| 1.10.1 Declaring my position..... | 28 |
| 1.10.2 Limiting my own bias..... | 28 |
| 1.10.3 Research approach: A qualitative approach..... | 29 |
| 1.10.4 Research design..... | 29 |

| | |
|--|-----------|
| 1.11 PARTICIPANTS AND SAMPLING..... | 30 |
| 1.11.1 Purposive sampling..... | 30 |
| 1.11.2 Sampling criteria..... | 30 |
| 1.11.2.1 Sampling criterion one - Principals..... | 30 |
| 1.11.2.2 Sampling criterion two - Generational issues..... | 31 |
| 1.12 DATA COLLECTION..... | 31 |
| 1.12.1 Semi-structured interviews..... | 31 |
| 1.12.2 Literature review..... | 32 |
| 1.12.3 Case law..... | 32 |
| 1.12.4 Legislation..... | 32 |
| 1.13 DATA ANALYSIS..... | 32 |
| 1.14 TRUSTWORTHINESS AND CREDIBILITY..... | 33 |
| 1.14.1 Triangulation..... | 33 |
| ▪ Literature review..... | 33 |
| ▪ Document analysis..... | 33 |
| ▪ Member checks..... | 33 |
| ▪ Reflexive journal..... | 34 |
| 1.15 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS..... | 34 |
| 1.16 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH..... | 34 |
| 1.17 LIMITATIONS OF RESEARCH..... | 34 |
| 1.18 WORK PLAN..... | 35 |
| 1.19 WORKING ASSUMPTION..... | 35 |
| 1.20 CONCLUSION..... | 35 |
| 2. CHAPTER 2: THE DECENTRALISATION, CENTRALISATION AND | |
| RECENTRALISATION CONUNDRUM IN PUBLIC EDUCATION..... | 37 |
| 2.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK..... | 37 |
| 2.1.1 Archer's theory of educational change: Centralisation vis-à-vis decentralisation..... | 37 |
| 2.1.2 Archer's theory: Characteristics of impenetrable (inaccessible) states..... | 37 |
| 2.1.3 Archer's theory: Features of an accessible state..... | 38 |
| 2.2 THE LAUNCH OF DECENTRALISATION AND THE PUSHING BACK | |
| OF CENTRALISATION..... | 39 |
| ▪ Part 1: The peripheral school landscape in which the principal must operate..... | 41 |

| | |
|--|----|
| ▪ Part 2: The principal and the centralisation /recentralisation conundrum in public education..... | 41 |
| 2.3 Part 1: The peripheral school landscape in which the principal must operate..... | 42 |
| 2.3.1 The relationship between the principal and the SGB regarding school management and governance..... | 42 |
| 2.3.2 The principal and the democratic school landscape..... | 44 |
| 2.3.3 Organisational/Grassroots democracy/Grassroots governance..... | 45 |
| 2.3.4 The principal and the cooperative school governance landscape..... | 46 |
| 2.3.5 The principal and stakeholder participation in local affairs and the decision making of the school..... | 49 |
| 2.3.6 Conclusion..... | 50 |
| 2.4 PART 2: THE PRINCIPAL'S CHANGING LANDSCAPE: THE CENTRALISATION / RECENTRALISATION CONUNDRUM IN PUBLIC EDUCATION..... | 52 |
| 2.4.1 Introduction – Contextualising recentralisation | 52 |
| 2.4.2 The principal confronted with a centralised school governance landscape..... | 53 |
| 2.4.3 Recentralisation of education governance in South Africa..... | 54 |
| 2.4.4 The principal's two proverbial hats in relation to the management governance conundrum | 56 |
| 2.5 THE PRINCIPAL'S MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE CONUNDRUM ILLUSTRATED THROUGH DWORKIN'S (1978:31) DOUGHNUT PRINCIPLE..... | 58 |
| 2.6 RECENTRALISATION TENDENCIES IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN EDUCATION SYSTEM..... | 60 |
| 2.6.1 The principal and the phenomenon of recentralisation..... | 61 |
| 2.6.2 Unsuccessful decentralisation in the South African education system..... | 62 |
| 2.6.2.1 Unsuccessful decentralisation: Corrupt leadership..... | 62 |
| 2.6.2.2 Unsuccessful decentralisation: Corruption in public procurement processes..... | 63 |
| 2.6.2.3 Unsuccessful decentralisation: Selling of educator posts and cadre deployment..... | 65 |
| 2.6.2.4 Unsuccessful decentralisation: Violence in schools..... | 66 |
| 2.6.2.5 Unsuccessful decentralisation: Weak institutional functionality..... | 66 |

| | |
|--|----|
| 2.6.2.6 Unsuccessful decentralisation: Teacher shortages..... | 67 |
| 2.6.2.7 Unsuccessful decentralisation: Inadequate school infrastructure..... | 67 |
| 2.6.2.8 Unsuccessful decentralisation: Academic underperformance..... | 69 |
| 2.7 RECENTRALISED - DECENTRALISATION OF SCHOOL GOVERNANCE..... | 73 |
| 2.7.1 The Basic Education Laws Amendment Bill Government Gazette No 41178 of 2017..... | 73 |
| 2.7.2 Proposed amendment of section 5 of SASA – Admission to Public Schools..... | 74 |
| 2.7.3 Proposed amendment of section 6 of SASA – Language policy of public schools..... | 74 |
| 2.7.4 Amendment of section 20(1)(i) of SASA – Recommending to the Head of the Department the appointment of educators at the school..... | 74 |
| 2.7.5 Amendment of section 21 of SASA – Central procurement..... | 76 |
| 2.7.6 Amendment of section 22 of the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 – Withdrawal of SGB functions..... | 76 |
| 2.7.7 Conclusion..... | 76 |
| 2.8 POLITICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL OBJECTIVES VIS-À-VIS UNSUCCESSFUL DECENTRALISATION..... | 78 |
| 2.8.1 Departmental interference – Educator appointments..... | 81 |
| 2.8.2 Departmental interference – School discipline..... | 83 |
| 2.8.3 Departmental interference – Language of instruction..... | 85 |
| 2.8.4 Departmental interference – School funding..... | 87 |
| 2.8.5 Conclusion..... | 88 |
| CHAPTER 3: THE PRINCIPAL AS MANAGER AND GOVERNOR VIS-À-VIS INTERFERENCE IN THE PRINCIPAL'S MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE AUTONOMY: AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE..... | 93 |
| 3.1 INTRODUCTION..... | 93 |
| 3.1.1 Chapter roadmap..... | 94 |
| 3.1.2 African perspective - Education governance and management | 94 |
| 3.2 AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE - KENYA..... | 95 |
| 3.2.1 Context..... | 95 |
| 3.2.2 Kenya's centralised education system (missionary to colonial period)..... | 95 |
| 3.2.3 Kenya's decentralised education system (independence)..... | 96 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| 3.2.4 The principal as school manager in Kenya..... | 97 |
| 3.2.5 Leadership challenges of the Kenyan school principal (head teacher)..... | 98 |
| 3.3 NIGERIA..... | 99 |
| 3.3.1 Context..... | 99 |
| 3.3.2 Nigeria's centralised school system..... | 100 |
| 3.3.3 Nigeria's decentralised school system..... | 101 |
| 3.3.4 The principal (also known as the head teacher) as school manager in Nigeria..... | 103 |
| 3.3.5 Leadership challenges of the Nigerian school principals (head teachers).... | 103 |
| 3.4 NEW ZEALAND..... | 104 |
| 3.4.1 Context..... | 104 |
| 3.4.2 New Zealand's centralised school system..... | 104 |
| 3.4.3 New Zealand's decentralised school system..... | 105 |
| 3.4.4 The principal as school manager in New Zealand..... | 106 |
| 3.4.5 Leadership challenges of the New Zealand school principal (head teacher) | 107 |
| 3.5 AUSTRALIA..... | 108 |
| 3.5.1 Context..... | 108 |
| 3.5.2 Australia's transformation from a centralised to a decentralised school system..... | 109 |
| 3.5.3 The principal as school manager in Australia..... | 111 |
| 3.5.4 Leadership challenges the school principal (head teacher) faces in the Australian School system..... | 112 |
| 3.6 SOUTH AFRICA..... | 113 |
| 3.6.1 Context..... | 113 |
| 3.6.2 South Africa's centralised school system (the colonial and apartheid periods)..... | 114 |
| 3.6.3 South Africa's decentralised school system..... | 115 |
| 3.6.4 The principal as school manager and governor in South Africa schools..... | 117 |
| 3.6.4.1 The South African Schools Act 84 of 1996..... | 117 |
| 3.6.4.2 Policy on the South African Standard for Principalship..... | 118 |
| 3.6.4.3 Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM)..... | 119 |
| 3.6.5 Leadership challenges of the South African school principal..... | 122 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| 3.6.5.1 Abuse of power..... | 122 |
| 3.6.5.2 School governing bodies interfering in the professional management functions of the principal..... | 124 |
| 3.6.5.3 School principals abusing their powers..... | 125 |
| 3.6.5.4 Conclusion..... | 127 |
| 3.7 COMPARING SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOL PRINCIPALSHIP WITH PRINCIPALS IN KENYA, NIGERIA, AUSTRALIA AND NEW-ZEALAND..... | 127 |
| 3.7.1 South Africa vis-à-vis Kenya..... | 128 |
| 3.7.1.1 Management functions of the South African school principal compared to the Kenyan school principal..... | 128 |
| 3.7.1.2 Leadership challenges of South African and Kenyan school principals... | 128 |
| 3.7.2 South Africa vis-à-vis Nigeria..... | 129 |
| 3.7.2.1 Management functions of the South African school principal compared to the Nigerian school principal..... | 129 |
| 3.7.2.2 Leadership challenges of the South African and Nigerian school principal..... | 130 |
| 3.7.3 South Africa vis-à-vis New Zealand..... | 130 |
| 3.7.3.1 Management functions of the South African school principal compared to the New Zealand principal..... | 130 |
| 3.7.3.2 Leadership challenges of the South African and New Zealand school principal..... | 131 |
| 3.7.4 South Africa vis-à-vis Australia..... | 131 |
| 3.7.4.1 Management functions of the South African school principal compared to the Australian school principal..... | 131 |
| 3.7.4.2 Leadership challenges of the South African and Australian school principal..... | 132 |
| 3.7.5 School governance in South Africa <i>vis-à-vis</i> Kenya, Nigeria, New Zealand and Australia..... | 132 |
| 3.7.5.1 Introduction..... | 132 |
| 3.7.5.2 South Africa..... | 132 |
| 3.7.5.3 Kenya..... | 133 |
| 3.7.5.4 Nigeria..... | 134 |
| 3.7.5.5 New Zealand..... | 135 |

| | |
|--|------------|
| 3.7.5.6 Australia..... | 136 |
| 3.8 Conclusion..... | 137 |
| CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY..... | 140 |
| 4.1 INTRODUCTION..... | 140 |
| 4.2 DECLARING MY POSITION..... | 140 |
| 4.3 LIMITING MY OWN BIAS..... | 141 |
| 4.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT..... | 142 |
| 4.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS..... | 143 |
| 4.5.1 Linking the theoretical framework to research questions..... | 143 |
| 4.5.2 Research questions..... | 145 |
| 4.6 PARADIGMATIC PERSPECTIVE..... | 145 |
| 4.6.1 Interpretivist paradigm..... | 146 |
| 4.6.2 Ontological perspective..... | 146 |
| 4.6.3 Epistemology..... | 147 |
| 4.7 RESEARCH APPROACH: A QUALITATIVE APPROACH..... | 148 |
| 4.8 RESEARCH DESIGN..... | 150 |
| 4.8.1 What is a case study?..... | 150 |
| 4.8.2 Characteristics of a case study..... | 151 |
| 4.8.3 Disadvantages of a case study..... | 151 |
| 4.9 PARTICIPANTS AND SAMPLING..... | 152 |
| 4.9.1 Sampling procedures..... | 153 |
| 4.9.2 Sampling criteria..... | 153 |
| 4.9.3 Proposed profile of participants..... | 154 |
| 4.10 DATA COLLECTION..... | 154 |
| 4.10.1 Semi-structured interviews..... | 154 |
| 4.10.2 Literature review..... | 155 |
| 4.10.3 Case law..... | 156 |
| 4.10.4 Legislation..... | 156 |
| 4.11 DATA ANALYSIS..... | 156 |
| 4.12 TRUSTWORTHINESS AND CREDIBILITY..... | 157 |
| 4.12.1 Credibility..... | 157 |
| 4.12.2 Triangulation..... | 157 |
| 4.13 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS..... | 158 |
| 4.13.1 Phase 1 - Ethical considerations prior to conducting the study..... | 158 |

| | |
|---|------------|
| 4.13.2 Phase 2 - Respect for persons..... | 159 |
| 4.13.3 Phase 3 - Ethical considerations at the beginning of the study..... | 159 |
| 4.13.4 Phase 4 - Collecting data..... | 159 |
| 4.13.5 PHASE 5 - Analysing data..... | 160 |
| 4.13.5 Phase 6 - Reporting data..... | 160 |
| 4.14 CONCLUSION..... | 160 |
| CHAPTER 5: DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS..... | 162 |
| 5.1 INTRODUCTION..... | 162 |
| 5.2 PROFILES OF PARTICIPANTS..... | 162 |
| 5.3 STRUCTURE OF THE CHAPTER..... | 167 |
| 5.4 THEME 1: PRINCIPALS' PERSPECTIVES OF THE DYNAMICS OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT..... | 170 |
| 5.4.1 The principal as protagonist..... | 170 |
| 5.4.2 Parameters of school management..... | 174 |
| 5.4.3 Principals' power to influence and implement policy..... | 175 |
| 5.5 THEME 2: PRINCIPAL'S PERSPECTIVES: EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT..... | 178 |
| 5.5.1 Principals' perspectives: 'Unhealthy' and 'healthy' management and governance practices..... | 178 |
| 5.5.1.1 Healthy leadership and management practices..... | 179 |
| 5.5.1.2 Unhealthy leadership, management and governance practices..... | 180 |
| 5.5.2 Autocratic management approach: When and why?..... | 182 |
| 5.5.3 Principals' perspectives: The importance of establishing borders between professional management and governance..... | 184 |
| 5.6 THEME 3: DYNAMICS OF SCHOOL GOVERNANCE..... | 185 |
| 5.6.1 Two sides of the coin: Centralised and decentralised governance..... | 185 |
| 5.6.2 Centralised governance: A 'one size fits all' approach does not work..... | 187 |
| 5.6.3 Centralised governance: Taking control of the ship..... | 188 |
| 5.6.4 Decentralisation: Thinking out of the box..... | 190 |
| 5.6.5 Principals' perspectives: Spheres of interference in school governance..... | 192 |

| | |
|--|------------|
| 5.7 THEME 4: PRINCIPALS' PERSPECTIVES OF THE SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY..... | 194 |
| 5.7.1 Negative perspectives about the SGB..... | 194 |
| 5.7.2 Positive perspectives about the SGB..... | 198 |
| 5.7.3 Keys to a functional principal and SGB relationship..... | 200 |
| 5.8 THEME 5: THE STATE AS PROTAGONIST OR ANTAGONIST IN EDUCATION..... | 201 |
| 5.8.1 Cooperative government: Reality or Illusion?..... | 201 |
| 5.8.2 Degree of parent and community involvement in school activities..... | 208 |
| 5.8.2.1 Positive perspectives..... | 208 |
| 5.8.2.2 Negative perspectives..... | 209 |
| 5.8.3 Interrelationships between the principal and the Department of Basic Education..... | 213 |
| 5.8.4 Principals' perspectives of departmental officials..... | 216 |
| 5.8.5 Recentralising intentions of the DBE..... | 219 |
| 5.8.5.1 Principals' perspectives of the Basic Education Laws Amendment Bill..... | 220 |
| 5.8.5.2 Principals' negative perspectives on the Basic Education Laws Amendment Bill..... | 221 |
| 5.8.5.3 Principals' positive perspectives on the Basic Education Laws Amendment Bill..... | 224 |
| 5.8.6 Principals' perspectives: Aspects of concern about the Basic Education Laws Amendment Bill..... | 228 |
| 5.8.6.1 Appointments of educators in promotional posts..... | 228 |
| 5.8.6.2 Language policy..... | 230 |
| 5.8.7 Principals' perceptions: School governance models..... | 232 |
| 5.9 FINAL REMARKS AND THE WAY FORWARD..... | 233 |
| CHAPTER 6: SYNTHESIS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH..... | 238 |
| 6.1 INTRODUCTION | 238 |
| 6.2 OVERVIEW..... | 238 |
| 6.2.1 Chapter 1: Roadmap..... | 238 |
| 6.2.2 Chapter 2: The decentralisation, centralisation and recentralisation conundrum in public education | 240 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| 6.2.3 Chapter 3: International perspective: The principal as manager and governor vis-à-vis interference in the principal's management and governance autonomy..... | 241 |
| 6.2.4 Chapter 4: Research methodology..... | 241 |
| 6.2.5 Chapter 5: Data analysis and findings..... | 242 |
| 6.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY..... | 242 |
| 6.4 FINDINGS OF THE STUDY..... | 243 |
| 6.5 Conclusion about the working assumption of the study..... | 249 |
| 6.6 Significance of the research..... | 250 |
| 6.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH..... | 251 |
| 6.8 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH..... | 251 |
| 6.8.1 Power relations..... | 251 |
| 6.8.2 Training..... | 252 |
| 6.8.3 Decentralisation policies..... | 252 |
| 6.8.4 Context school governance model..... | 252 |
| 6.9 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT OF PRACTICE..... | 253 |
| 6.9.1 Focused training..... | 253 |
| 6.9.2 More focused and differentiated legislation or policy..... | 253 |
| 6.10 CONCLUDING REMARKS..... | 254 |
| 7. REFERENCES..... | 256 |
| 8. APPENDIXES | |
| 8.1 Appendix A: UP ethics approval letter..... | 275 |
| 8.2 Appendix B: GDE research approval..... | 276 |
| 8.3 Appendix C: Permission letter to the participant..... | 277 |
| 8.4 Appendix D: Interview schedule..... | 280 |

CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL ORIENTATION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The preamble to the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 (hereafter referred to as SASA) states that:

This country requires a new national system for schools which will restore previous inequalities in education delivery, make available an education of gradually high standards for all learners and in so doing lay a sound basis for the advancement of all our citizens' talents and capabilities, advance the democratic transformation of society, fight racism and sexism and all other forms of unfair discrimination and intolerance, contribute to the eradication of poverty and the economic wellbeing of society, protect and advance our diverse cultures and languages, uphold the rights of all learners, parents and educators, and promote their acceptance of responsibility for the organisation, governance and funding of schools in partnership with the State.

My research proposes that the opposite is taking place of what was intended to be the goals set out in the preface to SASA in achieving a self-governing education sector. In this regard the legislation that was promulgated after 1994 that allowed for the decentralisation of government powers to the local school community are being restricted by the Department of Basic Education (hereafter referred to as the DBE). SASA empowers the principal and the school governing body (herein after SGB) to act more autonomously. The recentralisation actions where the Department interferes in the professional management and governance of the school, dilute those powers, and appear to be attempts to reinstate the draconian management and governance style that was implemented before 1994.

As an example, the sections of SASA that speak to aspects like school admission, language policy, suspension and expulsion, governance and professional management of public schools, the tasks/accountabilities of the principal and the SGB have been curtailed through various *ultra vires* actions of the officials and in some cases politicians. Furthermore, the Basic Education Laws Amendment Bill of 2017 that was published in Government Gazette No 41178 provides for further

impairment of the powers of schools. Governmental power is necessary to successfully promote values such as justice, free will and equivalence before the law. However, a state can also abuse its power. The principal is likely to be the role player in the management and governance structure of a school that will be the most affected by government's recentralisation tendencies. Section 16 (3) of SASA stipulates that the professional management of a public school is conferred to the principal (RSA, 1996a). Section 16(1) of SASA also makes it clear that the governance of a public school is vested in the SGB which may only execute their duties in accordance the SASA (RSA, 1996a). This section must be read in conjunction with section 16(2) of SASA which stipulates that the governing body stands in a position of trust towards the school (RSA, 1996a). According to section 16A(3) principals must support SGBs in the performance of their functions and obligations (RSA, 1996a). Furthermore, section 21(1) of SASA provides the SGB with an option to apply to the Head of the Department in writing to be allocated additional functions such as : to maintain and improve the school's property, and buildings and grounds occupied by the school, including school hostels (section 21(1)(a)), to determine the extra-mural curriculum of the school and the choice of subject options in terms of the provincial curriculum policy section (section 21(1)(b)) 21(1)(c) and to purchase textbooks, educational materials or equipment for the school (section 21(1)(c)).

As stated in section 16A(3) of SASA principals are expected to support/advise SGBs regarding some of these functions. In this regard, the SGB can allocate some of these additional functions to the principal to implement at school. If these functions are recentralised back to the DBE, school governing bodies will directly and principals indirectly experience the curtailment of their discretionary decision-making autonomy in regard to the governance of schools.

This precarious position of the principal can also be illustrated by the following example: As has been mentioned. the purchasing of textbooks and educational materials is just one of the additional functions for which an SGB can apply to the DBE. The procurement of Learner Teacher Support Material (LTSM takes place on the recommendations of the principal being the "gatekeeper" of the curriculum. The principal consultsthe educators on their Learner Teacher Support Material (LTSM) needs and is in the best position to advise the SGB on the procurement of LTSM. If

the DBE is going to recentralise the procurement of LTSM, it will directly influence the discretionary autonomy of the SGB to procure LTSM according to the needs of the school. The principal's discretionary autonomy will indirectly be influenced because there will be no need to guide the SGB in procurement on LTSM because the DBE will decide what the school will receive regarding LTSM.

The principal is therefore accountable for the professional management and in some cases also for governance duties delegated to him/her by the SGB. If the professional management and governance functions are to be recentralised, the principals' autonomy and functioning will be affected.

To understand exactly how South Africa arrived at this present juncture where recentralisation is taking place, it will be a good start to understand how South Africa was governed before and after 1994. I will explore the governance roles of the SGB and the management roles of the principal during these two periods. Thereafter, I will discuss the governance and management roles of the SGB and the principal respectively in the current education system.

The phenomenon of recentralisation is both an international and a South African phenomenon. The issue was discussed as early as 2002 by Beckmann (2002) in an article titled: *"The emergence of self-managing schools in South Africa: Devolution of authority or disguised centralism?"* After studying worldwide practices about education decentralisation, Du Plessis (2019:7) indicated that *"education decentralisation will advance the proficiency and effectiveness of regional local sites if they are held answerable for the results. In the Netherlands, for example, principals are called school directors"*. Their responsibilities are not just focused on upholding exceptional standards in academics, but they are also accountable for every aspect regarding human resources in their schools, for example, making appointments and discharging educators and union consultations (Du Plessis, 2019:7).

In England, schools that produce satisfactory outcomes can gain more independence/autonomy by attaining the status of earned autonomy, which also transfers added burdens on principals managing these schools (Du Plessis, 2019:7). On the other hand, the recentralisation of control by the government will create more complexities and will add to more problems for principals to carry out their duties (Du Plessis, 2019:7). To get an international perspective on matters

about school governance and management I will probe the type of education governance Kenya and Nigeria are implementing. Beyond the African continent, I will explore the education governance systems of New Zealand and Australia.

Recentralisation is in essence a confirmation of a case of failed decentralisation or the curtailment of power that has not been executed successfully. The assumption is that it can have a major impact on the professional management and governance of schools as well as the professional autonomy of the principal (Du Plessis, 2019:56). Through this proposed research I want to investigate how principals are experiencing some of the results of recentralisation and, specifically, how principals perceive this recentralisation (the taking back/away of their autonomy/powers) in their work as principals. It seems logical that the principal, who is at the helm of the professional management of the school, will be directly affected if the governing body's governance functions and responsibilities are centralised. The opposite also seems valid: the governing body will be affected if the principals' management functions and responsibilities are centralised.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Smit and Oosthuizen (2011:59) describe the democracy as expressed in the Constitution of 1996 as participatory democracy. SASA was intended to provide for participative decision-making in the education system (Prinsloo, 2006:356). Section 16(1) of SASA clearly states that the governance of every government school is entrusted to the SGB, and section 16(3) of SASA provides that the professional management of the government school must be the responsibility of the principal which executes these tasks according to the mandates of the Head of Department (HOD) (RSA, 1996a). In this regard, important decisions regarding management and governance have been decentralised from the government to self-governing and self-managing schools as attested in the establishment of school governing bodies (SGBs) (Smit, 2001:59) and the principal who must implement the decisions of the SGB.

Koelble and Siddle's (2013:607) research revealed that decentralisation has not fulfilled its promises. South Africa's local government is in a period of palsy, characterised by service delivery failure and dysfunction. Mbecke (2014:265) indicated that these unsuccessful decentralisation outcomes are the results of a lack

of good governance; the population not being consulted in decision-making, the shortage of resources, the lack of planning, monitoring and evaluation systems and non-adherence to appropriate laws, policies, regulations, and procedures.

My research problem is positioned in this unsuccessful decentralised governance era and the impact it has on the education system. It is also in this decentralised era where the phenomena of centralisation and recentralisation are located. Madsen, Andersen and Due (2001:3) refer to this centralised decentralisation as the re-location or redistribution of decision-making competence among different levels in a system. As a result, the government is responding more authoritatively, employing more bureaucratic and centralised structures through control, forced actions and compliance to manage failed decentralised governed systems such as the education system (Du Plessis, 2019). In this study, I will discuss how the government started to implement recentralisation to take back control of an underperforming education system. I will explore principals' perspectives regarding these recentralised actions and the impact of these actions on their management and governance functions.

1.3 PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

The aim of this study was to explore principals' perspectives and experiences of educational recentralisation in terms of the professional management and governance of public schools. Firstly, it is hoped that the outcome of the study will enable the DBE to make more informed decisions regarding future amendments to education legislation pertaining to the management and governance of schools. Secondly, this study revisits the management functions and responsibilities of principals. According to the Policy on the South African Standard for Principalship (herein after referred to as the Standards) (DBE, 2016), the diverse contexts of the South African schooling landscape require principals to have specialist knowledge, and the ability to apply context specific practical applications when managing their schools. These aims can only be realised by exploring each principal operating in their schools and the broader community surrounding the school. I hope that the conclusions of this study would reaffirm the importance of principals' professional autonomy when performing their functions and responsibilities.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS UNDER INVESTIGATION

The aim of my research is to conduct a comprehensive study of principals' perspectives of educational recentralisation, professional management, and governance of schools. Firstly, the goal is that the findings of this research will aid the DBE to give rise to more carefully considered decisions regarding future amendments to education legislation about the management and governance of schools. Secondly, it is to revisit the management functions and responsibilities of principals. The recently published Standards for Principalship (DBE, 2016) recognises that, because of the differences of school communities, principals need specific information, procedure and circumstantial real-world applications in the strategic spheres of managing a school. This can only be established by an individual principal operating within a particular school and its broader community.

1.4.1 Linking the theoretical framework to research questions

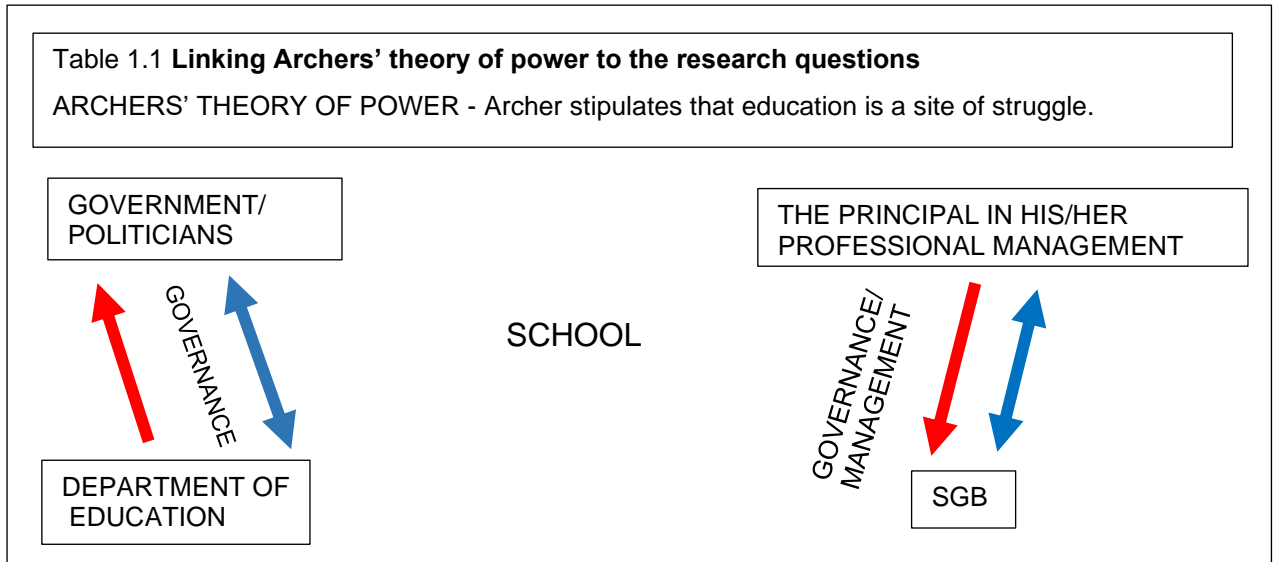
Archer (2013:1) hypothesises that education is a site of conflict because changes in education systems are the product of meticulous actions by differing social groups: "The nature of education is rarely, if ever, the practical realisation of an ideal form of instruction as envisaged by a particular group". In South Africa, the National Party government's Bantu education and the African National Congress's democratic inclusive system are examples of systems that never quite achieved what was intended. Instead, a large percentage of the characteristics of education transformations are the consequences of political control tussles. "They bear the marks of concession to allies and compromises with opponents" (Archer, 2013:1). Archer (2013:1) further indicates that "to comprehend the nature of education at any time we need to understand who the victorious entities were in these power struggles and how they achieved victory". My research questions contain keywords like governance, management and, recentralisation that can be directly linked to power relationships that occur between the government and the local community. Archer's theory describes these power relations. Fukuyama (2013:1) defines governance "as a government's competence to effect and implement rules, and to provide services, irrespective of whether that government is democratic or not". Through the implementation of rules, an authority association is established that imposes rules on to the public.

Olum (2004:2) describes management as:

The art, or science, of achieving goals through people. Since managers also supervise, management can be interpreted to mean overlooking – i.e., making sure people do what they are supposed to do. In other words, the manager stands in a position of power and uses this power to achieve goals.

Leung (2004:1) states that “*when the loss of control is perceived to be as a result of decentralisation, the process of regaining the authority devolved is called recentralisation*”. Based on this assertion, recentralisation can be described as regaining control and authority by the higher structures from the subordinate spheres of education management and governance to which these power and functions have been decentralised. Through my questions, I will probe the power struggle among the principals and the SGBs and the principal and the DBE from the principal’s perspective. According to section 16A(1)(a) of SASA, the principal of a government school act on behalf of the HOD in the SGB when performing functions in an official capacity as stipulated in sections 23(1)(b) and 24(1)(j) (RSA, 1996a). In section 16(3) of SASA it is stipulated that the professional management of a school is the sole responsibility of the school principal under the authority of the HOD (RSA, 1996a). Therefore, it is vital to be cognisant that the principal is functioning in two capacities in this relationship: as a SGB member; and then as the principal (professional manager) or departmental employee. In practice, this implies that the principal has to execute the policies of a specific provincial education department when functioning as a departmental employee; and, when interacting with the Department as an SGB member, should look after the well-being of the governing body, the school and the parent community (Van der Merwe, 2013:241-242).

Table 1.1 illustrates these power relationships. The blue arrow represents the governance/management relationship that exists between the government and, in the context of this study, the Department of Education, the DBE and the SGB and the SGB and the principal. The red arrow represents the governance/management powers that government can recentralise to retake control of the system.



1.4.2 Main research question

What are principals' perspectives of recentralisation regarding their management and governance functions in public schools?

1.4.3 Sub-questions

- What are principals' understanding of the term "professional school management"?
- Describe the type of management style principals implement at school.
 - Explain why they implement this style.
- What are principals' understanding of the term "school governance"?
- What should the relationship between the principal and the SGB be like?
- What do principals expect the relationship between the Department of Basic Education, the SGB and the principal regarding school governance to be like?
- How do principals describe this relationship that has unfolded between schools and the Department of Education after 1996?

- When would the Department of Education be justified to interfere in matters? pertaining to school governance and management?

1.5 RATIONALE

I am firstly motivated to pursue this research because of my involvement in a trade union, the South African Teachers' Union (SAOU). The centralising tendencies the government is implementing are likely to influence principals' management tasks/obligations as stipulated in section 16A of SASA (RSA, 1996a) and annexure A.7 of the Personnel Administrative Measures (DBE, 2016). During the last few years, the union has been embroiled in court cases defending the management and governance rights of its members. There were numerous documented cases of *ultra vires* actions where government officials and politicians acted beyond the scope of their powers to take control of school governance and management. The SAOU was either directly involved or participated as an *amicus curia* (*friend of the court*) to protect the rights of its members, e.g. *The Governing Body of Point High School and Another v The Head of the Western Cape Education Department and Others* and *Governing Body of Mikro Primary School and Another v Western Cape Minister of Education and Others*. Beckmann and Prinsloo (2006: 483) analysed the issue of *ultra vires* acts by discussing education officials' unjust actions as the use of "imagined power" and "abuse of administrative power".

On the 13th of October 2017, the DBE published Government Gazette No 41178 containing the Basic Education Laws Amendment Bill (herein after BELAB). This bill aims to amend SASA. If this Bill is promulgated into law, the education system and the SGB could, in the opinion of stakeholders like the unions and governing body associations, eventually be stripped of most if not all their functions and responsibilities regarding the management and governance of schools.

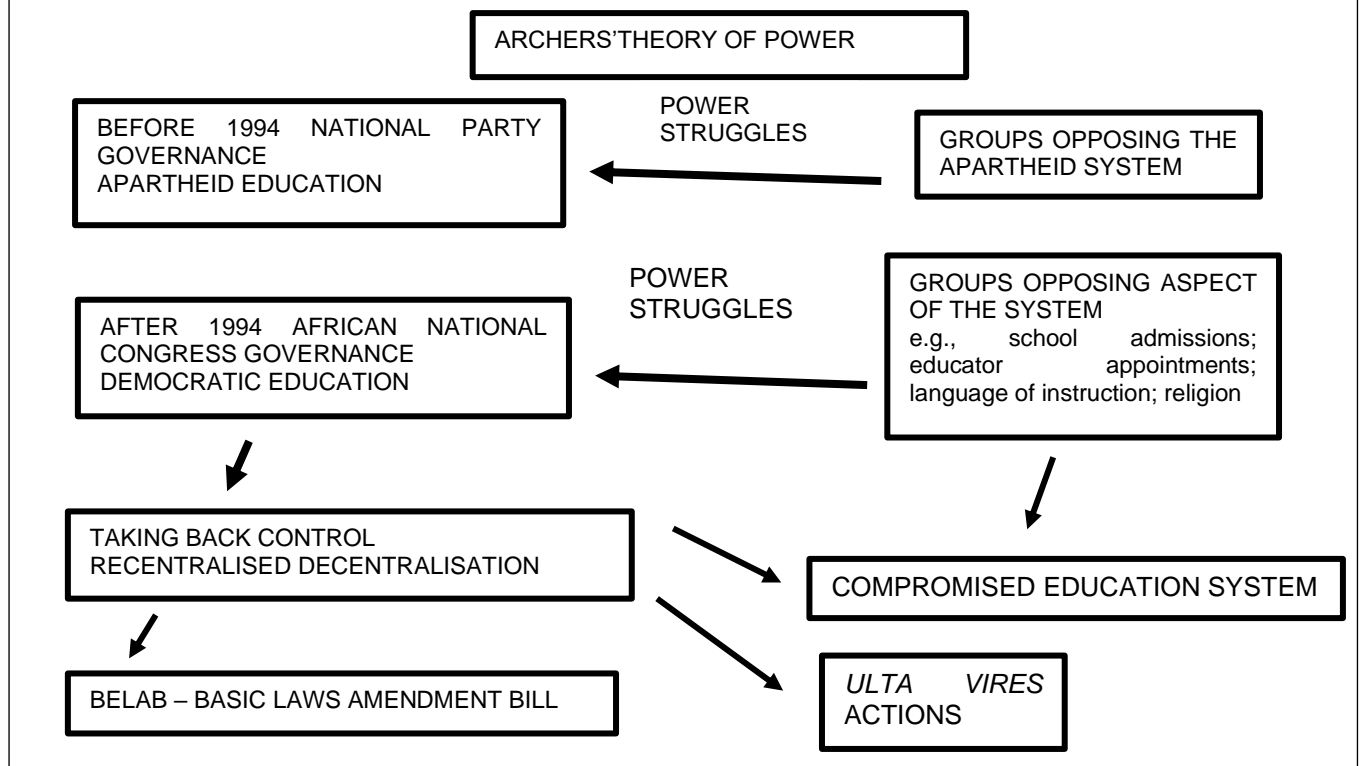
Finally, Du Plessis's (2019) research established that the South African education system is typified by decentralised centralism (a phenomenon that requires urgent further research) rather than by decentralisation.

1.6 LINKING THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK TO THE LITERATURE

REVIEW

1.6.1 Linking Archer's theory of power to the literature

It is important to link the theoretical framework on which I am basing my research with the literature. Archer's (2013:1) theory of power hypothesises that education is a site of conflict because changes in education systems are the result of controlled actions by differing social groups: "*The nature of education is rarely, if ever, the practical realisation of an ideal form of instruction as envisaged by a particular group*". Thus, to comprehend the workings of education at different periods, we need to be cognisant not only who were victorious in the conflict for control, but also how they achieved victory (Archer, 2013:1). In my research I explored principals' perspectives regarding the impact these recentralisation tendencies will have on their management and governance functions. To put my research in context it is important to understand how South Africa was governed before and after 1994. South Africa's political history is characterised by power struggles between the old apartheid regime and the struggle that was led by the African National Congress. These political struggles impacted the systems that functioned in government and the education system. In South Africa, the National Party government's Bantu education and the African National Congress's democratic inclusive system are examples of systems that never quite achieved what was intended. Instead, most of the transformations that education conforms to are the products of political power struggles. This discussion will lay the foundation to analyse the power struggle that is currently playing out through centralisation or recentralisation. In table 1.2 below I link Archer's theory of power to the literature.

Table 1.2 Linking Archer's theory of power to the literature

1.6.2 PART 1: NATIONAL PARTY GOVERNANCE (1948 - 1994) - CENTRALISED GOVERNANCE

1.6.2.1 Introduction

In 1948, White South African voters voted to power a government dedicated to the dogma of apartheid (Clark & Worger, 2013:37). The Afrikaner-controlled government centralised all political power in the central government (Clark & Worger, 2013:37). Through legislation, the government had total control of all systems and spheres in which its citizens operated, including the education system (Clark & Worger, 2013:37).

The government under the apartheid ideology has been described in various ways:

1.6.2.2 A unitary government

A unitary government make every effort to congregate power at the centre for a variety of reasons (Ile, 2007:15). According to Maluleke (2015:36), South Africa was administered as a unitary state during apartheid.

1.6.2.3 A totalitarian government

Totalitarianism advocates the advancement of one master race to the disadvantage of the other races in a country (Baehr, 2015). Totalitarian regimes establish comprehensive (total) control over almost all segments of social life, including education.

1.6.2.4 An authoritarian government

An authoritarian regime (on occasion also called “traditional” or “autocratic”) characterised the apartheid state in South Africa (Baehr, 2005). Through hierarchical power structures and, malicious and discriminatory actions they left a substantial part of society (religious practice, family, and work relations) broken (Baehr, 2005). Modern authoritarian systems typically function through single, domineering parties which regulate dominant and other important parts of society including the economy, media and education (Bedeski, 2009:91).

1.6.2.5 Centralisation of education: Apartheid education

All the above systems influenced the education system. The Bantu Education Act 47 of 1953 (South African Government, 1953) was introduced in 1954 by the National Party (NP) government which then took centralised control of most black and coloured schools (the missionary schools) controlled by the churches (Giliomee, 2012:68). The system was set to expand and reinforce the meaning of apartheid (Rehman, 2008). Through the Bantu education system, the Government was able to regulate and replicate the associations required for the unrelenting ill-treatment of Blacks in South Africa (Wills, 2011:1). The Bantu Education Act was followed by the Coloured Person's Education Act 47 of 1963. Coloured education was put under the authority of the Department of Coloured Affairs. Through the Indian Education Act 61 of 1965, the Minister of Indian Affairs delegated his powers to the Indian Council. Christian National Education required education to reproduce the life and beliefs of Afrikaners (Wills, 2011:10). Although an education department was established for each of these racial groups, these departments were still regulated from a central apex to ensure the realisation of the apartheid ideologies (Wills, 2011:10).

1.6.2.6 Centralised education: Impact on the functions and the responsibilities of the principal

The centralised education system had a major influence on school management and governance. Education was regulated by measures of a top-down management system (Sibanda, 2017:567). In this highly regulated working environment, principals became used to receive orders from the central department of education. In essence, school leadership during this era could be viewed as a small-scale version of apartheid governance where the system was ordered and the principal complied (Sibanda, 2017:567). According to Lethoko, Heystek and Maree (2001:311), *“principals in the African communities were viewed by the African people as sell-outs, for their loyalty was divided between the Department of Education (DoE) and the community. They had to execute the instructions of the Department (e.g., the implementation of Afrikaans as a language of teaching and learning in a stipulated number of subjects) in an unfriendly and rebellious climate”*. Principals’ main tasks were to make sure that government’s ideologies were advocated across the general learning environment and through “what was taught and learned, and how it was to be taught and learned, where it was taught and learned and when it was taught and learned” (Harber & Mncube, 2011:243).

In essence, Archer (2013) will categorise apartheid South Africa as an impenetrable state because of the highly regulated laws that were implemented by the National Party to indoctrinate, manipulate and control the citizens.

1.6.3 PART 2: POST 1994 – DAWN OF A NEW DEMOCRACY (Decentralised governance)

1.6.3.1 Introduction

After 1994, South Africa became a democratic state. Alshurman (2015:861) stated that the central characteristics of democracy include “equality, social and political participation, freedom of choice through voting, the end of forceful methods in the attainment of social and political goals and the practice of concession.”

South Africa after 1994 was characterised by:

1.6.3.2 Distribution of government authority

In the context of this study, decentralisation is defined by Olum (2014:56) as the *“process through which the central government transfers its powers, functions, responsibility and finances, or decision-making power to other entities away from the centre to either lower levels of government or dispersed central state agencies or the private sector”*.

Malherbe (2012:32) points out that the freedom of nationals of a state is achieved through the distribution of power through the legislative, executive and judicial structures in government. Legislative authority is assigned to the National Assembly that executes this objective by passing national legislation, analysing and administering the putting into practice of such laws by the executive (O’ Regan, 2005:127). The cabinet of South Africa, which is constituted of the President, the Deputy President as well as the national ministers, represents the executive arm in the national sphere (Munzodzi, 2017:82). The Constitution of 1996 states that the judiciary operations in South Africa are bestowed on the hierarchy of courts and that these courts have to be independent and subordinate only to the Constitution of 1996 and other laws (Venter, 2019:2). According to Venter (2019:2) *“the Constitution of 1996, is made up of the national, provincial and local spheres (not called levels) of government, which are separate, co-dependent and interconnected”*.

1.6.3.3 Decentralised education

After 1994 the new government established a system of education grounded on the basic ideologies of democracy. This meant that the government was dedicated to the advancement of a democratic education structure that enabled all the role-players to partake in issues affecting the sector (Mncube, 2008:79). The government reformed the education system in a manner that would decentralise power (Mncube, 2008:79). In this regard, the SASA gave formal effect to a system that allowed stakeholders to be involved in education by disseminating power to local SGBs and principals (RSA, 1996a). In effect, SGBs can be deemed as the fourth sphere of government, particularly if one considers that their elections take place nationally every three years. This was done by moving away from a system of centralised

control over specific issues of the educational administrative processes through the introduction of sections 16A and 16(1–3) of SASA as discussed in paragraph 1 above (RSA, 1996a). Cooperative government is described in Chapter 3 of the Constitution of 1996. Section 40(1) of this Constitution indicates that the government is operating in three spheres namely, national, provincial and local government (RSA, 1996b). These sections enable local communities to manage and govern their schools at a local level. Thus, through sections 16 and 16A of SASA, a wide variety of functions and responsibilities were devolved to the principal and to the SGB (RSA, 1996a). The principal was placed in a position where he/she could manage the school more democratically and the SGB was in a position where it could govern the school more democratically. Consequently, Archer (2013) will categorise South Africa after 1994 as a penetrable country because authority is decentralised to different spheres.

1.6.4 PART 3: CENTRALISED EDUCATION

1.6.4.1 Recentralisation of control – Basic Education Laws Amendment Bill of 2017 (BELAB)

The Basic Education Laws Amendment Bill” (BELAB) recommended 45 changes to SASA. If enacted, seven of these proposed amendments could seriously curtail the SGB’s governance powers and the principals’ professional management abilities. They are: section 5 of SASA (access of learners to public schools); section 6 of SASA (language policy of public schools); section 8 of SASA (schools’ Code of Conduct); section 20(1)(i) of SASA (functions of SGBs to recommend to the Head of the Department the appointment of educators at the school) and; section 20(1)(k) of SASA (cost-free utilisation of a school’s facilities); section 21 of SASA (central procurement) and section 22 of SASA (withdrawal of SGB functions).

Several organisations have expressed their concerns regarding the proposed amendments. The SAOU emphasised that the bill contains various aspects that will restrict the competencies of SGBs substantially and irrevocably change the landscape of public education. The union could not accept that public schools could be diminished to state schools and be regarded as extensions of the Department (SAOU, 2017). The National Professional Teachers’ Organisation of South Africa” (NAPTOSA) highlighted the fact that some of the proposed amendments to SASA appear to erode the established democratised education system in favour of a

centralised system in which many of the system's institutions are seriously flawed. Parent communities will feel side-lined by this proposed power grab by education departments, resulting in fewer parents being interested in being involved in schools. More importantly, the side-lining of communities could lead to increased antagonism and disruption of schools (NAPTOSA, 2017). The South African Democratic Teachers' Union (herein after SADTU) reiterated that a school forms an important facet of a community and the SGB is the voice of the community that enable the community to make broad inputs in education. By curtailing the powers of SGBs the Department will isolate individuals serving in these structures from the communities they serve (SADTU, 2017).

1.6.4.2 *Ultra vires* actions – government officials and politicians

Van der Merwe (2013:242) observes that *“a tendency has appeared where state administrators are exploiting their powers, illegally meddling in the management and governance of schools, deserting their obligations, displaying an absolute disrespect for the rule of law and even court orders where the judgements were made against them”*.

I will refer to some of these cases under main headings to illustrate the departmental officials' and politicians' ignorance of the law. Beckmann and Prinsloo (2006:484) quote from the judgment in *Suid-Afrikaanse Onderwysersunie v Departementshoof, Department van Onderwys, Vrystaat* where the court established that the HOD of the Free State Education Department had designed a procedure to orchestrate dismissals which had been, at best, a scandalous display of imagined power. Beckmann and Prinsloo (2006:484) indicate how department officials often pay no attention to legal advice, causing humiliation to the Department of Education, because they appear oblivious to the requirements of the people, and appear to intentionally violate the law and act outside their mandates. This in turn can lead to the deterioration and destruction of the values it was intended to promote (Joubert, 2014). Consequently, in the context of the discussion above, Archer's (2013) theory will state that South Africa is moving from a penetrable to an impenetrable state.

1.7 INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE – COMPARING CENTRALISED AND DECENTRALISED EDUCATION SYSTEMS

1.7.1 Overview

To get a global perspective of the control/power struggles that exist in education it is imperative to explore the phenomena of centralised, decentralised and recentralisation tendencies that transpire in education systems in other countries. In my theoretical framework, I refer to Archer's theory of power. Archer (2013) argues that education is a site of struggle. In this section, I will probe education governance trends in the following African countries: Kenya and Nigeria. This will be followed by a discussion of the education governance trends in New Zealand and Australia. These countries all experienced some form of power struggle either in the form of war, colonisation or unstable politics that impacted the education systems.

Mackatiani, Imbovah, Imbova and Gakungai (2016:55) emphasise that a national system of education of any nation can only be defined *“from the perspective of a total analysis of the whole system. This encompasses early childhood education, primary education, secondary education, and higher education and training”*. Mackatiani et al. (2016:55) noticed that in scrutinising international systems of education we must not overlook the fact that *“the things outside the school matter even more than the things inside the schools, and in most cases, they govern and interpret the things inside the school”*.

In simple terms, they meant that, for one to comprehend a state system of education, it is imperative to be cognisant of the fact that, behind each system of education, there are dynamics that have an effect on and model a specific education system. Mackatiani et al. (2016:55) point to some of these factors that could include *“geographical, historical, technological, political, economic, language, religious and socio-cultural factors”*. However, some of these dynamics are more overbearing in a specific system whereas in a different system they would be less overbearing and will to a large degree determine the kind of administration the system of education will take on, e.g., centralised or decentralised. It also underpins the content and elements of the education system (Mackatiani et al, 2016:55).

1.7.2 KENYA

- **Context**

According to Mulwa, Kimiti, Kituka, and Muema (2011:86), preceding self-governance, the school sector in Kenya was regulated by the colonial government and missionaries. Reading and applied subjects were initiated to advocate Christian beliefs and educate the native African communes to perform blue-collar and physical labour. In this regard, Keriga and Bujra (2009:2) state that *“the colonial education system was based on a model of segregation, which saw the establishment of separate educational systems for Europeans, Asians and Africans, a factor that perpetuated inequalities in accessing education more so for the African population”*.

- **Functions of Governments and Intergovernmental Relations**

After independence in 1963, Kenya inherited an education system of inequality (Mulwa et al., 2011:86). Major determinations concerning school initiatives were decided on at the Ministry of Education head office and very few school initiatives were made by the principals and boards of governors (BOGs) at the school level (Mulwa et al., 2011:87). Mulwa *et al.* (2011:86-87) remarked that the Government made it one of its main concerns to take steps to reform the education system with the national requirements and the aspirations of the country. The Kenya Education Commission (Ominde Commission) was consequently established with the decree to draft proposals for an appropriate education system that will meet the demands of the newly independent country. The Commission recommended a decentralised schooling sector that would accept national concord and provide adequate human capital for national growth (Mulwa et.al., 2011:86-87).

1.7.3 NIGERIA

- **Context**

According to Ikoya (2007), as early as the 1970s a centralised education management model was forcefully implemented on citizens by the reigning military faction. This period where the Army was in power from 1966 to 1999, with a short-term *inter-regnum* of private citizen government from 1979 to 1982, had a big influence on education restructuring in Nigeria. All extant democratic formations, such as independent school ownership, district curricular and decentralised subsidy

were banned. The delivery and management of schools at the primary, secondary and university levels became the government's responsibility, with the central government making available the finances and the policies. However, the centralised model could not continue because of various reasons ranging from cultural to social and economic diversity (Ikoya, 2007). Thus, by 1988 a law (amended in 1999 and 2003) was promulgated to decentralise educational management functions to state, local, district and village education boards and committees (Ikoya, 2007).

- **Functions of governments and intergovernmental relations**

Ikoya (2007) highlights the fact that between 1976 and 2003, various legislation was promulgated to transform the schooling system in Nigeria, commencing with the Local Government Act of 1976. The 1976 local government restructuring enabled legal support to local governments in the delivery and administration of primary education. By 1979, this restructuring was bestowed constitutional powers and other functions such as the management of adult education (Ikoya, 2007). In 1988, the National Primary Education Commission was founded by the Decentralisation Act. The Decentralisation Decree referred to as the Decentralisation Law delegated key management roles to subordinate entities of government such as district and village education committees for the first time in the history of education in Nigeria. Auyero (2000) and Gorostiaga (2001) mention some of the reasons the Nigerian government promulgated this law: The law was aimed to bring education management closer to the communities by forming educational development constitutes in different districts, zones and settlements; and the law also aimed to augment grassroots communal involvement in the management of education by employing locals onto educational management boards and committees.

1.7.4 NEW ZEALAND

Kettl (2006) points out that, while many Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) states have started with extensive reforms of their public sector during the last 15 years, the changes of the New Zealand public sector is often described as one of the more radical, uncompromising and clear examples of any of these endeavours to date. These makings are well-demonstrated by the 1989 educational reforms, throughout the very centralised and regulated system for

administering New Zealand's state schools before it was made undone and substituted with a model of single-school lay governance (Robinson & Ward, 2005). Each school was now overseen by a Board of Trustees, which included the principal, a staff representative and nominated parent representatives, one of whom will also function as the chairperson. In this model of governance, these predominantly lay boards have more responsibilities than in any other system of school-based management (Robinson & Ward, 2005). Section 75 of the 1989 Education Act states that "...except to the extent that any enactment or the general law of New Zealand provides otherwise, a school's board has complete discretion to control the management of the school as it sees fit" (Robinson & Ward, 2005). The responsibilities of school boards under this act include the appointment and evaluation of the school principal who is the board's chief executive (Robinson & Ward, 2005).

Three contending policy constituents formed the restructuring of the organisation of New Zealand's schools. Firstly, the "*democratic-populist*" constituent viewed parental involvement in school governance as participatory democracy. New Zealand has had a lengthy custom of parental lay participation in governance with official structures offering local communities a say in the educational policy before the publication of the document *Tomorrow's Schools* (Robinson & Ward, 2005). Fiske and Ladd (2001) mention that, regardless of this custom, general notions of powerlessness, of consumer dissatisfaction and disaffection as well as feelings of frustration with the perceived rigidity and impassiveness of the education system were visibly noticeable in public proposals produced for the task teams to re-evaluate educational administration in the late 1980s. The task team, which was appointed in 1987 to investigate approaches to enhance the management of state schools in New Zealand, consequently reacted to these apprehensions by pronouncing that "*the governance of learning establishments ought to be a partnership between the teachers (the professionals) and the community*" (Fiske & Ladd, 2001).

Secondly, the "*managerialist strand*" perceived local governance as a means of augmenting the operational efficiency of the school management whilst at the same time keeping state control. Managerialism has been described as "*the rarely assessed notion that enhanced management will be a useful diluter for a broad range of economic and social problems*" (Fiske & Ladd, 2001). Key to managerialist

thinking is the important aspect of liberating grass root managers from a central state bureaucracy, which is supposed to lessen efficiency and stop managers from being receptive to the demands of local stakeholders (Fiske & Ladd, 2001).

Lastly, the “*market-oriented*” strand was aimed to augment the receptiveness of authorities towards parents by promoting competition for learner admissions (Fiske and Ladd, 2001). The reformation of the New Zealand state sector, including education, was at least to a degree advocated by a neo-liberal view, which is grounded in a conviction that competition will improve the delivery of most services (Fiske & Ladd, 2000:42).

1.7.5 AUSTRALIA

Dimmock and Hattie (1994) stated that for three-quarters of the 20th century, the Australian state systems of education were typified by high levels of centralised control. Throughout this period, numerous well-known foreign educators (e.g., Butts, 1995; Kandel, 1938) remarked negatively about the exaggerated centralised depiction of the Australian state education system. The influential Karmel Report (Interim Committee for the Australian Schools Commission, 1973) encouraged, as one of its key values, “*the devolution of responsibility to schools*”. The Committee supported a more moderate system rather than a more centralised system of control over the administration of schools. Accountability must be decentralised as far as possible to the role-players partaking in the real issues of schooling, through discussions with the parents of the learners whom they educate and at the senior levels with the students themselves. Dimmock and Hattie (1994) further stated that the belief in this grassroots approach to regulating schools indicates a belief that accountability will be most successfully executed where the individuals entrusted with making decisions are also the individuals accountable for implementing these decisions, with a responsibility to validate them and in a position to gain advantage from their experiences. The three key results of the Karmel Report were: “*an erosion of the monopoly of the state bureaucracies (largely through the establishment of the Schools Commission); a move towards decentralised and more personal styles of educational management; and a refurbishment of schools*” (Dimmock & Hattie, 1994).

1.7.6 CONCLUSION

Komatsu (2012:24) indicates that the decentralisation of education governance in post-conflict countries generally transpires inside the structure of these broader restructuring efforts, frequently intending to depoliticise education formerly influenced by contentious politics and to advance government-civilian and inter-group relations. Smith and Vaux (2003:26) also mention that the post-conflict context indicates that decentralised school governance “*can provide better protection against political and ideological abuse, patronage and corruption*”. In this regard, Burde (2004) adds that public involvement in schools has been considered an efficient tool to transform the social fabric and repair social networks.

These arguments show that decentralised school governance in post-conflict countries (e.g., South Africa) could be viewed as a means to foster participation in decision-making and social unity, to augment learner scholastic achievement, as regularly seen in other countries.

According to Davies (2002), one of the causes why decentralisation appears to have become a standardised transformation agenda in post-conflict countries, seems to be its intrinsic democratic character. Decentralisation signifies power-sharing between crucial role-players and augments involvement and inclusivity, which are the trademarks of democracy. Davies (2002) further concludes that the decentralisation of the education structures of conventional democracies is deemed to be a natural step regarding reinforcing democratic governance and social unity. This comment by Davies (2002) demonstrates that decentralisation of education governance has been associated with a democratic approach, which has the objective to increase social unity in multicultural nations in transition, e.g., South Africa. Essentially, the connection between decentralised school governance and democracy is expressed by the belief in deliberative democracy.

It seems that South Africa is moving in the opposite direction of what other new democracies are striving towards namely decentralisation. In the context of this study, I refer to this phenomenon as recentralisation.

1.8 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1.8.1 Introduction

Archer (2013:1) postulates that education is a site of conflict because transformations in education systems are the cause of controlled actions by conflicting social factions. Archer (2013:1) states that “*the nature of education is rarely, if ever, the practical realisation of an ideal form of instruction as envisaged by a particular group*”. In South Africa, the National Party (NP) government’s Bantu education and the African National Congress’s democratic inclusive system are examples of systems that never quite achieved what was intended. Instead, most of the appearances that education takes on are the results of political power skirmishes – “... *they bear the marks of concession to allies and compromises with opponents*” (Archer, 2013:1). Thus, to comprehend the nature of education at any time we need to understand not only who were victorious in the tussle for power, but also how victory was achieved (Archer, 2013).

1.8.1.1 Archer's theory of educational change: Centralisation *vis-à-vis*

Decentralisation

As soon as a state education system is formed, the degree of centralisation and decentralisation becomes a vital determining aspect to bring about changes in the system (Archer, 2013). In highly centralised education systems, negotiated education transformation normally takes place through political interference at the national level and the patterns of transformation fluctuate depending on the type of government controlling the centralised decision-making processes. Archer (2013:1) distinguishes between three types of state: “*impenetrable, semi-permeable and politically accessible states*”. This study focuses on impenetrable and politically accessible states.

1.8.1.2 Archer’s theory of the impenetrable (inaccessible) states

In an impenetrable (inaccessible) state no ordered, unified, educational opposition comes to the fore, because of the social and ideological diversity in groups that have opposing views and partly as a result of state policies (Archer, 2013). When education transformation is allowed, it is implemented in the form of a top-down governance approach. Scholars and educators are limited to consultative responsibilities and parents and external role-players are purposely side-lined.

Educators will implement any action to enhance their vested professional interests rather than to effect a transformation in the system. Where national relations are established, they engage in policies to hinder the realisation of these transformations (Archer, 2013). The social conglomeration of those who are contented with the existing education status-quo, obstructs the establishment of strong opposition to approve education policy. At the same time, the state aggressively seeks to avoid the establishment of associations dedicated to educational transformation (Archer, 2013). In this regard, Bourdieu and Passerson (1990:22) indicate that *“the school, invested by ‘society’ with a single, purely cultural function of enculturation, does no more than to advocate in its organisation and functioning the hierarchy of values of the national culture which it transfers from one generation to another”*. This is the reason why the centralised government was against educational transformation because the current system imprinted the apartheid ideologies of the national culture that were those of the Afrikaner. The Bantu Education Act 47 of 1953 (South African Government, 1953) implemented by the National Party government was an approach designed to control the majority opposing groups. Archer (2013:1) indicates that the features of education can be broken down into three categories: *“Who gets it? What happens to them during it? Where do they go to after it?”* During the apartheid era, quality education mainly favoured the minority (Whites) of the population. The majority of the population received an inferior education. The majority of the population was prepared for manual labour with no hope of occupying significant positions in the white society.

1.8.1.3 Archer’s theory: Features of an accessible state

According to Archer (2013:1), *“the existence of an accessible state permits a widespread of education requests to reach the central decision-making arena and numerous groups may work through the system of parliamentary alliances in search of opportunities to consult the state about their demands”*. The diverse opinions of members of society obstruct the merging of established units for political manipulation (parties, alliances and coalitions) and consequently, this leads to law-making immobilisation. However, when interest groups themselves are also at odds with one another and unable to work together, it obstructs the realisation of stable relations with dependable political support (Archer, 2013).

According to Archer (2013), transformation transpires because new objectives are followed by those who have the authority to transform education's former structural form. After 1994 power shifted to the majority of the population. SASA is an example of the changes that occurred in education because of the new goals pursued by the new state power. Mathebula (2013:8) pointed out that the new democratic education system provided for a new uniform system for the organisation, governance and funding of schools. Starting with the Education White Paper 2: The Organisation, Governance and Funding of Schools, the notion of democratic governance in schools was undoubtedly expressed through the formation of SGBs in all public schools (Sehoole, 2003). According to Sehoole (2003) *"other representative and deliberative structures within schools, such as student representative councils, parents' associations and staff meetings are important for successful democratic practice and school management"*.

1.9 PARADIGMATIC PERSPECTIVE

A paradigm signifies a researcher's scheme of beliefs, values and perceptions of the world in which he lives, or put differently, the methodological assumptions or background that gives direction to the researcher in the specific area of study (Taylor, 2011; O'Neil & Koekemoer, 2016:3). According to Taylor and Medina (2011:2), a paradigm includes how a researcher sees reality (i.e., ontology) while ontology refers to the nature of our beliefs about reality. Rehman and Alharthi (2016:51-52) state that *"researchers have assumptions (sometimes implicit) about reality, how it exists and what can be known about it"*.

I will make use of the interpretative paradigm in my study to understand the subjective world of human experience (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017:27). This approach will allow me to get into the heads of the participants in the study. By making use of semi-structured interviews with some open-ended probing questions, I will be able to access the independent thoughts of each participant (Newcomer, Hatry & Wholey, 2015).

1.9.1 Interpretivist Paradigm

Interpretivists are more inclined to give preference to a qualitative approach (Thanh & Thanh, 2015). The ontological issues are related to the nature of reality and its characteristics. When researchers implement qualitative research, they are

accepting the notion of several realities. Different researchers accept different realities as do the participants that participate in research studies (Cresswell & Poth, 2017).

1.9.2 Ontological Perspective

According to Patton (2002:97) “*a paradigm is a means of defining a world view that is informed by philosophical assumptions about the nature of social reality (known as an ontology – that is, what do we believe about the nature of reality), ways of knowing (known as epistemology – that is, how do we know what we know), and ethics and value systems (known as axiology – that is, what we do believe is true)*”. A paradigm thus directs researchers to ask particular questions and apply applicable methodologies to organised inquiry (known as a methodology – that is, how we should study the world) (Patton, 2002:97).

Ontology relates to whether we think there is one provable reality or whether there are several, socially created realities (Patton, 2002:97). Ontology can be seen as the philosophical study space that revolves around issues of reality and gaining a purer understanding of the things in the world (Dieronitou, 2014:4). The ontological position of interpretivism is relativism. Relativism is the belief that truth is subjective and varies from person to person (Scotland, 2012:10). This transpires as an effect of collapsing ontological and epistemological apprehensions into one called the “*epistemic fallacy*”, thus creating a realism-relativism dualism which leaves us with only two seemingly opposing beliefs of the nature of reality: one that suggests that there is a singular exterior reality which can be truthfully and objectively seized by the researcher (realism), and another which suggests that what is experienced as real is contingent on the state of mind of the person who is experiencing it and that there is no reality outside such subjective realities (relativism) (Willig, 2016:2). Our realities are mediated by our senses. Without mindfulness the world is empty. Reality appears when consciousness connects with things that are already pregnant with meaning (Crotty, 1998:43). Reality is individually created; there are as many realities as individuals. Language does not inactively put a label on objects, but actively forms and models reality (Frowe, 2001:185). Thus, there exists an objective reality that is called realism, and another reality called subjective reality (this is the mindset of the participants that I will be interviewing). By being mindful of the realism-relativism dualism I will be able to explore the participants’ thoughts

regarding the centralisation tendencies that are currently taking place in the education system.

1.9.3 Epistemology

O'Leary (2017:2) explains that epistemology is the means of how we come to have a true comprehension of the world. The rules for understanding the individual epistemologies a person has will influence how they come to understand the world. Schraw (2013:2) refers to the epistemological worldview as "*the individual's belief system about the type and collection of knowledge*". He uses the term relative to other terms in the literature such as personal epistemology and epistemological stances, the inter-connectivity of which refers to a series of ideas or a personal theory about knowledge and knowledge validation (Schraw, 2013:2). The epistemological worldview comprises all of a person's clear and hidden viewpoints, mindsets, and prospects about the realisation, creation, illustration and use of knowledge. It is important to take note of the variances between epistemological beliefs and epistemological worldviews.

Epistemological beliefs are "*the gathering of specific beliefs about a specific dimension of knowledge such as its belief, plainness, origin or justification*" (Schraw, 2013:2). Epistemological worldviews comprise a set of beliefs that jointly describe a person's mindsets about nature and the attainment of wisdom (Schraw, 2013:2). Therefore, it becomes obvious that the frame of reference within which a principal operates will contribute to moulding the principal's views, attitudes and suppositions about the attainment, construction, depiction, and application of knowledge which eventually forms the principals' worldview. Inside of this epistemological world view, the principal compartmentalises a precise set of beliefs about particular dimensions of existence that defines the principals' attitude and conduct on particular issues. A further assumption is that the personal epistemological beliefs the principal holds would impact the choice of management style and the way the principal engages with the educators in the school. Finally, the conclusion can be drawn that the epistemological beliefs principals hold regarding his or her duties and responsibilities, will have a direct influence on the way principals execute their functions and responsibilities.

1.10 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.10.1 Declaring my position

At the outset, I need to point out that I was a high school principal and that I am currently employed in a senior position by a national teachers' union. There is a real possibility that these two facts might affect how participants respond to my questions. They may also be suspicious about my motivation for the study. I will therefore have to adopt special measures that will limit the possible impact of my standing in education on the results of the study.

Smith and Noble (2014:100) emphasise that *"bias exists in all study designs, and although researchers should attempt to minimise bias, outlining potential sources of bias enables greater critical evaluation of the research findings and conclusions"*. Researchers bring to each study their experiences, thoughts, preconceptions and individual philosophies, which if reported for in advance of the study, enhance the transparency of potential research partiality (Smith and Noble, 2014:100). Rajendran (2001) highlights that the problem is that, while it is simple to identify possible sources of bias, it is not possible to create guidelines for assessing the legitimacy of specific findings or spheres of inquiry. It is also impossible to stipulate measures that adhere to processes that eradicate bias and mistakes. We need therefore to contemplate social practices that could sustain research trustworthiness and augment its objectivity. There need to be ways of research defending against their own biases. Any research approach, in the end, desires credibility to be useful (Rajendran, 2001).

1.10.2 Limiting my own bias

According to Rajendran (2001), the researcher must do an introspective evaluation of himself about the topic that will be researched as a precondition for coping with bias. This is the reason why I am declaring my position early in this research study. My position is putting me in a state of conflict. In this regard, I will implement certain mechanisms to limit the personal biases I might have. Borowska-Beszta (2017:66) mentions that *"transparency and reflection throughout the research process from design phases to field data collection, analysis and report writing must be the norm"*. In this regard, I will send my transcribed data back to the participants for them to evaluate the accuracy of the transcriptions. The research will also be sent to critical readers. Borowska-Beszta (2017:66) also points to *"the importance of openness to*

particular and atypical modes of communicating on the ground and knowledge of the specific mental and physical performance of the participants to limit bias". Galdas (2017), in addition to Borowska-Beszta, states that if the researcher critically scrutinises their role, possible bias and influence during the construction of the research questions, data collection, including sample recruitment and selection of the site will be restricted. During my interviews, I will make sure to establish an atmosphere in which the participant will feel comfortable and safe to answer the questions honestly. I will send my interview schedule to the participants in advance for them to familiarise themselves with what I am going to ask during the interview. I formulated the questions in such a way that it is easy to interpret.

1.10.3 Research approach: A qualitative approach

According to Creswell and Poth (2017:42-43), qualitative research is concerned with research problems related to the meaning of persons or groups assigned to a social or human conundrum or experience. To study these conundrums, researchers use an emergent qualitative approach to do research. The collection of data takes place in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places being studied. Data analysis is both inductive and deductive and establishes patterns or themes. A qualitative approach will assist me the best since I want to comprehend the principals' perceptions of a human problem, namely their perceptions regarding the impact that centralisation will have on their functions and responsibilities to manage the school as well as SGB's functions and responsibilities to govern the school.

1.10.4 Research design

I will make use of an exploratory case study to collect data. According to Epler (2019:21), *"an exploratory case study involves studying a particular topic to the extent where absolute, comprehensive, and a complete understanding occurs"*. Creswell and Poth (2017) refer to a case study as a qualitative approach in which the researcher investigates a phenomenon in everyday realistic, bounded system (a case) over a certain period, through broad, detailed collection procedures like interviews, documents and reports. Therefore, a case study is a suitable design for my proposed research. This design allowed me to collect data in bounded systems namely schools. I interviewed principals in these bounded systems/schools to determine their perspectives regarding the impact centralisation has on the school management and the school governing bodies governance functions assigned to

them in SASA, the Employment of Educators Act 76 of 1998 (Republic of South Africa, 1998) and the Personnel Administrative Measures (DBE, 2016).

1.11 PARTICIPANTS AND SAMPLING

1.11.1 Purposive sampling

I decided to make use of purposive sampling in the selection of participants. According to Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan and Hoagwood (2015:2-3), purposeful sampling is employed in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases where resources are limited. This entails the identification and selection of groups and individuals that are particularly well-informed about a phenomenon of interest (Cresswell, Plano & Clark, 2011). Palinkas et al. (2015:2-3) mention that *“in addition to knowledge and experience, the importance of availability and willingness to participate, and the ability to communicate experiences and opinions in an articulate, expressive, and reflective manner are critical parts of the selection of research participants”*. I will discuss some factors that assisted me in choosing the purposive sampling strategy. The educator’s union where I work has a large database e.g., school size, school quantile information, the language of teaching and learning regarding the schools in Tshwane where I want to conduct my research. This will assist me in selecting the schools where I want to conduct my research.

1.11.2 Sampling criteria

According to Laws, Harper and Jones (2013), *“it is essential to locate excellent participants in order to retrieve excellent data”*. Morse (2007 in Laws et al. (2013) asserts that not all people interested in participating in research will be excellent participants. Excellent participants must be experts in their experiences of the phenomenon under investigation.

1.11.2.1. Sample criterion one – principals

I interviewed principals. In section 16A of SASA, some of the functions and responsibilities of the principal are clearly outlined. In this section of the Schools Act, it is unambiguously stated that the principal is the accountable person in the professional management of the school. Because of the centralisation tendencies of government, the principal may be losing control of these functions and responsibilities to the government. The principal is the person in the system that is

most affected by the re-centralisation tendencies of government. I wanted to comprehend principals' awareness, understandings and perspectives of these centralisation tendencies.

1.11.2.2 Sample criterion two – generational issues

I interviewed principals from both the Baby Boomer and Generation X age groups. The Baby Boomer generation that is in management positions are approaching the end of their careers. This generation may have understandings and perceptions of these centralising actions that differ from those of younger principals. In this regard, I also selected so-called Generation X principals. This generation has relatively little experience of being principals. With age comes more experience and this influences how a person sees the world. It is understandable that the older generation, which grew up in an era when fundamental human rights were not acknowledged in South Africa, may have perspectives different to younger generations who grew up knowing that they have fundamental human rights which are embedded in the Bill of Rights.

Table 1.3 - Proposed profile of participants

| | | |
|-----------------------------|----|--|
| Baby Boomers 1946 – 1964 | 12 | Principals between the ages of 55 – 65 years of age. |
| Generation X 1965 – 1980 | 12 | Principals between the ages of 39 -54 years of age. |

1.12 DATA COLLECTION

1.12.1 Semi-structured interviews

I opted to make use of semi-structured interviews. According to Blandford (2013), the semi-structured interview is an effective approach to attain a better comprehension of people's views/opinions and experiences. I plan to interview principals to determine their understandings and perspectives of the impact the (re)centralisation actions of the government have on school management and governance functions and responsibilities.

1.12.2 Literature review

Tate, Furtmueller, Evermann and Bandara (2015:6) indicate that “... *studying earlier literature is an essential facet in every research field. A good literature review establishes a strong basis for the development of new knowledge, enables theory development, closes areas where a saturation of research exists and exposes areas where research is considered necessary*”. I will probe national and international literature regarding centralisation, decentralisation and recentralisation as well as tendencies in how education authorities implemented recentralisation in South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria, New – Zealand and Australia.

1.12.3 Case law

Case law can be seen as a segment of common law and consists of judgments handed down by the courts in understanding the statutes relevant to cases brought before them. I will probe case law to get a better understanding of where the courts had to intervene where department officials and politicians abused their positions in order to control governance and management functions delegated to the SGB and the principal.

1.12.4 Legislation

In this study, I will discuss the proposed Education Laws Amendment Bill released in the Government Gazette number 41178 on the 13th of October 2017. This proposed bill if promulgated into law can severely obstruct a school's ability to function autonomously.

1.13 DATA ANALYSIS

The method I will use to analyse the data is called data coding. Data coding starts with small units of data that stand on their own. We refer to these data parts as segments, which are used to arrange the data set (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). After I have identified the segments, I will use them to formulate codes (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). In the next step, I will isolate the appropriate words or phrases and arrange them into categories (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). The next step will be to group the categories into themes and the themes into clusters of themes. Finally, I will group the themes and clusters of themes into patterns (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014).

1.14 TRUSTWORTHINESS AND CREDIBILITY

I will strive to ensure the trustworthiness and credibility of my research through the following:

1.14.1 Triangulation

According to Graue (2015:9), *“triangulation signifies that the researcher makes use of data from an assortment of sources implementing different methodologies. The similarity or dissimilarity of data acquired from various data sets enables the researcher to form an impression of the reliability of data”*. I will use data sets from four data collection methods, namely, literature reviews, document analysis, semi-structured interviews and legislation.

- **Literature review**

According to Randolph (2009:2), there are many applied and technical explanations for conducting a literature review. One practical reason is that it is a way of showing that the author is well-informed about the field, including its jargon, concepts, key variables and singularities, its methodologies and its history.

- **Document analysis**

In this study, documentary analysis (in the form of content analysis) was chosen as the second approach, which would work well alongside the qualitative interviews and can augment my study during the research process. The education stakeholders' comments regarding the proposed amendments to SASA will assist me to explore the possibility that the proposed BELA is an attempt to (re)centralise control in government.

- **Member checks**

According to Madill and Sullivan (2017:4-5), *“member checking is time and again believed to be one of the best approaches to verify the quality/standard of the data in qualitative research. For some methodologists, role-player concurrence is key to exhibiting validity.”* The process involves sending the evaluated and deciphered information back to the participants for them to assess the readings made by the researcher. They can then propose amendments if they are not satisfied with how the researcher has processed or interpreted the information, they made available or feel that they have been misreported (Anney, 2014:277).

- **Reflexive journal**

Trustworthiness can also be attained by making use of a reflexive journal or field journal. Anney (2014:279) describes a reflexive journal as “*reflective manuscripts held by the researcher to contemplate on issues/behaviour observed, that needs interpretation*”. The reflective journal will allow me to write down all the occurrences that transpired in the field, specifically personal expressions concerning my study.

1.15 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

To ensure that my research is ethical, I will follow certain steps. Firstly, I will apply for ethical clearance from the University of Pretoria to conduct research as a doctoral candidate of the university. Secondly, I will apply to the Gauteng Department of Education to grant me permission to access the schools in the Tshwane North, South, East and West School districts. Thirdly, I will approach the principals of the selected schools to grant me permission to enter their schools to conduct my research. I will also approach the participants (as identified in my selection criteria) for permission to conduct interviews with them. It is highly likely that some of the participants will be critical of the government and to protect them I will make use of pseudonyms. The schools I will visit will not be named in my research. Only my supervisor and I will have the information of the participants and the schools I visited. My proposed research will also have an exit clause that gives participants the option to exit from my research at any stage. I do not foresee any risks to my participants.

1.16 SIGNIFICANCE OF RESEARCH

The aim of my research will be to contribute to the field of education law. This study will also aim to generate a more profound insight into principals’ understanding and perspectives of the impact of government’s centralisation tendencies on their functions and responsibilities.

1.17 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

My study is limited in the sense that it is bounded. I will only interview principals in the Tshwane school districts. The study will only focus on principals’ perspectives of recentralisation on their management and on governance functions. Some participants may feel at risk if they convey the impression that the state is restricting their authority and may not convey information that can be trusted.

1.18 WORKPLAN

Table 1.4 Workplan

| | |
|---|--|
| 1. Defend proposal successfully [End of September 2019] | 2. Apply for ethical clearance through the University of Pretoria – November 2019 |
| 3. Apply for permission at the DBE to conduct research at public schools – Due to COVID19 this process was delayed. | 4. Enter the field to conduct the planned interviews – August 2020 – December 2020 |
| 5. Analyse the data collected – January 2021 to May 2021 | 6. Draft Report on the research – June 2021 |
| 7. Submit the research report – October 2021 | |

1.19 WORKING ASSUMPTION

My working assumption is that principals are aware of the recentralisation tendencies that are limiting their autonomy to perform their management tasks and, in the case of the school governing bodies, their governance tasks. Their perspectives regarding these centralisation tendencies are therefore particularly important. Through this proposed research, I hope to be able to produce a rich description of principals' views regarding the seemingly purposeful attempts to recentralise some of their powers and to assist the Department of Basic Education to objectively consider their governance and actions and the impact thereof on the schools.

1.20 CONCLUSION

Before 1994, the education system was affected by centralised tendencies. Principals were accustomed to getting commands from the central department of education (Steyn, 2007). After 1994 a new structure of education based on the basic dogmas of democracy was created in South Africa. According to Oosthuizen et al. (2011:59), SASA made it possible to realise a participative form of democracy in education. This was done by doing away with centralised regulation about specific facets of the educational decision-making processes. Through sections 16, 16A and 20 of SASA, a wide variety of functions and responsibilities were decentralised to the principal and the SGB. However, recentralisation tendencies e.g., the BELA and the *ultra vires* actions of the Department officials and politicians have a direct impact on school governance and management. I will explore principals' perspectives of

educational recentralisation, professional management and governance of schools and principals' autonomy.

CHAPTER 2

THE DECENTRALISATION, CENTRALISATION AND RECENTRALISATION CONUNDRUM IN PUBLIC EDUCATION

2.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

I decided to commence this chapter with a discussion of the theoretical framework. This allows me to link the theoretical framework to the literature. The research was conducted in the manner as explained and suggested in the work of Archer (1978). It centres on her theory on the social origins of educational systems. Archer's theory states that modern educational systems are basically either centralised or decentralised and that their character and functioning are conditioned by the social and political conflicts of their formative phases.

2.1.1 Archer's theory of educational change: Centralisation *vis-à-vis* decentralisation

After a state education system is decided upon, the amount of centralisation and decentralisation becomes a vital aspect in determining plans to transform it (Archer, 2013). In very centralised education systems, negotiated education transformation generally emerges through political meddling at the national sphere and the patterns of adjustment fluctuate subject to the type of government regulating the centralised decision system. Archer differentiates between three types of state: impenetrable, semi-permeable and politically accessible (Archer, 2013). This study focuses on impenetrable and politically accessible states.

2.1.2 Archer's theory: Characteristics of impenetrable (inaccessible) states

In an impenetrable (inaccessible) state no ordered, unified, educational opposition comes to the fore, because of the socio-political diversity in the groups that opposes each other and partly because of government strategies (Archer, 2013). When education transformation is allowed, a top-down approach is followed. Scholars and teachers are restricted to advice-giving roles and other role-players are side-lined. Teachers will utilise any action available to improve their vested professional interests instead of contributing to the transformation of the system. Where national federations are established, they engage in policies to restrict the execution of these transformations (Archer, 2013). The social diversity of those who are content with the existing education *status quo* cause dejection to prevent the formation of strong

opposition to official educational policy. At the same time, the state attempts to prevent the formation of organisations committed to educational reform (Archer, 2013). In this regard, Bourdieu and Passerson (1990) indicate that the school, invested by a society with a single, purely cultural function of enculturation, does no more than to provide information to its own structures regarding the way the hierarchy of values of the national culture expects from them.

This is the reason why the previous government was opposed to education reform because the system imprinted the apartheid ideologies of the national culture that favoured the Afrikaner. The Bantu Education Act 47 of 1953 (South African Government, 1953) implemented by the National Party government, was an approach designed to control the majority opposing groups.

Archer (2013:1) indicates that the characteristics of education can be broken down into three categories: *“Who gets it? What happens to them during it? Where do they go to after it?”* During the apartheid era, quality education mainly favoured the minority (Whites) of the population. The majority of the population received an inferior education. The majority of the population was prepared for manual labour with no hope of occupying significant positions in the white society.

2.1.3 Archer's theory: Features of an accessible state

According to Archer (2013), the existence of an accessible state allows a wide range of education demands to reach the central decision-making arena and many groups may work through the system of parliamentary coalitions in seeking to negotiate their demands. Different viewpoints of members of society prevent the merging of stable units for political manipulation (parties, alliances and coalitions) and lead to legislative immobilisation. However, when interest groups themselves are also divided and incapable of cooperation, it prevents the formation of stable associations with consistent political sponsorship (Archer, 2013).

Archer (2013) states that transformation takes place because new objectives are attempted by those who have the authority to amend education's previous structural organisation. After 1994, power shifted to the majority of the population of South Africa. SASA (RSA, 1996a) is an example of the changes that occurred in education because of the new goals pursued by the new democratic government. This new democratic education system as articulated in the preamble to SASA provided for a

new uniform system for the organisation, governance and funding of schools (Mathebula, 2013).

Through Education White Paper 2: The Organisation, Governance and Funding of Schools (DOE, 1996) the thought of democratic governance in schools was patently articulated through the establishment of SGBs in all public schools (Sehoole, 2003). Other representative and deliberative structures within schools, such as student representative councils, parent associations and staff meetings are important for successful democratic practice and school management (Sehoole, 2003).

In paragraph 2.2 I will describe the processes that unfolded after 1994 to democratise / decentralise the education system followed by a discussion of the recentralised tendencies government is implementing to systematically centralise the control of education back to government.

2.2 THE LAUNCH OF DECENTRALISATION AND THE PUSHING BACK OF CENTRALISATION

On 27 April 1994 South Africa became a democratic country and changed its governance from an authoritarian to a democratic approach through a new Constitution dedicated *“to representative and participatory democracy, accountability, transparency, and public involvement”* (RSA, 1996c). Consequently, the South African education system also had to be realigned with democratic principles through policy and law reforms (Naidoo, 2005:13). According to the Education White Paper 2, effective public-school governance requires a strong collaboration between the different role players (SGB, parents, teachers, principal and the DBE). This partnership has to be fortified in collective objectives (DBE, 1995).

A suitable balance between the different constituency rights and interests in the sector and practices is imperative (Van der Merwe, 2013:238). In this regard, SASA makes it possible to decentralise governance and management to the role-players at the grassroots level to involve them in decision-making processes (Van der Merwe, 2013:238). In principle, it enables schools and their communities to have a substantial voice in decision-making by assigning authority to role-players who are involved in the democratic governance of schools (Van der Merwe, 2013:238). Naidoo (2005:17) points out that this notion of participation and democratisation

gave rise to the practice of educational decentralisation and participation in school governance after 1994.

The literature, however, presents another picture. It seems that the principles of democracy, stakeholder participation and decision-making that enable local school communities (parents through the SGB and principal) to manage and govern school affairs are not always honoured by government education officials and politicians.

For example, as early as 2008, Samoff (2008:41) asserted that *“the governance and management of the education system have become a fiercely contested sector, with multi-faceted interrelating issues, rigorously opposing agendas and contradictory viewpoints that are on occasion complementary but seldom compatible”*. According to Beckmann and Prinsloo (2015:1) these challenging agendas and discordant attitudes can be seen in the behaviour of government officials and politicians that frequently show a disdain for legal advice and act on “imagined powers”, causing disgrace to the government where they appear to be unmoved by the requests of the people, and intentionally act contrary to the law thereby abandoning their responsibilities to the children and, in general, the nation.

The recentralisation of governance powers either through lawful or unlawful means is becoming more prominent. Through recentralisation, the government is implementing measures that are curtailing formerly delegated powers of the local community - whether in the form of resources, authority, or decision-making autonomy (Eaton & Dickovick, 2004:90).

According to Sebidi (2009:46), the South African government is using recentralisation to re-arrange and rectify unsuccessful administrative structures to put into function *“enhanced procedures to meritoriously transfer the educational delivery and mandate to higher office”*. Recentralisation also takes place when the execution of decentralisation policies stands in disagreement with other current laws, prompting hesitation in terms of which sphere of government or which decision-maker in education is in control of the various functions. These recentralised tendencies have a profound impact on how the local school community (principal and SGB) are allowed to manage and govern the school. In the end, this creates an unhealthy conundrum for schools to operate in, very reminiscent of the centralised and bureaucratic approach which characterised the apartheid regime.

The principal is the role-player in the education system that will be the most affected if powers to make decisions regarding management and governance issues at the school level are curtailed and transferred back to a central (apex) system. I will explore this phenomenon in two parts.

- **Roadmap – Part 1: The peripheral school landscape in which the principal must operate**

The title of this study is “*Management and governance decentralisation in public schools: Principals’ perspectives on recentralised decentralisation*”. The following keywords in the title namely management, governance, decentralisation and recentralised decentralisation guide the research to a large degree. All these keywords refer to power relations and how power can be distributed to people lower down in the system or curtailed and transferred back to a central (apex) system.

In Part 1 of the literature, I sketch the landscape in which the school principal must function after 1994. It is important to have an understanding of the democratic school environment principals must manage and SGBs must govern. I discuss the relationships that exist amongst the principal and the SGB regarding school management and governance. Then I examine how democracy enables the redistributing of power to local SGBs and school management teams (herein after SMTs) with the removal of centralised power over specific aspects of educational decision-making. This is followed by a discussion of the principal and the cooperative school governance landscape. Finally, I look at the principal and stakeholder participation at grassroots level and the matters they deliberate over. The peripheral landscape of the period after 1994 will then be linked to my theoretical foundation (Archer’s theory of power).

- **Part 2: The principal and the centralisation /recentralisation conundrum in public education**

In Part 2 I start the discussion by putting centralisation into context. Brennen (2002:1) mentioned that “*centralised governance in education generally implies a situation where a main administrative authority has absolute control over all resources, for example, money, budgets, information, people, legislation, policy and technology*”. I will refer to the factors that have shaped recentralisation around the world, namely: economic (e.g., hyperinflation), political (e.g., partisan control of

government) and administrative (e.g., lack of institutional capacity at the lower levels of government) factors (Murcia, 2017:55).

I then focus on the principal that is confronted with a centralised school governance landscape. Du Plessis (2019:48) stated that *“at the beginning of democracy, assurances were made in regard to participatory decision-making, but this was short-lived and it appears that the powers that be in education have started to intensify their power through more significant regulation and answerability measures”*. I scrutinize the recentralisation of education governance in South Africa. This will be followed by a discussion of the principal’s management and leadership positions in relation to decentralisation and recentralisation.

2.3 PART 1: THE PERIPHERAL SCHOOL LANDSCAPE IN WHICH THE PRINCIPAL MUST OPERATE

2.3.1 The relationship between the principal and the SGB regarding school management and governance

It is important to analyse how the SASA 84 of 1996 refers to the position of the principal as governor and professional manager as well as the principal’s relationship with the SGB and the Department. According to section 16(1) of SASA, the governance of a public school is conferred in the SGB of the school, while section 16(2) of SASA stipulates that the governing body stands in a position of trust towards the school (RSA, 1996a). This position of trust can be understood as promoting the best interests of the school as contemplated in section 20(1)(a) of SASA and section 20(1)(e) of SASA that instruct the SGB to support the principal, educators and other staff of the school in the performance of their professional functions (RSA, 1996a). Section 16A(2) of SASA stipulates that the professional management of the school is vested in the principal (RSA, 1996a). Section 16A of the SASA 84 of 1996 further provides that the principal acts as the representative of the Provincial Head of Department in the SGB in his/her official capacity as contemplated in sections 23(1)(b) and 24(1)(j) of the Act (RSA, 1996a). In this regard, section 19(2) of SASA places a duty on the principal and other officials of the education department to render all necessary assistance to SGBs. Section 19(1) of SASA (RSA, 1996a) must be read in conjunction with section 16A(3) that instructs the principal to assist the SGB in the performance and execution of their functions and responsibilities (RSA, 1996a). It is clear that there is an interwoven relationship

between the principal, the SGB and the department regarding school governance and professional management (RSA, 1996a). To put the above sections of SASA into perspective, Figure 2.1 illustrates that the position of the principal in the context of school-based management and governance rests on four pillars, namely governor, manager, agent and leader (Botha, 2013:128).

Botha (2013:128) explained that the first pillar is the political leadership element where the principal takes up a position as a member of the SGB. In the SGB, the principal is not allowed to vote, he/she is an *ex officio* member, but the principal still performs a significant political leadership function. In this regard, the principal provides guidance, support and direction through his/her professional know-how to assist the SGB to make more informed decisions when drafting school policy, deciding on the vision and mission of the school, and other relevant guidelines, rules as well as governing processes essential for school governance (Botha, 2013:128).

Botha (2013:129) indicated that under the second pillar the principal takes up the duty of a manager in the school to carry out the instructions from the main education authority, namely management of the learning and teaching resources and other school capital on behalf of the department. As a manager, the functions of the school principal is not limited to the management of apportioned resources but stretches into other spheres such as governance, teaching and learning and the transformation of the school (Botha, 2013:130).

The third pillar refers to the curriculum. In this regard, the principal is accountable for the successful implementation of the curriculum at school (Botha, 2013:132). As instructional leaders involved in the primary affairs of schooling, principals in self-governed schools have control over the management of resources. Principals' expertise and knowledge of the curriculum put them in a position to assign resources in accordance with the educational needs of the school. In addition to this, the principal, being a member of the SGB, is also well-informed regarding policy that refers to resource allocation (Botha, 2013:132).

The fourth pillar sees the principal as a key figure of transformation. In respect of school-based management, this transformation encompasses important areas of governance, curriculum and management (Botha, 2013:133). According to Botha (2013:33), the principal in the role of transformation agent "*will actively engage in*

four important tasks, namely school vision building, capacity building, team building as well as programme design and management”.

Therefore, the assumption can be made that if the SGB’s governance functions are (re)centralised, the principal’s professional management duties will be affected and, *vice versa*, if the principals’ management functions are (re)centralised or restricted, the SGB’s governance functions will be affected.

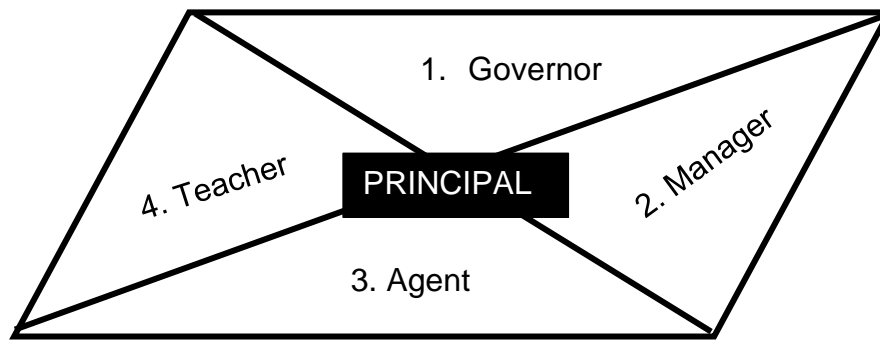


Figure 2.1: The principal’s role as manager and governor (Botha, 2013)

2.3.2 The principal and the democratic school landscape

SASA made it possible to give effect to a participative form of democracy by devolving power to local SGBs and SMTs and ended centralised control over specific facets of educational decision-making through the institution of cooperative governance between the powers that be in education and the school community (Squelch, 1998:101; Smit & Oosthuizen et al., 2011:59). In theory, these conditions were intended to create a democratic balancing of power and collaborative partnership between the government, parents, and educators (Karlsson, 2002:37).

The preamble to the National Education Policy Act 27 of 1996 (herein after NEPA) (RSA, 1996b) stipulates that law should be promulgated to permit the democratic change of the education sector in its entirety. The central objective of legislation must be to institute a unified system that serves the needs and well-being of all the citizens of South Africa and sustain their basic rights (RSA, 1996b).

In terms of section 20(1)(a) of SASA members of school governing bodies are democratically elected by parents, educators, learners and staff members of a school to promote the best interests of the school and strive to ensure its development through the provision of quality education for all learners at the school (RSA, 1996a). SGBs have the statutory authority to implement a constitution

(section 20), recommend the appointment of staff (section 20), decide about the language policy of a school (section 6), draft and implement a code of conduct for learners (sections 8 and 9), and administer the school property and financial resources (sections 20 and 21) (RSA, 1996a).

The directive principle in section 4(m) of NEPA (RSA, 1996b) states that the national Minister of Basic Education should make sure that broad public participation in the development of education does take place by involving role-players in policy-making and governance in the education sector (RSA, 1996b). Section 4(b) of NEPA (RSA, 1996b) provides that policies must be drafted to incorporate the improvement of democracy in the education system. In this regard, the National Development Plan 2030 stipulates that education requires political consensus (National Planning Commission, 2012). Participants in education should include political parties, government, unions, the private sector, professional bodies, subject-specific associations, associations of governing bodies and the communities (National Planning Commission, 2012).

It is this democratically realigned legislation that enables the SGB and principal to govern and manage the school's affairs at the school level without unnecessary government interference (Squelch, 1998; Oosthuizen et al., 2011:59). It is clear from the legislation that democracy stands central to school governance and professional management. At the school level, democratic legislation allows for a democratically elected SGB to govern the school (Squelch, 1998; Oosthuizen et al., 2011:59) and enables the principal to have greater autonomy in respect of the professional management of the school supported by the school management team (Squelch, 1998; Oosthuizen et al., 2003).

In summary, through democratic legislation grassroots democracy can become a reality and the local school community can govern and manage their affairs.

2.3.3 Organisational/Grassroots democracy/Grassroots governance

Cunningham (2003: 776) states that *“grassroots democracy and local control depend on the freedom to participate and to have input into decisions that influence the institutions that serve the community”*. Grassroots democracy offers a chance to address issues in the minds of the community leadership, professionals, and parents, while functioning inside the parameters stipulated by the government and

district. The era has arrived to do away with a “*one-size fits all*” mindset and commit to a more community-oriented approach that is aware of the local circumstances.

Furthermore, research confirms that where grassroots governance is implemented schools have a better chance of success when they are led by a representative, responsive governance group — administrators, teachers, students (when mature), parents, and community members (Cunningham, 2003:778). Such individuals can be trusted to work toward the best interests of the children regarding setting policy, planning, establishing goals, mobilizing resources, developing staff, evaluating and modifying programs, and other activities. Local school groups know best what needs to be done to address the social, psychological, and academic development of local children (Cunningham, 2003:778). School staffs are much freer to develop, implement, and evaluate projects that have a high probability of promoting their students’ success. A more representative group of decision makers can reduce the alienation, frustration, distrust, and resistance that plague modern schools and can paralyze progress. Grassroots governance and local control provide an opportunity to reconcile differences in the thinking of citizens, community power elites, professionals, and parents, all the while operating within the guidelines provided by the state and district (Cunningham, 2003:778).

However, it seems that government tends to undo all the good work by enforcing bureaucratic regulations and policies onto schools instead of providing the necessary assistance to schools at local level (Cunningham, 2003: 776).

2.3.4 The principal and the cooperative school governance landscape

After 1994 South Africa became a democracy or an accessible/penetrable state. It is because of the democratic practices that Government implemented that decentralised governance in the education system became a reality after 1 January 1997. Through the introduction of SASA, the school system was realigned with the principles of a democratic government. This enabled the community to partake in decision-making at grassroots community level. Principals were now expected to implement democratic management models and leadership styles in schools (Mhone & Edighej, 2003:191).

To enable principals to realign schools with democratic practices, the new government at the national level decentralised some defined authority to the local,

district or school level (Mhone & Edighej, 2003:192). This is the reason why, in the current education administration, an intricate set of inter-relationships between groups exist. This wide scope of interests and involvement do lead to difficulties in regard to school governance if all those onboard are not open and transparent with each other (Balarin, Brammer, James & McCormack, 2008:5).

According to the Education White Paper 2 (DBE, 1995), effective public-school governance and management necessitate a healthy partnership, grounded on common interest and mutual self-assurance among the various role-players that make up and support the school. The right balance of the diverse rights and interests of groups that make-up each SGB is therefore extremely important. This is the reason why cooperative governance is an essential component of good public-school governance that is based on a partnership between the different stakeholders in education like parents, teachers, learners and the community. Participation by all the stakeholders in education is crucial to ensure that the system is functioning effectively. Thus, it is crucial to take notice of the notion of cooperative government.

According to Malan (2005:229), cooperative governance is a partnership between three spheres of government where each sphere is expected to fulfil a particular role. Serfontein and De Waal (2018:2) point out that *“the Constitutional Court connotes cooperative government as implicit in any system where the same powers are assigned to different government levels, or example: nationally, primary and secondary education functions, Grades R to 12, are administered by the DBE”*. Even though each of the nine provinces has its own Provincial DBE at the provincial (macro) level, school governance is not limited to national and provincial levels. At the micro-level, power is decentralised to SGBs that perform an important function in the governance of their schools as part of the wider decentralisation of power, while the professional management of the school is the responsibility of the principal (Visser, 2003:113).

Serfontein and De Waal (2018:2) ascertained that *“this new South African governance model was implemented to permit schools more independence to manage resources, execute the curriculum, democratise grassroots power over decision-making, and comply with distinctive community demands to enhance the general education system”*. Thus, cooperative governance provides for self-

governance within the different spheres of the government to allow them to serve their people appropriately and in accord with their contextual environments (Malan, 2005:229). It is in terms of this self-rule stipulation that different provincial departments of education are entrusted with exclusive powers to choose different approaches and perspectives regarding education delivery within their jurisdiction. However, the different departments of education also must engage in healthy debate on concurrent functions to line up with and coordinate their activities to find different means of addressing the demands of the people (Maluleka, 2015:21-22). In the South African context, cooperative governance provides for concurrent powers for central and regional governments. These concurrent powers regulate the nature of the relationship among the spheres of government in the country. The regional government is playing a significant role in improving the effectiveness of government in respect of delivering services in various parts of the country and meeting the needs of specific communities (Maluleka, 2015:22).

Chapter 3 of the Constitution of 1996 (RSA, 1996c) contains provisions regarding this cooperative relationship. According to section 41(1), the principles of cooperative government include the following:

All spheres of government and all organs of state within each sphere must:

- collaborate in mutual trust and confidence by -
- promotion good relationships;
- help and care for one another;
- keep each other up to date, and listen to each other's opinion/views on affairs of mutual interest;
- realign their actions and legislation with one another;
- abide by approved procedures; and
- circumvent legal actions against each other (RSA, 1996c).

In addition, section 41 (2) of the Constitution of 1996 specifies that Parliament must approve law for the formation of organisations and associations to encourage and enable intergovernmental interactions and to offer suitable procedures and processes to expedite resolution of inter-governmental differences (RSA, 1996a). Du Plessis (2019:80) mentions that this resulted in the Inter-governmental Relations Framework Act 13 of 2005. This framework is applicable to the three spheres of

government, namely the national government, provincial governments and local municipalities. As previously discussed, the SGB and the principal as the representative of the HOD are the key role players in the education sector and therefore perform an essential part in the inter-governmental relationship.

2.3.5 The principal and stakeholder participation in the local affairs and the decision-making of the school

Various authors (Somech 2002:1; Margulies & Black 1998:23; Keith, 1996:14) mention that disagreements about involvement in decision-making are generally grounded in three hypothetical orientations, namely *“the democratic, socialist, human growth and development and productivity and efficiency arguments”*. I only focus on the democratic theoretical orientation as it applies to this study. The democratic disagreement about involvement in decision-making has also been labelled the ethical approach (Somech, 2002:1). The democratic argument suggests the idea that presenting the chance to take part in the decision-making of an institution is a moral priority because every person has the right to implement some control over their own labour and their existence (Somech, 2002:1). In the school environment, this debate implies that the partaking of the principal and teachers are required to enhance the professional side of the sector and to democratise teaching. In addition, a democratic school environment is supposed to inspire parents and learners to take part in and uphold a country’s system of government (Mokoena, 2011:119). In the education sector, where this underlying principle is common, teacher, parent and community involvement are believed to enhance the standard of educational options and therefore improve education (Somech, 2009:18). Somech (2011:120) cited that this theory can be summarised as follows: *“Flatter management and decentralised authority structures carry the potential for achieving outcomes unattainable by the traditional top-down bureaucratic structure of schools”*. Mokoena (2011:120) mentioned that *“the majority of the principals in my study cited the improvement of teaching and learning as the primary purpose for employing participatory decision-making structures at school level”*.

- **The role of the principal in participatory decision-making structures at school level**

The duties of principals were amended to a great extent when the participatory decision-making approach was introduced (Mokoena, 2011:120). Mokoena

(2011:120) pointed to the fact that “Brown observed more than a decade earlier (1990) that the role most affected by participatory decision-making is unquestionably that of the school principal”. Riesgraf (2002) contended that participatory decision-making has had major impacts on the functions of school principals (Mokoena, 2011:120). Figure 2.2 represents a move in the functions and responsibilities of the principals in the direction of a more cooperative operational approach in the school environment. According to this table, the principal in the democratic school era is not the sole decision-maker anymore (Mokoena, 2011:120). These adjustments in principals’ roles have appeared because of the formation of structures and procedures in the school (such as SGBs and SMTs), and an increase in the number of decisions that must be taken at school (Mokoena, 2011:120).

| <i>Decrease in:</i> | <i>Increase in:</i> |
|--|--|
| <p><i>Mokoena (2011:120) cited that:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“individual responsibility to make decisions, although the number and variety of decisions have increased significantly</i> • <i>time and opportunities to make individual decisions</i> • <i>involvement in low-level management activities delegated to others where possible”</i> | <p><i>Mokoena (2011:120) cited that:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“the need to work with and through representative committees and groups in a collaborative way to achieve consensus decisions and the need to delegate decisions to others to empower them</i> • <i>accountability to school community members</i> • <i>school leadership through visioning, strategic planning, changes in attitudes and culture, and a focus on people</i> • <i>operational climate change for decision-making at school”</i> |

Figure 2.2: Changes in the role and responsibilities of school principals

Source: Mokoena, 2011: 120 Adapted from Cranston, 2001

2.3.6 Conclusion

Botha (2013:128) referred to the principal’s functions as four pillars in the school. The first pillar is the political leadership dimension where the principal takes up a position as a member of the SGB. Botha (2013:129) indicated that in pillar two the principal takes up the position as a manager in the school to implement the mandates from the central education authority (Botha, 2013:130). The third pillar refers to the principal as curriculum manager. Here the principal is responsible for the successful execution of the curriculum at school (Botha, 2013:132). The fourth pillar sees the principal as an agent of change. Botha (2013:132) points out that *“in the dimension of school-based management this transformation encompasses important areas of governance, curriculum and management”*.

In principle, these stipulations were proposed to institute a democratic power-sharing and collaborative partnership among the state, parents, and educators (Karlsson, 2002:37). The preamble to NEPA (RSA, 1996b), likewise stipulates that legislation should be implemented to enable the democratic change of the education sector in its totality. The directive principle in section 4(m) of NEPA (RSA, 1996b) is clear that the National Minister of Basic Education must make certain that wide public collaboration takes place in the enhancement of education by involving stakeholders in policy-making and governance in the education system (RSA, 1996b). Section 4(b) of NEPA (RSA, 1996b) indicates that policies must be drafted to include the advancement of democracy in the education system. In this regard, the National Development Plan 2030 stipulates that education requires political consensus (National Planning Commission, 2012). Participants in education should include political parties, government, unions, the private sector, professional bodies, curriculum specific-associations, SGB federations and the public (National Planning Commission, 2012). In essence, local school communities are now permitted to take part in decision-making at the local community level. Principals must be able to implement democratic management models and leadership styles in schools (Mhone & Edighej, 2003:191). The Education White Paper 2 (DBE, 1995) guides good public-school governance and underlines the importance of a prosperous partnership, founded on common interest and mutual self-assurance, among the various groups that are involved in the school.

It appears from the previous sections that participation by all the stakeholders in education is crucial for the success of the education sector. Thus, it is important to take note of the notion of cooperative government. Chapter 3 of the Constitution of 1996 (RSA, 1996c) contains provisions in respect of this cooperative relationship. The assumption can be made that if the SGB's governance functions are (re)centralised, the principal's professional management duties will be affected and, *vice versa*, if the principals' management functions are (re)centralised or restricted, the SGB's governance functions will be affected.

Furthermore, it is important to take note of the following keywords and phrases in paragraphs 2.3.1 - 2.3.6 that refer to decentralised governance. In paragraph 2.3.2 I referred to SASA's use of phrases pertaining to participative governance, redistributing of power, cooperative governance, and democratic power sharing.

NEPA section 4(m) mentions stakeholder (SGBs) and broad public participation (RSA, 1996b). The National Development Plan 2030 mentions participation in education (RSA, 2012). In paragraph 2.3.4 I referred to the Education White Paper 2 that mentions school governance that requires a flourishing partnership, and the Constitution emphasises cooperation with mutual trust (DBE, 1995). In paragraph 2.3.5 it is emphasised that participation in the decision-making of an organisation is a moral imperative because individuals have the right to exercise some control over their work (Somech, 2002). If these keywords are to be categorised from the perspective of Archer's (2013) theory of power, they resonate with the accessible or penetrable state. According to Archer (2013), the existence of an accessible state allows for a broad range of educational pronouncements to be communicated to the central decision-making arena. These keywords and sentences all relate to decision-making power that is allocated to lower levels in the systems that operate in government. Consequently, the conclusion is that various examples of legislation and policy enable the principals to execute their duties in a democratic (accessible or penetrable) school landscape. Decentralised governance and management can now be implemented by the principal and the SGB.

2.4 PART 2: THE PRINCIPAL'S CHANGING LANDSCAPE: THE CENTRALISATION-RECENTRALISATION CONUNDRUM IN PUBLIC EDUCATION

In part 2 I discuss the way in which the principal's peripheral school landscape is changing because of Government's tendencies to centralise the aspects of school governance that will have a significant effect on the management functions of a school.

2.4.1 Introduction – Contextualising recentralisation

Brennen (2002:1) mentions that "centralised governance in education normally implies a situation where central administrative authority has absolute control over all resources including money, budgets, information, people, legislation, policy and also technology." Centralisation, in this case, limits the roles or involvement of individuals at the lower levels (Brennen, 2002:1).

The concept of recentralisation can also be explained through the centralisation-decentralisation continuum. Shah (2010:285) mentions *that "the concepts of centralisation and decentralisation are not opposing entities. Therefore, the question*

of selecting either centralisation or decentralisation should never arise". Centralised decentralisation can be best described as opposed to points on a single continuum as depicted in Figure 2.3 below.



Figure 2.3: The centralisation-decentralisation continuum

The benefits of one tend to be to the detriment of the other. According to Shah (2010:285) “[t]he test is not always whether to centralise or to decentralise authority, it is rather the degree to which the element of concentration shall prevail.” Shah (2010:285) indicated that in real life, “... we seldom find any system similar to pure centralisation (where all decisions are taken by a single person) or pure decentralisation (where everyone is actively involved in the decision-making process)”.

Shah (2010:285) pointed out that there are various undertones associated with the relevance/implementation of the notion of centralisation-decentralisation in the education environment. For example, how far can the government agree to take accountability to provide educational facilities *vis-à-vis* individuals, families, social groups or the private sector? To what degree does a separation of power exist among the central, state/provincial and local governments in regard to educational affairs? Lastly, to what degree are pronouncements converged in the Ministry of Basic Education or any other educational organisation?

As a result, the degree of autonomy allocated to the principal is dependent on the amount of scope higher authorities delegated to him/her.

2.4.2 The principal confronted with a centralised school governance landscape

Du Plessis (2019:48) emphasised that “the early post-apartheid rhetoric of democracy and participation is systematically being replaced by rhetoric dominated by compliance assurance to promote efficiency in policy implementation and education delivery through the implementation of greater control measures over schools”.

Du Plessis (2019:48) clarifies that at the beginning of democracy, promises were made in respect of consultative/collaborative decision-making, but that promise was short-lived and it seems that the powers that be in education have begun to increase their power through more rigorous regulation and accountability. Authorities implement these regulations by means of a bureaucratic state obligation or at best through rigid discussions between education departments and other stakeholders (Du Plessis, 2019:48). In this regard, Beckmann (2009:139) concurs by stating that it has become clear “... *that the state may increasingly be trying to assert itself by limiting the real authority of school governing bodies*”.

It is because of these (re)centralised tendencies that (re)centralised governance and the manifestations thereof must be scrutinised more closely. (Re)centralisation of the governance roles of the SGB will have a profound effect on the principal and SGB’s ability to manage and govern the school autonomously.

In Beckmann’s interview with Malherbe, a constitutional lawyer, Malherbe (2017) makes a very alarming observation. He states that, whereas South Africa is a federal state as stipulated in the Constitution of 1996, the failure to observe the ‘letter and spirit’ of the Constitution of 1996 in terms of cooperative governance has led to the country *de facto* becoming a unitary state, as the provinces have ceased to influence or question or oppose centralised decisions or policies or laws. The result is that, in practice, all centrally devised and planned strategies and policy *ipso facto* become provincial strategies and policy. Malherbe (2017) further states that the *Mashavha v President of the Republic of South Africa and Others* 2004 (3) BCLR 292 (T) case marked the beginning of the end of cooperative governance in South Africa. The situation that Malherbe (2017) portrays does not necessarily have to be true. Educational and other civil society stakeholders in question can employ legal and other mechanisms that can insist on the mechanisms of cooperative government being and remaining available to them in the service of a democratic country.

2.4.3 Recentralisation of education governance in South Africa

Murcia (2017:14) describes recentralisation in education as “*the set of formal and informal policies and reforms that transfer resources, authority, or responsibilities from lower to higher levels of government, after a process of decentralisation*”. Murcia (2017:14) further indicates that recentralisation can also be justified as the

central government's reaction to failed spheres of local governance (administrative issues) such as:

- the inability of lower government spheres to turn down propositions by corrupt elites to be captured;
- inadequate provision of services to the public;
- ineffective/unproductive institutional operational processes;
- the public's loss of trust in the education sector.

Murcia (2017) refers to the instance where communities are involved with schools where fraudulent appointments have been made lose confidence in the education system. Furthermore, where the autonomy and impartiality of the national department are compromised, for example when hasty policy transformations are made because of SADTU demands, this leads to citizen doubt of new policy formulations and their successful enactment (Murcia, 2017:14). An important example is the late curtailment of the Annual National Assessment testing instruction in 2015 owing to SADTU's refusal to accept the policy, leaving department officials baffled and dispirited (Van der Berg, et al., 2016:41). Sebidi (2009:39) concurs by stating that recentralisation in terms of education transpires because of the following reasons:

- Firstly, recentralisation in the education system takes place when the national DBE become aware that the provincial officials are performing sloppily, their exertions being categorised by not being well-informed of what is transpiring inside and outside the bureaucracy (Sebidi, 2009:39).
 - Secondly, it emerges because of inadequate leadership by the education governance powers in provincial Departments of Basic Education where haziness of thought and lack of respect for fundamental issues like operative processes take place. In this event, the centre may curtail power as the custodian of implementation (Sebidi, 2009:39).
 - Thirdly, recentralisation may also take place as a government approach to rearrange and straighten out problematic administrative structures and to put into operation improved processes to successfully carry out the education provision and delivery mandate of the higher authority (Sebidi, 2009:39).
-

- Fourthly, recentralisation also transpires when the execution of decentralisation policies is contradicting other standing legislation, triggering indecision regarding which sphere of government or which authority in education is accountable for which tasks (Sebidi, 2009:39).
- Lastly, Coombe and Godden (1996:37) are of the opinion that *“...recentralisation may be triggered by the complexities of the national education system in South Africa. This heterogeneity is characterised by the scale of the educational establishment, the heterogeneity of the citizens it serves, difficulties in communication between decentralised education administrative structures and the centre, as well as financial maladministration”*.

In the end, the type of governance the state puts into operation and communicates to the public will demarcate the mode of management, leadership and governance leaders at lower levels of government will employ (Coombe & Godden, 1996:37). The apartheid type of governance is a good example to demonstrate the profound influence a government’s governance approach could have on the management and leadership practises in schools (Coombe & Godden, 1996:37).

The assumption that can be made from this is that the type of government (accessible/impenetrable or inaccessible/penetrable) will determine the type of leadership, management, and governance at the local community level and in the context of this study the type of leadership/management and governance the principal will apply. Thus, the conclusion can be made that the South African school system during the apartheid (inaccessible/impenetrable state) era was very bureaucratic and undemocratic in nature, which restricted broader participation by teachers, parents and learners (Du Plessis, 2019:116).

2.4.4 The principals’ proverbial two hats in relation to the management and the governance conundrum

In section 16(3) of the SASA 84 of 1996 (RSA, 1996a) it is stipulated that the professional management of a public school is the sole responsibility of the principal that acts on the instructions of his/her superior authority, the Head of the Department. Section 16(1) points out that the governance of government schools is situate in the SGB. The SGBs are only allowed to execute the functions allocated to

them in the Schools Act (RSA, 1996a). Section 16A was added to SASA (RSA, 1996a) after 1996 and gives more information regarding the professional management duties of the principal. The SASA Act 84 of 1996 provides for the following: section 16A(1)(a) stipulates that the principal of a public school is acting on behalf of the Head of the Department in the SGB when performing his/her official duties as contemplated in sections 23(1)(b) and 24(1)(j) of SASA (RSA, 1996a). Thus, the principal becomes an *ex officio* (by virtue of his office) member of the SGB in accordance with section 23(1)(f) of SASA).

Consequently, principals wear two proverbial hats, namely representing the DBE and the school community. It is for this reason that Sefeane (2013:14) points out that schools are complex institutions to manage, lead and govern. In reference to the above, Beckmann (2002:11) cited that *"in practice, the principal should implement the policies of the provincial education department when operating as a departmental employee, and, when dealing with the department in his/her capacity as governing body member, watch over the interests of the governing body, the school and the parent community"*.

To make the position of the principal even more complex, he or she most of the time lives among the parents and learners of the school where he/she must be cognisant of both the government as well as the parents' expectations, who expect the principal's work to be to the benefit of the government and the community. This balancing act is crucial to maintain the bond of confidence with the parents and learners. Furthermore, it is presumed, even instructed, that the principal will not divert from the directives of the department, because as the employer the department pays his/her salary (Heystek, 2004:308). Simultaneously the community can expect the principal to respect the expectations of the community (Heystek, 2004:308).

Du Plessis and Heystek (2019:3) observed the principal's position from a different standpoint. Du Plessis and Heystek (2019:3) indicate that since school principals became the answerable person in control of the standards of schooling offered, it can be presumed that in terms of a collaborative or distributive leadership model that educators in charge at levels lower than the principal must also be held accountable (to the department, parents and learners) in respect of the standards of teaching and learning offered in the school.

However, according to Du Plessis and Heystek (2019:3) *“the conundrum confronting school principals who desire to apply distributed leadership is that sections 16, 16A and 58B of the Schools Act state that only the school principal is answerable for the professional management and academic performance of a school”*. In this regard the department has the authority to implement sanctions against the principal in terms of the incapacity code and procedures for poor work performance referred to in section 16 of the Employment of Educators Act 76 of 1998 (RSA, 1998) if the department is of the opinion that the principal is underperforming (Plessis & Heystek, 2019:3).

Du Plessis and Heystek (2019:3) further mention that the bureaucratic characteristics of South Africa’s education system raise the following questions: *“Do present-day policies recommend adequate management space for principals to apply distributed leadership in an established hierarchical education system? Does the practise of decentralised decision-making confer power to school leaders?”*.

2.5 THE PRINCIPAL’S MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE CONUNDRUM ILLUSTRATED THROUGH DWORKIN’S (1978:31) DOUGHNUT PRINCIPLE

Referring to centralisation, decentralisation and recentralisation, Naidoo (2005:40) points out that South Africa’s governance transformation laws/regulations, which include significant changes in the allocation of authority from national to grassroots levels, are not unique. He also indicates that a variety of local school governance models have been put into operation all over the world, so much to the extent that decentralisation and questions such as *“Who controls the schools?”* and *“How are schools to be governed and managed?”* have surfaced as antagonistic political matters. According to Naidoo (2005:39):

Each decade has witnessed intense public debate about the control of schools, but the basic objective has changed little over time, as reflected in current worldwide governance initiatives: how to balance the involvement of education authorities, government, communities, parents, teachers and in some cases students. This question, in turn, relates to issues of democratic participation, representation, decision-making, and power that are central to the complex shifts associated with restructuring school governance. Governing carries connotations of control, authority, responsibility, and prestige related to decisions about the operations and objectives of educational institutions.

Naidoo (2005:39) refers to research by Arnott and Raab (2002) that indicated that both in form and process, governance inventiveness involves the notions of centralisation, decentralisation and recentralisation in the administration and control of education. It has involved an assortment of facets that include the continuous movement of specified duties closer to the school and the classroom, bolstering some decision-making areas and weakening others by curtailing these duties and taking them back to the government, empowering parents and communities and curbing professional control. To clarify these shifts in decision-making power and authority, Du Plessis (2019) explains this phenomenon effectively by referencing Dworkin's theory of the conceptualisation of discretion (Dworkin, 1978:31). This theory proposes that a person or persons in charge will be restricted in decision making due to yardsticks implemented by a specific authority. The principal can among others manage, lead and govern the school according to the degree of management, leadership and governance autonomy with which the DBE (the authority) entitles them.

As illustrated in Figure 2.4, Dworkin (1978: 31) explains:

Discretion, like the hole in the doughnut, does not exist except as an area left open by a surrounding belt of restriction. It is, therefore, a relative concept. It always makes sense to ask "Discretion under which standards?" or "Discretion as to which authority?" Generally, the context will make the answer to this plain, but in some cases, the official will have discretion from one standpoint, though not from another.

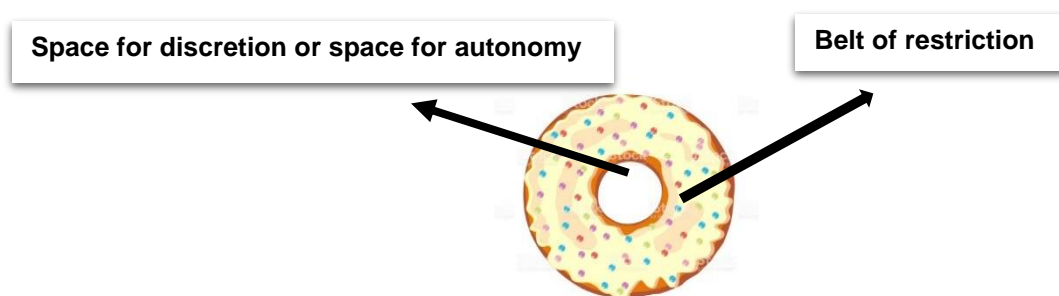


Figure 2.4: Dworkin's (1978:31) doughnut principle

The hole, therefore, shows the space for decision-making or space for freedom to make a decision while the circle of the doughnut represents the band of restraint to make one's own decisions (Dworkin, 1978:31). This comparison demonstrates the general definition of discretion as a space where a person has options that are authorised by higher powers or where a person's actions are based on what he/she

believes to be the correct way to deal with a specific situation (Wallander & Mollander, 2014:1). Thus, creating a space for professional decision-making and therefore implies making space for professional discretion, which would infer a reduced amount of restraint in the setting than one would assume where hierarchical bureaucracy is in the order of the day. Du Plessis (2019:27) suggests that *“this enables more resourcefulness/innovation for SGBs and principals to manage, lead and govern when measured up against the rigorous impersonal conformity to elaborate rules and regulations typifying bureaucratic hierarchies”*.

Du Plessis (2019:27) further explains *“that the ring of the doughnut (belt of constriction) suggests that when exerting professional discretion, sound judgement is needed, and it is accomplished within a liability framework. One can therefore interpret the act of exerting discretion as being vigilant, inconspicuous, liable and mature”*.

Consequently, from the perspective of Archer's (2013) theory of power, the hole (representing the degree of decision-making) in the doughnut will be bigger in an accessible /penetrable state and smaller in an inaccessible/impenetrable state. The principal in the accessible/penetrable state will have more freedom in decision-making relating to management and governance issues at the school level, whereas in the inaccessible/ impenetrable state the principal will be an extension of the state to implement its governance and management ideologies at the school level.

2.6 RECENTRALISATION TENDENCIES IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

Education is, significantly, located in an area of social disputation, and as such, it is always political. The dominant political ethos influences education, which in turn forms part of the overall socio-economic policy of the nation that must be implemented at a local level (Herman and Herman, 1994:43–44).

According to Archer's (2013:1) theory of power that forms the basis of my theoretical framework, the strife for authority/power are determined by the conduct of opposing social groups. Therefore, education becomes a site of struggle. Archer (2013:1) further argues that at any given time an education system is characterised by the objectives pursued by those who regulate it. Where transformation takes place, new

objectives are followed by the authorities who have the power to transform the education system's earlier organisational model. Education is essentially about what individuals gain from it and what they can do with it. Archer (2013:2) further suggests that education is seldom, if ever, the practical realisation of an ideal form of instruction as pictured by a certain group. Instead, the forms education take are typically the results of political power skirmishes. They assume the signs of surrendering to partners and compromises with their adversaries.

Archer, Mackatiani, Imbovah and Gakungai (2016:43) underline the fact that for one to understand a national system of education, it is important to note that, behind every system of education, there are factors that influence and shape the governance, leadership and management of a particular education system.

2.6.1 The principal and the phenomenon of recentralisation

In this part of the literature, I discuss the binding constraints (Van der Berg, Spaul, Wills, Gustafsson & Kotzé, 2016) the South African education system is facing because of failed decentralised governance. Despite the good intentions of decentralisation to promote democracy, legitimacy, public participation, developmentalism, demand efficiency, promote supply efficiency, promote competition, and improve communications, decentralisation has not fulfilled its promise (Siddle & Koelble, 201:236). South Africa's local government is finding itself in a state of palsy, service delivery failure and dysfunction (Koeble & Siddle, 2013:23). Mbecke (2014:267) indicates that failed decentralisation is the result of not implementing good governance and management, the population not being involved in decision-making, the lack of resources, the lack of planning, monitoring and evaluation systems and non-adherence to applicable laws, policies, regulations and procedures. Unfortunately, this failed decentralised governance is also prevalent in the education system. Bloch (2006:1) alludes to the fact that it has become a common cause that education is in crisis in South Africa. Bloch (2006:1) further alludes to the fact that although South Africa is several years beyond its initial transformation into a democratic state, the education system has not achieved the objectives to improve the schooling system for all the country's learners.

A discussion of these constraints will assist me to contextualise the reasons why the DBE is implementing more (re)centralised control of the education system through legislation and policy, and, in extreme cases, through *ultra vires* actions.

2.6.2 Unsuccessful decentralisation in the South African education system

Serfontein and De Waal (2015:2) point out that corruption manifests itself in the form of bribery, embezzlement, fraud, extortion, abuse of power, nepotism, conflict of interest, insider trading/abuse of privileged information and favouritism. Du Plessis (2014:1308) concurs that corruption is the main aspect that is responsible for the insufficient utilisation of educational resources. Du Plessis (2014:1308) elaborates that corruption in education is particularly detrimental as it compromises a country's social, economic and political future because of its enduring effects. Corruption jeopardises equal access regarding quantity and quality of education (Du Plessis, 2014:1308). Lewis (2011) sees corruption as the misuse of delegated authority for own self-interest, which impacts the citizens whose existence is affected by it. Pillay (2014) points to the fact that the public sector staff's incentive to stay honourable is declining when they see senior officials and political leaders using the public office to enrich themselves. In the sections that follow I elaborate on some of these constraints that result from unsuccessful decentralisation governance practices.

2.6.2.1 Unsuccessful decentralisation: Corrupt leadership

- **Abuse of entrusted power**

Serfontein and De Waal (2015:2) indicate that even if the powers that be is justifiable, the aspiration for power can become a major challenge and as a result it is often abused for its own gain. Hoexter (2008:523) mentioned that "authority used in bad faith, fraudulently or dishonestly is prohibited by law." Power abuse, as set forward by Makumbe and Chairman (1999:5) includes the "malevolent, unaccountable, devious execution of power." In this regard, Roane (2013) reports there are also SGBs and principals that become corrupt. Through maladministration practices, they misuse school finances and resources for their own selfish gain. Roane (2013) further elaborated that corruption is broadly described where principals direct government finances into their own pockets and consequently abuse their power to cover up such dishonest deeds (Roane, 2013). This aspect (i.e corruption) was recognised in both *Bula v Minister of Education* and *Kimberley Junior High School v Head of Northern Cape Education Department*. These cases indicate that a moderate equilibrium should be maintained among the requirements to safeguard people from decisions unethically reached at by public officials and

their conflicting requests of evading unwarranted legal meddling in their administration (Serfontein & De Waal, 2015:2).

- **Influence of power on others**

Makumbe and Chairman (1999:12) indicate that power has an impact on the livelihoods, conduct and beliefs of a country's citizens. The misuse of those in positions disregard the responsibilities that are given to them and persuaded by incentives for their own advantages, they defy civil order and harm the public interest (Makumbe & Chairman, 1999:12). The constitutional right of learners to receive a quality education as stipulated in section 29(1)(a) (RSA, 1996c) will not be realised if finances are mismanaged, learners are bribed/manipulated to do inappropriate errands for better marks, nepotism secures employment, and test papers are sold. Corruption Watch (2013) performed a survey in this regard and concluded that the occurrence of selling test papers, specifically in Mpumalanga (23%), and the maladministration of school finances in the Free State (30%), and the North-West Province (31%) were taking place for several years. The study established that almost 47% of the participants in the research identified departmental officials in authoritative positions and school principals as the main persons behind such corrupt practices (Corruption Watch, 2013).

2.6.2.2 Unsuccessful decentralisation: Corruption in public procurement processes

In the Equal Education Report (2018:5), that is a composite joint submission by Equal Education, The Equal Education Law Centre and Section 27 to the Zondo Commission into claims of state capture, corruption and fraud, it was emphasised that procurement systems are extremely susceptible to corruption, leading to the maladministration of public funds and malfeasance. Public contracting is the meeting point of substantial power and money, as demonstrated in South Africa recently (Equal Education Report, 2018:5). Departments of education are heavily involved in procurement due to the extreme quantity of goods and services that must be procured to fulfil the mandate of quality education (Equal Education Report, 2018:5), including transactions for the procurement of classroom infrastructure, textbooks, scholar transport and furniture. The considerable amounts of public money needed to ensure the realisation of this mandate make these departments

particularly vulnerable to state capture and corruption (Equal Education Report, 2018:5-6).

- **The Limpopo textbook crisis**

Textbooks that did not reach their delivery to schools in Limpopo, a province placed under national administration in December 2011, prompted a storm of fury and anger between May and July 2012 (Chisholm, 2013:8). Between June and July, several disclosures were connecting what became known as “*the textbook debacle*” with corruption (Chisholm, 2013:8). In this regard, Chisholm (2013:8) points out that “*a report was made public by a dismissed official, full of information about fraud, corruption, mismanagement and maladministration in the province, one of the first whistle-blower left in the dark, and a questionable textbook supplier with tight ties to the reigning party whose terminated contract he was fighting through the courts*”. Compounding the picture were scandalous images of textbooks and newly printed workbooks being destroyed, dumped into rivers, or left outside storerooms. Both national and provincial departments came under severe pressure with calls that the national Minister of Basic Education must immediately be replaced (Chisholm, 2013:8).

- **Corruption in the provision of school nutrition in the Eastern Cape**

Corruption in school procurement procedures has influenced several sections of the education sector. The Eastern Cape saw this play out in the provision of school nutrition in the province (Equal Education Report, 2018:6). Examples of the gravities of corruption were made public by media reports from 2015. In 2015, an audio recording between two of the Eastern Cape’s most senior government officials – former acting superintendent-general of Education, Mr Raymond Tywakadi, and former head of the Eastern Cape Treasury, Ms Marion Mbina-Mthembu, was revealed through media reports (Equal Education Report, 2018:6). To note, Ms Mbina-Mthembu was mentioned in a Public Protector’s report looking into claims of funds channelled towards replacing mud schools in Eastern Cape being indecorously directed to former president Nelson Mandela’s funeral (Equal Education Report, 2018:6). According to the Daily Dispatch [Anon1], the officials were recorded discussing political interference in two departments of education contracts, including a proposed R1 billion schools nutrition programme. The officials are reported to have explicitly discussed instructions, allegedly from then ANC

Eastern Cape secretary, Mr Oscar Mabuyane, to distribute one of the tenders to his “*boys from Ngcobo*” (Equal Education Report, 2018:6).

2.6.2.3 Unsuccessful decentralisation: Selling of educator posts and cadre deployment

▪ Selling of teacher posts

During 2016 the news broke of the suspected selling of educator posts by some members of teacher unions. With the many challenges in education, this is regrettable, considering all the efforts undertaken by many to rectify an underperforming education system. Some members of the South African Democratic Teachers Union, South Africa’s biggest teacher union, were involved in the sale of teacher posts (Msila, 2016). According to Msila (2016) the apparent selling of teaching jobs has been taking place since as early as 2014. This unlawful manipulation of teacher appointments impairs pupils’ learning and how school programmes are managed (Msila, 2016). In this regard the finding of the Volmink report must also be mentioned. Volmink (2016) reported that:

- SADTU members exercised inappropriate pressure.
- Posts are being sold for cash, that the parties operate in networks, and that there is an ambiance of trepidation that keeps the non-corrupt officials from reporting these practices.
- Union influences often go beyond the regulatory boundaries, specifically where administrative processes are inadequate.
- The administration and education systems in all provinces are not well established.
- There are shortcomings in the procedures to appoint educators.

▪ Cadre deployment

According to Ndedi and Kok (2017), the notion of cadre appointments may be seen as the appointment by the ruling party of steadfast members in an organisation, as a means of circumventing public reportage channels and drawing in that institution under the power/authority of the party, as a substitute of government. The strategy entails the creation of a parallel authority structure to a constitution, for the party members to be accountable firstly to the party and secondly to the public. In essence, the party takes forward its own well-being above the general interests of

the public (Ndedi & Kok, 2017). From an economic perspective, the policy of cadre deployment is a patronage hand out to individuals, companies and agencies, not on merit but on the basis that they have political connections to the ruling party (Ndedi & Kok, 2017).

With reference to cadre deployment, Shava and Chamisa (2018) mention that, after 1994, the first democratic government established various new departments to rectify past inequities, which were mainly race-based in terms of access to public services. After their victory in the elections, the African National Congress government had to compensate the South African Democratic Teachers Union elites with crucial positions in government, as the ANC's secretary-general, Gwede Mantashe, acknowledged in a media briefing in 2011.

2.6.2.4 Unsuccessful decentralisation: Violence in schools

Mncube and Harber (2013:1) underline that the plague of violence in South African schools is an aspect that must receive more attention. There are daily accounts in the media about intensifying levels of violence, physical and sexual abuse, and gang-related actions in our schools. Instruments to commit bodily harm like knives, guns and other weapons are brought into the schools by ill-disciplined learners (Mncube & Harber, 2013:1). Ncontsa and Shumba's (2013:10) study established that violence in schools leads to ineffective teaching when learners are out of control, and this leads to demotivated educators.

2.6.2.5 Unsuccessful decentralisation: Weak institutional functionality

According to Van der Berg, Spaull, Wills, Gustafsson and Kotzé (2016:31), the devolution of educational powers to provinces in South Africa and the consequent implementation of policy standards depend to a large extent on provincial level functionality. The National Development Plan highlighted this aspect and emphasised that the quality of provincial and local governance is uneven and too often of an unacceptably low standard (Van der Berg et al., 2016:31). The result is big differences in the manner that the same policies are put into operation in different provinces. It then becomes the duty of national departments to take control of aspects in the provinces (Van der Berg et al., 2016:31).

2.6.2.6 Unsuccessful decentralisation: Teacher shortages

Richter (2016:1) indicates that there are not enough teachers in South Africa, specifically in rural areas. The 26 higher education institutions in South Africa are mainly responsible for the training of teachers, and together with a few private institutions, they produce roughly 13 000 new teachers per annum, while the need is for around 18 000 teachers and rising year by year. Consequently, teacher shortages in schools lead to excessive learner numbers in classes (Richter, 2016:1).

2.6.2.7 Unsuccessful decentralisation: Inadequate school infrastructure

According to Veriava, Thom and Hodgson (2017:238) dilapidated classrooms, appalling toilets, damaged fences, and no libraries and laboratories are still realities for learners all over the country. At the same time, a privileged handful of learners can receive quality teaching in schools that are sufficiently resourced in a learning environment that is safe. The DBE's own data, that was communicated to the media in 2015, underlined these inequalities (Veriarva et al., 2017:238). They show that of the 23 589 public ordinary schools in the country, 77% do not have libraries, 86% have no laboratory facilities, and 5 225 schools have neither a dependable water supply nor water at all. A total of 913 schools must operate without electricity, and a further 2 854 must make do with an unreliable supply of electricity (Veriava et al., 2017:238).

- **Mud schools**

In 2013 there were still thousands of children in South Africa who received their education in mud schools (Skelton, 2014:2). Mud schools are schools where the classrooms are built with mud. While mud may not be the worst form of building material, the problem is that the mud schools are old and dilapidated. The roofs, often constructed from corrugated iron, leak causing children and classroom equipment to get wet when it rains. Books cannot be left in the classrooms, and when it rains, children simply cannot attend school (Skelton, 2014:2). Mud schools also lack electricity, running water and sanitation, and most have old and insufficient classroom furniture. The government indicated that there were 510 of these schools and the majority were in the Eastern Cape Province (Skelton, 2014:2).

- **Sanitation**

According to Mbele (2011:24) the delivery of proper sanitation with a specific focus to install decent toilet facilities at schools is another dire situation for the Government. One of the Government's goals is to make certain that basic sanitation infrastructure is erected at all public schools and to all its citizens through the introduction of water supply programmes, ranging from full-pressure water systems, flushing toilets and dry toilets. According to the Department of Water Affairs (DWA), "*... water is life; sanitation is dignity, water as a human right, is essential to sustain life, development and the environment*" (Baartjies, 2008:21-23). But, according to Mbele (2011:24) there is no informed national policy to assist the government regarding their lack of capacity to offer and conserve acceptable toilet infrastructure at public schools. This presents a worrying health and safety danger to all learners who must receive basic sanitary services at school. In reference to this, the SECTION 27 report entitled "Towards safe and decent school sanitation in Limpopo: The most fundamental of dignities" indicates that learners attending schools in the Limpopo Province are confronted with horrific and atrocious toilets (Veriava, 2019:3).

- **Water and electricity**

According to the Wall report (2011), published for the South African Institution of Civil Engineering (SAICE), the DBE professed that fewer than 1% of schools had no water and toilets, but this information is incorrect. In some provinces there are no water and toilet infrastructure, many rural schools must operate without water for long periods of time. More than 10% of schools have an unreliable electricity infrastructure, 20% of schools were found to have an unreliable water supply, and 30% of schools have neglected the upkeep of toilets and toilet infrastructure (Walls, 2011:38). In provinces such as the Eastern Cape, North-West, Limpopo and KwaZulu-Natal, the upturn in schools provided with water and electricity is surpassed by the decline in the dependability of these services since 2013 (Walls, 2011:38).

- **Overcrowded classrooms**

Marais (2016:1) emphasised that in 2012 the Minister of Basic Education, said that the upper border proposed a learner-educator ratio for South African primary schools of 40:1 and for secondary schools 35:1. However, there are schools in South Africa that excessively surpass these learner ratios in one classroom (Marais, 2016:1). John (2013:4) indicated that *“in some schools in the Eastern Cape three to four learners must share one desk, thus hindering any movement in the classroom. One school in the Eastern Cape has 1 300 learners but only 24 teachers. Another school has 165 learners in the Grade 3 class and 140 learners in the Grade 2 class”*.

2.6.2.8 Unsuccessful decentralisation: Academic underperformance

- **Unequal school system**

A child’s experience of education in South Africa is still mainly influenced by the area in which they are raised, how well-heeled their parents are, and their race group. A recent survey of school principals in different countries who are members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) reported that 71% of South African teachers teach in schools where over 30% of learners are socio-economically underprivileged, more than threefold the OECD norm of 20%. Difficulties are further intensified by the various languages in the country with 60% of teachers teaching in schools where more than 10% of learners’ first language is not the language of instruction compared to the OCED average of 21% (Amnesty International, 2020). It is thus not unexpected that, in terms of results, South Africa has one of the most unequal school systems in the world, with the broadest academic performance gap between the test scores of the top 20% of schools and the rest (Amnesty International, 2020). Learners in the top 200 schools attain more distinctions in Mathematics than learners in the 6 600 disadvantaged schools combined. More than three quarters of nine-year old children cannot read, meaning that in some provinces reading impediments are as high as 91% (Limpopo) and 85% (Eastern Cape). Of 100 learners that begin their school careers, 50-60 will eventually make it to matric, 40-50 will complete matric, and only 14 learners will eventually attend a university (Amnesty International, 2020).

- **Resources**

Learner-Teacher Support Materials (herein after LTSM) refer to teaching aids or resources utilised to improve teaching and the comprehension of the subject content (Modisaotsile, 2012:4). According to Modisaotsile (2012:4), a high number of South African schools still do not have adequate vital learning resources. In many instances, the South African Government was unable not only to provide facilities such as libraries and laboratory material, but also essential learning materials such as books. The lack of learning materials consequently leads to a decline in the quality of education that is offered (Modisaotsile, 2012:4).

- **Teacher subject knowledge and qualifications**

According to Hungi et al. (2011:52) the 2007 The Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) report denoted that teachers' do not have adequate content knowledge and pedagogical skill. Grade 6 Mathematics teachers and their learners were evaluated and the SACMEQ report concluded that a mere 32% of grade 6 Mathematics teachers had desirable subject knowledge in Mathematics, based on their score in a Mathematics test (Hungu et al., 2011: 52). In this regard, the report also highlighted that there were substantial differences between provinces, with Mpumalanga (4%) and the Western Cape (64%) being the worst and best provinces respectively (Hungu et al., 2011:52). In more current research conducted by Venkat and Spaul (2014:121) they established that 79% of grade 6 Mathematics teachers tested in SACMEQ 2007 have a content knowledge level lower than grade 6/7, i.e. below the level they are currently teaching. These teachers were mainly situated in the poorest four quintiles of schools. Inadequate content knowledge further comes to the fore in teachers' inability to accurately judge their learners' performance (Venkat & Spaul, 2014:121).

- **Grassroot governance challenges**

Research by Mohapi and Netshitangani (2018:4) indicates that parent governors find it especially difficult to implement the functions of the SGB as postulated by SASA. The research further points out that some functions of SGBs are dependent on the social settings of schools as well as a capacity differences of SGBs (Mohapi & Netshitangani, 2018:4). In this regard, Mohapi and Netshitangani's (2018:8) research revealed that low levels of education and literacy of some parent governors are linked with low-income regions and in more wealthier regions the parent

governors have higher levels of education. The participants in the study indicated that they had challenges comprehending some of the discussions in the SGB meetings due to the English language barrier (Mohapi & Netshitangani, 2018:8).

Incidentally Mokoena (2005:14) emphasised that:

There are widely varying capacities among SGBs in affluent suburban schools and those in rural areas. SGBs in urban schools are dominated by well-off and highly qualified professionals and managers, predominately whites, but including a small and growing complement of blacks who have accumulated some experience in running schools under the old model C system. SGBs in rural areas are often dominated by parents who are illiterate and without administrative and financial experience to oversee the affairs of the schools.

Mathonsi (2001) cited that when SGBs are well educated and capacitated in understanding their roles and responsibilities, they will be able to govern schools well and improve the quality of education in South Africa. Mohapi & Netshitangani (2018:8) indicate that some parent governors who are illiterate presented challenges when it comes to parent involvement in school activities level (Mohapi & Netshitangani, 2018:8). The respect that the SGB and the principal have for each other's functions and duties is an additional marker of the functionality of the SGB. Mohapi and Netshitangani (2018:8) mention that the perspectives the two parties have of each other are established by the SGB's encroachment on the professional management functions of the principal and *vice versa*. This is a good indicator whether their relationship will work for better or for worse (Mohapi & Netshitangani, 2018:8).

On the other hand, some scholars such as Soudien (2003) and Duku (2006), criticise SASA for being too much aligned to the middle class in standards, and that SASA is drafted to accommodate the middle-class terms, without any consideration for the disadvantaged societies. SASA, for instance, makes absolute notions about parents; for example: that they have sufficient time to partake in school activities without receiving any compensation for their time, and that they have the reserves to make decisions about their children education (Soudien, 2003; Sayed & Soudien, 2005 in Duku, 2006: 140). As a result, in some communities particularly in rural schools, parents seem to rely more on educators on matters of school governance (Duku, 2006; Mncube, 2009).

- **The real undisclosed matric pass rate**

Banton (2020) points out that while many have celebrated the matric pass rate that was made public as the best results since 1994, the official rival party in the government was not impressed. The Democratic Alliance (DA) had their reservations about the official pass rate that was released by Minister Angie Motshekga and the DBE. The DA contended that the undisclosed pass rate was in fact 38.9%, and not 81.3% if the dropout rate was also considered (Banton, 2020).

Table 2.3 shows what the party deemed to be the real statistics regarding the matric results if the dropout rate was considered. The party included the number of students registered in grade 10 in 2017 and compared it to the number of learners who wrote matric in 2019. They stated that 1 052 080 learners were registered in grade 10, but in 2019 only 409 906 learners passed the matric examination. This purports that only 38.9% of the 2017 grade 10 learners wrote and passed matric in 2019 (Banton, 2020).

Table 2.1: Undisclosed matric pass rate as per province (Source: Section 27)

| Province | Class of 2019 | | | | |
|-----------------|------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|
| | Grade 10 (2017) | Grade 12 (2019) candidates | % Grade 10 2017 writing NSC 2019 | Total Gr 12 candidates passed | "Real" Pass Rate (%) |
| Eastern Cape | 139 962 | 63 198 | 45,2 | 48 331 | 34,5 |
| Free State | 58 933 | 25 572 | 43,4 | 22 602 | 38,4 |
| Gauteng | 188 069 | 97 829 | 52,0 | 85 342 | 45,4 |
| KwaZulu-Natal | 240 713 | 116 937 | 48,6 | 95 017 | 39,5 |
| Limpopo | 168 847 | 70 847 | 42,0 | 51 855 | 30,7 |
| Mpumalanga | 93 136 | 43 559 | 46,8 | 34 995 | 37,6 |
| North West | 62 766 | 26 819 | 42,7 | 23 272 | 37,1 |
| Northern Cape | 24 008 | 9 138 | 38,1 | 6 990 | 29,1 |
| Western Cape | 75 646 | 50 404 | 66,6 | 41 502 | 54,9 |
| National | 1 052 080 | 504 303 | 47,9 | 409 906 | 39,0 |

2.7 RECENTRALISED–DECENTRALISATION OF SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

In the above sections I highlighted some aspects of unsuccessful decentralisation. Unsuccessful decentralisation in education has led to government tendencies of (re)centralisation, either in the form of more centralised legislation and policy being drafted or through interference in the local affairs of school management and governance.

2.7.1 The Basic Education Laws Amendment Bill: Government Gazette No 41178¹

On 13 October 2017, the DBE published Government Gazette No 41178 pertaining to the Basic Education Laws Amendment Bill (herein after BELA). The draft Bill proposes to amend certain sections of the SASA, and the EEA. These proposed amendments of the School Act were received with a great deal of critique. In comments pertaining to BELA, the SAOU (2019) stated that “since the original promulgation of SASA in 1996, the Act has been amended on nine occasions and with every amendment the powers of SGBs [and principals my insertion] have been severely eroded.” If the initial 1996 edition of SASA is measured against the 2011 version of SASA and the proposed amendments contained in BELA, one can make the conclusion that there has been a unremitting assault by the DBE on the fourth tier of school governance and that the powers have to a large extend been drawn upwards to the second tier, i.e. the provincial DBE (SAOU, 2019). In this part of the literature, I focus on section 5 (admission policy), section 6 (language policy), section 20(1)(i) (appointment of educators), section 21 (central procurement) and section 22 (withdrawal of SGB functions) to demonstrate the way this Bill will further centralise the education system and eventually strip the principal and the SGB of more management and governance functions.

2.7.2 Proposed amendment of section 5 of SASA – Admission to public schools

According to the explanatory comments on BELA released in the Government Gazette number 4117831 on 13 October 2017, the Bill seeks to amend section 5 of the SASA (RSA, 2017). The proposed amendment stipulates that the provincial

¹ An amended version of the Bill was published in December 2021. It was too late then to incorporate it into this thesis.

HOD has the absolute authority to give access to a learner in a public school. In addition, BELA further stipulates that the SGB must submit the admission policy of the school, to the provincial HOD for approval (RSA, 2017). The proposed amendments have the effect of eliminating any basic powers pertaining to admissions that grassroot governance structures may have had and reduce the school to the actual status of a state school.

2.7.3 Proposed amendment of section 6 of SASA – Language policy of public schools

According to the explanatory comments to BELA, the Bill seeks to amend section 6 pertaining to the language policy of the school. In this regard the HOD has the authority to approve the policy, or any amendments thereto, or the option to send it back to the SGB with recommendations to improve on it. The HOD must take cognisance of particular conditions when studying the policy or any amendments thereof (RSA, 2017). The clause also aims to give power to the provincial HOD to order a public school to take on more than one language of teaching and learning, after considering specific conditions, and after the prescribed procedures have been followed. The proposed amendment gives power to the provincial HOD to enforce a policy. This is a further example of the stripping the powers of local school governance through the centralising of power. In essence this clause re-establishes a state school model.

2.7.4 Amendment of section 20(1)(i) of SASA – Functions of SGBs: Recommend to the HOD the appointment of educators at the school

The proposed amendment seeks to amend section 20(1)(i) of SASA by restricting the powers of the SGB concerning the recommendation of candidates for appointment. If the amendment is approved, a SGB will be able to recommend to the provincial HOD the appointment of Post Level 1 teachers only, which will in effect make it the sole responsibility of the HOD to select and make appointments at Post Levels 2 to 4 teachers (RSA, 2017). This is the most noticeable example of the curtailment of powers of grassroot governance. If this proposed Bill is going to be promulgated into law, it will completely go against the democratic vision for school governance as promoted by The Education White Paper (DBE, 1995). Furthermore, it is important to take notice of the critical findings of the Volmink report released in 2016 (DBE, 2016), namely that cadre deployment has undermined the education

system. The Volmink task team found that officials deployed “... *are not there because of their professional intentions or even abilities but are placed there as reward*”. To propose that the appointment of teachers in promotional posts must be centralised in the exclusive power of provincial basic education departments is to ignore this crucial finding of the Volmink report.

Another interesting point with reference to section 20(1)(i) of SASA was made by Beckmann (2009). Beckmann (2009:177) pointed out that section 20(1)(i) of SASA in its format stated that SGBs should make a recommendation to the provincial HOD for the appointment of educators at the school, in terms of the Educators Employment Act, 1994 (now EEA). This stipulation is already restricting SGBs in the appointment process. According to Beckmann (2009:177), this stipulation indicates that the provincial HOD is the employer of all educators and that, if they want educators and non-educators to be appointed, grassroot governors must make recommendations to the provincial HOD. Subsequently, no authority is delegated to grassroot governors pertaining to appointments apart from making recommendations in accordance with the common law and labour law provisions (Beckmann, 2009:177). Beckmann (2009:182) further points out that restrictions regarding educator appointments can be found in the EEA (RSA, 1998). Section 6(3)(a) of the EEA (RSA, 1998) states that any appointment, promotion, or transfer to any post on the educator establishment of a public school can only be implemented on the recommendation of the SGB of the public school. This stipulation gives the idea that grassroot school governors are in a very authoritative position (Beckmann, 2009:182). But subsection 6(3)(c) indicates that the SGB must submit, in order of preference, to the HOD, a list of (i) a minimum of three names of candidates they prefer to be appointed, or (ii) fewer than three candidates in consultation with the HOD. For purposes of this research the new subsection 6(3)(f) (after amendment in 2006) includes the most extensive ‘attack’ on the powers of SGBs regarding the appointment of educators. It contends that, despite the order of preference in paragraph (c), the HOD has the final authority to appoint any one of the candidates on the list. Beckmann (2009:182) emphasised:

This is a dramatic power given to the HOD and could result in SGBs de facto losing all power regarding the recommendation and appointment of teaching staff. It could be viewed as the final removal of power from SGBs in this regard and a decisive recentralisation of

significant power delegated to the governors of schools. It could also be viewed as a serious violation of the democratic rights of parents (governors) to have a say in the education offered to their children.

2.7.5 Amendment of section 21 of SASA – Central procurement

According to the explanatory comments to BELA, the Bill aims to adjust section 21 of the SASA. This adjustment will provide authority to the provincial HOD to centrally procure learning support material for public schools after discussions with the SGB and based on the economical use of public funds or uniform norms and standards. This amendment is proposed to bring about economies of scale (RSA, 2017). This amendment it is a further example of the stripping of the powers of local school governors to centralise power. This has the potential of establishing a culture of dependency instead of developing autonomous and professional school managers (principals) and governors.

2.7.6 Amendment of section 22 of SASA: Withdrawal of SGB functions

According to the explanatory comments to BELA, the Bill seeks to amend section 22 of the SASA. Section 22 of the SASA aims to give more authority to the provincial HOD to withdraw one or more functions of a SGB and not only a function as the section currently reads. This proposed amendment will undermine the fundamentally important norms of our democratic dispensation and will infringe on the autonomy of parents and members of the school community to decide on the domestic affairs of their schools. In essence this amendment will re-establish a state school model.

2.7.7 Conclusion

Mestry (2013:168) points out that *“the principal plays a two-fold role, one as a member of the SGB and the other as an employee of the provincial department of education”*. However, it should be noted that the department places the principal in an invidious position, because, in terms of legislation, the principal is expected to obey two authorities: the department and the SGB (Mestry, 2013:168). The principal will either give effect to the department’s wishes out of fear of a disciplinary hearing should he/she not obey the department, which goes against his/her obligation in terms of section 16(2), or the principal will choose to act in accordance with section 16(2) and place the interests of the school before the interests of the department and disregard his/her duty as a departmental employee (Mestry, 2013:168).

Bayeni and Bhengu (2018:2) point out that the department entrusts principals with the responsibility of policy implementation at the school level, in essence they are the accounting officers in their schools, and that, *ipso facto*, makes them significant policy actors. The principal is in an advantaged position to influence the way policy is interpreted and translated into action (Bayeni & Bhengu, 2018:2). Because principals are a point of access into the schools, they have inherent power to control and direct the way various policies move from government to the schools and from the SGB to the school (Bayeni & Bhengu, 2018:2). This is likely to impact on the relationship between the principal and the employer. The principals' power may also pose a threat to the department in terms of its expectations that the policies that are implemented at school level may not mirror their intentions and are more inclined to implement the policies of the SGB.

The Basic Education Laws Amendment Bill released in Government Gazette No 41178 will definitely contribute to the tensions that already exist between the principal and the department and the principal and the SGB, e.g., the *Grey College* case. The department will expect the principal to implement and support the more restrictive Basic Education Laws Amendment Bill that deals with sensitive issues like school admission, language policy, appointment of educators, central procurement, and the functions of the SGB. If the proposed Bill should be promulgated into law, the SGB will have virtually no voice. The SGB on the other hand will expect the principal to support the policies of the SGB, because the principal also serves on the SGB. Consequently, the discretionary hole of autonomy that Dworkin (1978) refers to in his discretionary theory will become even smaller, leaving principals with less room to execute their functions autonomously.

In the next section I illustrate how these tensions have escalated to such an extent that the courts had to be approached to remedy the tensions. I discuss how local school governance clashed with department officials and politicians, forcing schools to deviate from their own policies. In these cases, the department expected the principal to support and implement their instructions, while the SGB expected the principal to do the same for the SGB.

2.8 POLITICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL OBJECTIVES *VIS-Á-VIS* UNSUCCESSFUL DECENTRALISATION

Du Plessis and K ung (2019:209) indicate that the political and ideological intentions of the education authorities are summed up by the following pronouncement by the MEC for Education in the Gauteng Province, Mr Panyaza Lesufi (Lesufi, 2018):

This philosophy of racial division, and cultural and language individualism remain entrenched in our education system. That is why Hoerskool Overvaal's legal victory in keeping out 55 grade 8 English learners from the Afrikaans school in Vereeniging was a major setback for transformation and the struggle for a non-racial society (n.p.).

In this section of the literature, I discuss the *ultra vires* actions and conduct of departmental officials and politicians where they interfered through *mala fide* actions in the management and governance of schools. Regarding Dworkin's (1978) theory of discretionary power, the actions of these departmental officials and politicians jeopardise the belt of autonomy allotted to school managers and governors to manage and govern their schools' affairs. In doing so, departmental officials and politicians are widening the restrictive belt that Dworkin (1978) uses to demonstrate where a higher authority's obstructive rights begin and end.

Van der Merwe (2013:242) contends that these centralising propensities are becoming a common issue where state officials misuse their powers, unlawfully meddling in the schools' operations, disregard their responsibilities, show no respect for the rule of law, and even ignore court orders against them. Prinsloo (2006:356) emphasises that *"the cases include parents' right to determine the language policy of public schools; a governing body's legal duty to ensure a disciplined and purposeful school environment; the right of parents to make recommendations regarding the appointment of educators or non-educator staff and the parents' right in the financial management of a public school"*.

Woolman (2013:74) believes that the reasons behind state interference through unjustifiable practices of (re)centralisation is because of the state's failed efforts to offer the rudiments of a functional education system. Woolman (2013:75) further elaborates that these legislative and regulatory actions to (re)centralise are merely hand-waving efforts to divert attention from the huge shortcomings. There appears to be uncertainty (especially on the part of the DBE) about who has the last say

about public school governance and management (Van der Merwe, 2013:75). Furthermore, this conduct by departmental officials and politicians is undermining SASA that stipulates that the department's management function is restricted to the professional management of the school through the principal as the employee (Van der Merwe, 2013:242). These are the reasons why, after 1996, schools were compelled to approach the courts in situations where the powers that be in education and their officials took unlawful actions against schools, or where officials were reluctant to carry out their responsibilities towards schools.

This begs the following questions: Is the interference in local school governance and management in the best interest of the child? Is it driven by political or ideological issues to hide the inability of the government to provide a functional education system? The *Overvaal*, *Rivonia* and *Hoopstad* court cases are excellent examples where the best interest of the child is used as a façade to drive political ideologies.

- ***Governing Body, Hoërskool (High School) Overvaal and Another case²***

In January 2018, Hoërskool Overvaal (a school using Afrikaans as the language of teaching and learning), requested the intervention of the court to prevent the DBE from enforcing the enrolment of 55 learners who wanted English as the language of teaching and learning to the school. The court ruled in the school's favour (Conradie, 2019). The Constitutional Court emphasised that the MEC had not given adequate thought to determine if there was sufficient capacity or not at either General Smuts High School and Phoenix High School, which both offer instruction in English and the fact that these schools are clustered together with Hoërskool Overvaal in the particular school feeder zone (Conradie, 2019). In doing so, the HOD exceeded the powers allocated to him, and his decision was not in line with the constitutional principle of legality and thus illegal. The respondents' instruction to the school was unlawful and set aside (Conradie, 2019).

² *Governing Body, Hoërskool Overvaal and Another v HOD of Education Gauteng Province and Others* (86367/2017) [2018] ZAGPPHC 1

- ***Rivonia Primary School and Others case***³

In the Rivonia case, the Constitutional Court upheld, to a certain extent, an appealing counter to a ruling of the Supreme Court of Appeal, that the HOD, Gauteng Province had the authority to instruct the school to admit a learner to the school irrespective of the fact that the school is operating beyond the capacity of learners specified in the Rivonia Primary School's (the school) admission policy. The court stated, on the other hand, that the HOD had failed to carry out that power in a procedurally reasonable manner.

It is important to take note of Jonathan Jansen's (2012) article entitled "*Seven dangerous shifts in the public education crisis*" in respect of the Rivonia judgment. Jansen (2012) underlines that another noteworthy shift in the education sector has been the increasing tendencies towards the centralisation of authority. Initially, there was a strong opinion that communities must be more involved at the grassroots level, but that notion has changed and there is now a tendency to vest that authority in the centre. Jansen (2012) indicates that the impetus for centralisation could be seen as a natural reaction to the education calamities in the provinces over which the national government has minor legal control. But the centralisation of power always carries the possibility that people in authority will abuse it, and this is clear in recent cases. Jansen (2012) mentions that when the Gauteng Department of Basic Education forced Rivonia Primary School to take an extra child, it superseded the authority of the SGB to regulate admissions policy. A school that raises private resources to provide high-quality education for manageable numbers of learners from various racial and class backgrounds, found itself being exposed to legal action and its principal under peril of dismissal over one child (Jansen, 2012). "*The issues of diversity and inclusion are not at stake here - this must be managed in a different manner. What is at stake is the erosion of the authority of a school to have a voice in its own admissions*" (Jansen, 2012).

³ *MEC for Education in Gauteng Province and Others v Governing Body of Rivonia Primary School and Others* Case CCT 135/12

- ***Hoërskool (High School) Hoopstad en 'n Ander case***⁴

In the *Hoërskool Hoopstad* case, a district director instructed the school principal to pay no heed to the school's admission, language and hostel policies and allow a learner access to the school contrary to those policies. The issue was resolved and court instructions interdicting interference by the HOD and district director were acquired by consent (Serfontein, 2010:100).

2.8.1 Departmental interference – Educator appointments

In terms of section 20(1)(i) of SASA (RSA, 1996a) the SGB must make a recommendation to the HOD to appointment educators at school. Section 6 of the EEA (RSA, 1998) stipulates that the SGB must present the HOD with three suitable candidates in order of preference or fewer than three candidates after consultation with the HOD. According to these stipulations, it is important to take note of section 19 of SASA (RSA, 1996a) that states that the principal must capacitate and assist the SGB, and section 16(3) mentions that the professional management of the school is vested in the principal. The assumption that can be made from this is that the principal could guide and inform the SGB regarding the academic needs of the school and the type of educator qualities they must look for in the process of appointing an educator. The appointment of educators is therefore an important governance issue that will affect the management of the school. This is the reason why Davis (2001:64) emphasises that *“possibly the most challenging area of school governance is the right of a school to make recommendations concerning the appointment of educators [guided by the principal - my insertion] to the funded establishment of the school”*. There have been cases where provincial education departments showed a total disregard of these provisions and other relevant sections of relevant legislation (Davis, 2001:64).

The Point High School and Settlers Agricultural High School cases in respect of the appointment of educators and the judgment reached by the courts are two examples that demonstrated the education department's disregard of the principle of legality and the demarcation of functions very clearly and unambiguously. In the end, if there is interference and curtailment of the governance functions relating to the

⁴ *Hoërskool Hoopstad en 'n Ander v Departementshoof: Departement van Onderwys, Provinsie Vrystaat* (1608) [2009] ZAFB

appointment of educators, it will also impact the principal's management functions because the principal must manage the curriculum of the school. The wrong appointment will be detrimental to the successful implementation of the school's curriculum.

- ***The Point High School and Others case*⁵**

In the judgment handed down in *The Point High School* case the court did not agree that subsection 6(3)(f) of the Employment of Educators Act number 76 of 1998 gives unlimited power to HODs to discard or accept SGB recommendations at will. In this case, the Point High School in the Western Cape Province of South Africa and its SGB challenged an instruction by the Western Cape Department of Basic Education not to acknowledge the recommendations the SGB made for the position of principal and deputy principal respectively. The SGB was of the view that the preferred candidates were the best and that the procedures in the Educators Employment Act and other legislation were followed in all the aspects to make an appointment on merit. The court studied and dismissed the decision of the HOD to appoint candidates of his choice. The ruling by the court highlights the fact that the education departments may not capriciously substitute candidates of their choice for the candidates recommended by the governing body. The HOD only has a restricted discretion and must appoint or rubber-stamp the first choice of the school governors unless sound legal reasons are enabling him/her to veto the SGB's recommendation.

- ***Settlers Agricultural High School case*⁶**

According to Smit and Oosthuizen (2011:65), the case of Settlers Agricultural High is an example of an approach where bureaucratic department officials pay no attention to the democratic and legal authority of the SGB. This issue concerned the appointment of a principal. The SGB had acted lawfully and recommended that Mr V, a white Afrikaans applicant, must take up the position of principal. Nevertheless, the Education Department appointed the second candidate on the shortlist, Mrs M.,

⁵ *The Point High School and Others v the HOD of the Western Cape Department of Education* [2007] SCA 14188/06 (RSA)

⁶ *Settlers Agricultural High School and the Governing Body Settlers Agricultural High School v. The HOD: Department of Education, Limpopo Province*. Case No. 16395/02 (T)

because the departmental employment equity plan preferred a black female applicant as an affirmative action appointment (Smit & Oosthuizen, 2011:65). The department stated that it could not be assumed to merely authorise and rubber stamp a recommendation of the SGB, but that it was obliged to follow the employment equity of the DBE. The court discarded the reasons of the department and upheld the commendations and arguments of the SGB (Smit & Oosthuizen, 2011:65). The HOD then sought the assistance of the Constitutional Court for leave to appeal. The Constitutional Court rejected the submission for condonation. The Constitutional Court mentioned one further issue that needed consideration. It related to the matter of costs granted in the High Court. The SGB stated in their affidavit that despite numerous requests, three costs orders of the High Court had also been disregarded by the HOD (Prinsloo, 2006:364). The Constitutional Court concluded that if the HOD had undeniably disregarded the order for costs instituted against him in the former proceedings, this demonstrates an inappropriate lack of respect for court orders. Prinsloo (2006:364) pointed out that *“the judges remarked that if a structure of government does not agree with a decision by a court, it has legal avenues for a revision, but the negation to pay court orders for costs is not among them”*. Prinsloo (2006:364) further elaborated that *“the Constitution is clear-cut in the sense that a court order binds all persons to whom and organs of State to which it applies. If governments do not comply with the conditions of court judgments, they cannot demand that citizens do so. There is no other issue that could be more belittling to the poise and competence of courts than to have state organs disregard their orders.*

2.8.2 Department interference – School discipline

Bray (2005) points out that, *“in terms of SASA (RSA, 1996a) governing bodies of public schools must develop and approve a code of conduct for learners which must be aligned with the Constitution of 1996 (RSA, 1996c), SASA (RSA, 1996a, and provincial legislation”*. Schools must have the autonomy to draft their own code of conduct. SASA (RSA, 1996a) states in section 18A(2) that the SGB must develop a code of conduct to bring about a disciplined and focussed school environment and in section 16(A)(2)(d) it stipulates that the principal must assist the SGB in handling disciplinary matters about learners. In respect of the drafting of the school code of conduct, Van Wyk and Pelsler (2014:837) underline the fact that the school principal

is, in practice, still seen as the *primus inter pares* (first among equals) and for that reason must play an active and important role as a leader in the school management team (SMT) and in the SGB.

It is through the principals' initiatives in these committees that discipline policies are implemented. The conclusion can be made that when the SGB's governance powers are infringed upon and even curtailed regarding school discipline, it will have a profound effect on the principal's management of discipline in the school. *The Tafelberg School* and *Maritzburg College* cases are examples of departmental interference in school discipline matters (Botha et al., 2014:300).

- **Governing Body, Tafelberg School case⁷**

Botha, Roos, Rossouw and Smit (2014:292) denoted that in the *Tafelberg School* case the HOD's actions were not in line with the ideologies of natural justice. In this case, the SGB suspended a learner after he confessed to having stolen a computer hard drive. The SGB proposed to the HOD that the learner must be expelled. However, before a decision was taken, the father of the learner handed a letter over to the HOD that prompted him to readmit the learner as an interim measure. The SGB filed suit against the HOD because it had not been allowed an equal chance to respond to the assertions and arguments in the father's letter. The Court maintained that the HOD did not employ the principles of natural justice and that the governing body's rights to administrative justice had been violated (Botha et al., 2014:292).

- **The Maritzburg College case⁸**

Prinsloo (2006:361) points out that "*the Maritzburg College case is an example of the arrogant conduct of a departmental official that disregarded the obligations assigned to the SGB to uphold discipline and respectable values at the school*". In this case, the SGB conducted a proper and unbiased hearing and decided to recommend the "expulsion of two ill-disciplined" learners to the Head of the Department of Education, KwaZulu-Natal. Despite numerous writings, phone calls from the SGB and a meeting with the HOD, the HOD neglected to correspond a pronouncement on the expulsion of the learners for 21 months. In the end, out of

⁷ *Governing Body, Tafelberg School v Head of the Eastern Cape 2000* (1) SA 1209 (C)

⁸ *The Maritzburg College v HOD and others* [2004] Case no. 2089 (SA)

absolute despair, the SGB sought the assistance of the High Court for a declarative order. The Court communicated its disapproval of the unresponsive and poor standard of education administration as well as the bureaucratic attitude of the HOD (Prinsloo, 2006:361).

2.8.3 Departmental interference – Language of instruction

Another example of meddling in school's management and governance is the inability of the department and, in some instances, politicians to advocate language multiplicity and mother-tongue instruction. According to Smit and Oosthuizen (2011:61), the language rights of African learners, as well as Afrikaans single medium schools, do not have the required attention from the DBE. The quantitative study of Smit and Oosthuizen's (2011:15) revealed that the Afrikaans sub-groups (81.5%) held robust beliefs against the centralisation of school language policy, while the greater part of the Setswana group was in support of the centralisation of language policies by the provincial education department. Despite the finding that 85.38% of the respondents agreed that home language education is in the best interest of the learners, the Setswana language group was clearly against the tolerance and accommodation of Afrikaans single medium schools (Smit & Oosthuizen, 2011:65).

Examples of court cases regarding the centralisation of language policy at schools are as follows:

- ***Mikro Primary School case***⁹

In the *Mikro Primary School* case, the DBE enforced, through threats of disciplinary action, the inclusion of English as an instruction language in an Afrikaans medium school. In essence, this altered the school's language policy without any regard for the democratic rights of the school's governance and management structures (Botha et al., 2014:287). The court found that the actions of the Department of Education were unlawful. The guidelines of the minister's language policy were not adhered to (Botha et al., 2014:289). In this regard, the court mentioned the value of legality, which means that the State must obey the law. Prinsloo (2006:360) pointed out that "the judge commented that it is hard to picture how it could ever be in the

⁹ *Governing Body of Mikro Primary School and Another v Western Cape Minister of Education & Others* [2005] JOL 13716 (C)

best interest of children, in the long term, to live in a country where the State and its organs and functionaries have been raised to a position where they can deem themselves as being above the law.” Judge Thring quoted in Prinsloo (2006:30) was of the opinion that “the fact that the school principal, in terms of section 16(3) of the Schools Act, must undertake the professional management of his school under the authority of the HOD does not, to my mind, render the principal compliant to the Department in everything he does. He does not, thereby, become the HOD’s instrument.” It is clear from this case that the DBE (the employer) is not permitted to delegate to an employee (principal) and hold him/her liable for statutory functions vested in governing bodies (Prinsloo, 2006:360).

Although it is a function of the SGB of a public school to determine the language policy of a public school, departmental officials attempted to intimidate the principal into starting an English medium class at the school (Prinsloo, 2006:360). The Western Cape Department of Basic Education subsequently appealed to the Supreme Court of Appeal of South Africa 140/05 (SCA). On 27 June 2005, the court made a judgement that the MEC and the HOD had no right to meddle with the statutory duties of a SGB to make pronouncements pertaining to the language policy of a public school (Prinsloo, 2006:360).

- ***Hoërskool (High School) Ermelo case***¹⁰

Smit and Prinsloo (2011:68) mention that the case of *HOD, Mpumalanga Education Department v. Hoërskool Ermelo*, involved a performing SGB whose language and admissions policies contradicted the central and provincial government’s policies. The Mpumalanga Department of Basic Education curtailed the SGBs function in terms of section 25 of the Schools Act to compel an alteration in the language policy of the school. Such unconstitutional implementation of terms concerning the tasks of SGBs by the department is not aligned with the democratic values subsidiarity and participatory democracy. Carpenter (1999:46) emphasised that “*the principle of subsidiarity necessitates that the liability and functions of lower tiers or levels in a system or organisation must not be illegally captured or misappropriated by higher*

¹⁰ *HOD: Mpumalanga Department of Education and Another v Hoërskool Ermelo and Another* (CCT40/09) [2009] ZACC 32; 2010 (2) SA 415 (CC); 2010 (3) BCLR 177 (CC) (14 October 2009)

levels of power". The Department has a duty to perform a subsidiary role to provide support and may only take control of SGB roles if the latter is dysfunctional (Carpenter, 1999:46).

- ***Laerskool Middelburg (Primary) case*¹¹**

In the *Laerskool Middelburg* case, the court concluded that an instruction by the department to foist the addition of English as a language of instruction in an Afrikaans school was an indecorous governance action. The administrative actions were indecorous because the minister's language policy decrees of guaranteeing that available schools to foremost reach their operational learner numbers before considering single medium schools to convert to dual-medium schools were not adhered to (Peens, 2009:81).

2.8.4 Departmental interference – School funding

Du Plessis (2019:54) points out that the competent utilisation of financial resources is reliant on how decentralisation is applied to extend its financial capital to focus on past discriminations. Du Plessis refers to the 2006 amended National Norms and Standards for School Funding. Du Plessis (2019:54) indicates that school fees offer two advantages for the schooling system. Firstly, they offer a means for augmenting income from parents who have the financial means to make these payments, which fosters fiscal space for the State to put into operation special financial support for underprivileged schools. Secondly, school fees promote parent participation in school governance (Du Plessis, 2019:54).

In South Africa, the Government is obligated to subsidise public schools from public revenue on an equitable base as specified in section 34 of SASA. In reference to school funding, section 36(1) of SASA stipulates that SGBs must assist schools to make use of all economical actions to effectively utilise the resources offered by the Government (Du Plessis, 2019:55). Du Plessis (2019:55) mentions that "this is because the National Norms and Standards for School Funding pronounced that 60% of public schools are economically disadvantaged and for that reason, they are referred to as non-fee-paying schools." These schools acquire all their subsidy from

¹¹ *Laerskool Middelburg en 'n Ander v Departementshoof, Mpumalanga Departement van Onderwys, en Andere*, 2003 (4) SA 160 (T)

the Government – this is almost six times the subsidy the fee-paying schools receive (Du Plessis, 2019:55).

The more affluent schools can make an application in terms of section 21 of SASA (RSA, 1996a) to the HOD to be assigned extra functions. These extra functions allow the SGB to do the required upkeep of school structures and grounds, to organise the extra-curricular programme of the school, procure learning support material and compensate service providers (Du Plessis, 2029:55). But all these extra functions have unavoidable financial effects for the school and can be directly associated with the decentralised autonomy to collect school fees. Du Plessis, (2019:55) emphasises that *“fee-paying schools assume a vital role in both supplementing the insufficient supply of resources the State allocates to them in order for the State to focus state funds on the underprivileged schools”*. Du Plessis (2019:55) states that this is an example of *“censored centralism”* because, even though these schools obtain most of their funds from entities outside of the Government, fee-paying schools are still constrained to similar liability processes as non-fee-paying schools. The evidence of this concealed centralism can be found in the draft BELA Bill (RSA, 2017a) which attempts to place an additional burden on SGBs to present the HOD with quarterly reports on all revenue and expenses in line with instructions issued by the HOD. The BELA Bill further recommends that the Member of the Executive Council for Education in a province must sanction all lease agreements SGBs wish to enter into (Du Plessis, 2019:55).

2.8.5 Conclusion

A public hierarchy that’s operating effectively is more desirable than a poorly performing one.

Levy, Cameron, Hoadley & Naidoo (2018:6) denoted that:

The provision of minimal public funds within the system, the allocation of workers to the areas where they are deemed necessary, skills improvement of the teachers and other employees who work within the system, overseeing and managing the outcomes achieved by staff, the construction and management of infrastructure, and the supply of furniture, textbooks, and other teaching materials are normally bureaucratic tasks.

Schools will operate more effective when these tasks are implemented ably than when they are rushed into and inappropriately executed. What influences whether

a bureaucracy is functioning satisfactorily or poorly? If a bureaucracy is performing competently, will the outcome be the achievement of greater governance freedom at grassroot level and, ultimately, complement the general efficiency of the system? On the other hand, if the bureaucracy is operating poorly, could grassroot governance to some extent maintain some acceptable operating orientation? The answers to each of these questions depend on the setting (Levy et al., 2018:6).

The World Bank's (2004:31) World Development Report considered the link between politics and bureaucracy as an extended course of accountability - a hierarchical link connecting people (as principals) to policy drafters, and policy drafters (as principals) to the bureaucracy. The lengthy road of accountability is multifaceted. For the system to function proficiently, all the links in the chain must be robust; such hardiness can be achieved only in very exceptional political conditions. The link between politics and bureaucracy can obstruct the efficient lengthy route of liability in three ways.

Firstly, the South African government has allocated a significant number of resources to the DBE after 1994. In effect, the new government's political dogmas have established the objectives that bureaucrats should keep to. But for some high-level profile government officials and politicians, their multiple contesting private well-being obscure their ability to offer transparency of purpose to public officials lower down in the systems and in several instances also corrupted these officials to only look after their own interests (Levy et al., 2018:7). Secondly, political principals are allocated the task of overseeing bureaucracies and holding them answerable for their performance outputs. In this regard, there is a noticeable disparity throughout setting the degree to which they take on this responsibility. The lack of liability of these political principals have led to unsuccessful decentralisation practices that paved the road for corrupt leadership. The outcomes are corruption in public procurement processes, the selling of vacant educator positions, violent behaviour in schools, feeble institutional functionality, a lack of teachers in the system and unsatisfactory school infrastructure to mention a few (Levy et al., 2018:7).

Thirdly, an aspect of specific importance to the education sector, is the way political leaders increase and retain political backing in reference to the type of measures needed to enhance educational outcomes (Levy et al., 2018:7). The unions in South

Africa play an important role in determining who controls the country. The South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU) is one of the largest teachers' unions in South Africa and is an important affiliate of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). After winning the 1994 elections, the African National Congress government had to compensate the South African Democratic Teachers Union members with high-level positions in government for their support. Consequently, cadre appointments became more prevalent and the education system dysfunctional because appointments are not on merit (Levy et al., 2018:7).

Regrettably, the culmination of these factors has left the government with no other measures but to utilise centralised tendencies in education to take back control of failed decentralised governance practices. The BELA Bill is an example of this centralised tendencies the DBE is starting to implement. This is the Education Department's ninth proposed amendment to SASA (RSA, 1996a). If the current SASA is compared to the original Act of 1996, it becomes clear that with every amendment of the Act the local school governance and management structures were left with less autonomy to govern and manage their affairs.

This retraction of powers back to the DBE (central apex) will have a profound impact on the local school governance and management of a school. Section 16(1) of SASA (RSA, 1996a) stipulates that the governance of a school is situated in the governing body of the school and section 16(3) the professional management of the school is situated in the principal. The principal's position becomes more complex in section 16A(1)(a). This section stipulates that the principal represents the HOD in the SGB and section 16A(3) further requires the principal to assist the SGB in the performance of their functions. The principal is in a juxtaposed position. As the representative of the HOD, the principal must implement the legislation and policy of the employer. At the same time, the principal is a member of the SGB, and the school governors expect the principal to implement the policies of the SGB. Bhengu (2018:4) indicates that:

The concept of policy as an authority regulation views policy as a direct, clear-cut process with translucent set outcomes. The government expects these outcomes to be achieved not considering local factors and workings. The prescriptive dimension of policy seems to overlook the fact that local conditions where policies are applied

have their particular difficulties and challenges that have to be considered if positive implementation must take place.

Bhengu (2018:4) contends that a practical logical analysis of policy clarifications must include those who exercise power. That is the reason why leaders can have control over policy implementation. This tactic concentrates on what Levinson et al. (2009) call the “*modalities of domination within the policy-practice landscape*”. Bhengu (2018:4) underlines that such an understanding has its restrictions, for example, even if authority groups such as policymakers may determine the content of a policy text, they may not effectively regulate what appears at grassroot level because they are not on the inside of the restricted demarcations where policy is put into practice. In the school environment where policy is put into practice, there are interconnecting human and non-human aspects that form policy practice (Bhengu, 2018:4). Policymakers cannot control these factors, at least not in any direct manner.

In addition, in the school environment there is an unequal dissemination of power between principals, heads of department, and educators. Here, principals are inclined to exercise more control compared to the educators in the schools (Bhengu, 2018:4). This is more likely to happen because closely linked with the principal's responsibility is the approval or disapproval of the teachers' behaviours and the day-to-day operations in the school. Bestowed with such power and the considerable loyalty they command from teachers, principals can control, change and direct or ignore policies from the DBE (Bhengu, 2018:4). These circumstances touch on intricacies regarding power (perceived or real) that policymakers believe they have while discounting the fact that principals as local protagonists are also endowed with authority that they can use to favour their interests and/or that of the local communities.

This is the reason why so many incidents of litigation between schools and the DBE occurred after 1996. In the end, the principal is the role player that will be the most affected if the SGBs governance functions are curtailed, because this will also influence the principal's management functions. The conclusion can be made that the hole representing the principal's autonomy in Dworkin's (1978) discretionary theory, if related to the principal's context puts the principal in the middle of authoritative structures. The DBE is the employer of the principal and the SGB the

governance structure of the school. Both these authoritative structures expect compliance from the principal and in essence determine the amount of autonomy the principal has. *The Grey College Bloemfontein* case is the beginning of a trend where SGBs is beginning to be more inclined to act beyond their governance duties and begin to interfere in the principal's professional duties.

In the next chapter, I will discuss international trends in education management and governance with a specific focus on the principal's position in this regard.

CHAPTER 3

THE PRINCIPAL AS MANAGER AND GOVERNOR *VIS-Á-VIS* INTERFERENCE IN THE PRINCIPAL'S MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE AUTONOMY: AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In analysing school leadership (management/governance) in the new democratic era in South Africa, it is also important to be cognisant of the studies that were done in reference to school management, leadership and governance in Western countries such as the United Kingdom. The Western countries' school leadership strategies were used as the blueprints for leadership studies in South Africa, other African countries and countries not on the African continent e.g., Australia and New Zealand (Christie, 2010:694).

In this regard, Bush (2016) states that educational governance and accountability have been given precedence by politicians and practitioners by means of a government's promulgation of laws in numerous nations, e.g., "*the Education Act (1968) in Kenya, Education Act (2008) in Uganda, the No Child Left Behind Act (2001) in the United States of America, New Zealand's Tomorrow Schools (Minister of Education, 1988) and the SASA 84 of 1996 (SASA) (Republic of South Africa, 1996) in South Africa to name a few*".

Mulford (2006:1) cited that:

Nothing aborts an ambitious school improvement effort faster than a change in school leadership. Governments around the world are devoting unparalleled resources to the development of school leaders. Members of the business community, long enamoured by the romance of leadership, assume that the shortcomings of schools are coincident with their leadership.

This renewed motion for educational accountability led to policy changes leaning towards organisational decentralisation and self-management and the induction of market rudiments in educational governance (Wahitu, 2017:2).

3.1.1 Chapter roadmap

In this chapter, I touch upon the education systems of Kenya, Nigeria, New Zealand and Australia to get an international perspective on the principal's position regarding management and governance.

I will then discuss the management and governance challenges principals face in each of these school systems. This will provide information on whether the South African school principal's management and governance powers/functions are aligned with international best practices and if the system is moving to align itself with international best practices regarding management and governance.

3.1.2 African perspective – Education governance and management

Mackatiani, Imbovah, Imbova and Gakungai (2016:55) point out that *“to understand a national system of education, it is imperative to know that behind every system of education, there are elements that affect and form a specific education system. “These elements include geographical, historical, technological, political, economic, language, religious and socio-cultural factors. Some of these elements are more prevalent in one specific system than in others”*.

The political dogmas of a country have a strong influence on the education system of that country. In the end, the political element lay down the type of administration the system of education will implement. It also highlights the fundamental elements of the education system. It regulates the manner how the system will function (Mackatiani et.al., 2016:55).

South Africa's Bantu education system was an example of how a government's ideologies can influence the education system. This is the reason why colonisers established a centralised schooling system in the African countries they colonised to model the African cultures and societies on Western customs and dogmas (Malisa & Missedja, 2019:1). As a result, colonial education, in many ways, was an essential component of colonising the people's thoughts to take on Western views (Corby 1990:314).

3.2 AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE - KENYA

3.2.1 Context

Karari (2018:1) points out that Kenya became a member of the British East Africa Protectorate in 1895. From 1920, the British controlled Kenya as a colony until its independence in 1963. As in several other previous British colonies around the world, the callous approaches that were implemented to colonise the specific areas was its most salient feature (Karari, 2018:1).

The British colonisers and money-making economy in Kenya destabilised the natives' subsistence ways of sustaining themselves. This culminated in a countrywide anti-colonial rebellion between 1952 and 1960 (Elkins, 2005:32). The British powers in Kenya had to find different ways to legalise land control, because they had no justifiable rights to take control of the natives' land. The colonial powers, for that reason, passed a succession of crown land decrees to approve the deprivation of the natives' land (Mazrui, 2008:18). These laws led to the seizure of millions of acres of land that led to the exploitation of the natives by subjecting them to free manual labour for their consumer economy (Southall, 2005:22). The colonial authority also implemented the "*Pass or the Kipande*" system that stipulated that natives' must wear a metal disc around the neck that contained a paper with personal identification, work records and ordinances limiting movement (Anderson, 2005:25). In the end, the colonial government regulated everything including the education system. At Kenya's independence in 1963, the government was modelled on the Westminster system with a dual executive (Keriga & Bujra, 2009:2).

3.2.2 Kenya's centralised education system (missionary to colonial period)

In Kenya, the church missionaries were tasked to educate the African population. The schools educated pupils in the general fundamentals of reading, writing and maths. The defining point for the improvement of education in Kenya was in 1903 (Mackatiani et al., 2016:57). This was when Charles Elliot, the then Governor, urged several white colonisers to put down roots in the colony. The colonisers had a convincing opinion in the political matters of Kenya. They demanded better quality education for their children. As a result, the Fraser Commission of 1908 came into operation. The result was an education system founded on racial lines (Mackatiani et al., 2016:57). Missionaries controlled the schools with little to no support from the

Government (Mackatiani et al., 2016:57). The first British policies concerning education in East Africa and in other places in Africa were driven by discussions regarding the educability of African natives. The aim of the African education policy was to offer blue-collar labour for the white colonisers to enhance their farming productivity. Consequently, in 1924, the Phelps Stokes Commission for East, Central and South Africa was founded. Its order was to draft plans that will look after the educational needs of Africans (Mackatiani et.al., 2016:57). Thus, during the colonial period government confirmed its control through policy and law to regulate the education system (Mackatiani et.al., 2016:57).

3.2.3 Kenya's decentralised education system (independence)

In 1963, the country gained its independence from England, under a semi-federal constitution, which ended one year later (Barasa & Tsisiga, 2014:13). Immediately after independence, the Minister for Education founded the Kenya Education Commission. The commission had to review the educational resources of Kenya and guide the government in drafting national laws/regulations for education. In its report, the commission suggested that a united education system will be the most suitable approach (Mackatiani et al., 2016:57).

In 1966, District Development Committees (DDC) and District Development Advisory Committees (DDAC) were founded (Barasa, 2014:13). Although several powers and roles, such as primary education, health and roads were curtailed on the local authority level and centralised in government during the 1970s, succeeding governments have realised that local authorities are required for the development process (Barasa & Tsisiga, 2014:13).

In 2003 plans were set into motion in reference to the decentralisation of education. In this regard Barasa and Tsisiga (2014:13) mentions that "*commendations were made to decentralise school registering services, administration, finance, accounting services and teacher management*". Regarding decentralisation, Barasa and Tsisiga (2014:13) point out that there is currently a combination of different decentralisation models in operation in Kenya. In the education sector, the tasks of the different levels of government are as follows:

- At the highest authority of governance is the Ministry of Education (MoE) that controls policy.
-

- At the provincial sphere, the Provincial Education Office supervises the daily operations of the districts on behalf of the national directorates (Barasa & Tsisiga, 2014:14).
- At the district sphere, the District Education Officer manages the harmonisation of educational affairs in the district and executes the policies that the Ministry of Education order them to put into operation. It is also responsible for the audit of funds collected at the school level (Barasa & Tsisiga, 2014:14).
- At the school level, the School Management Committees (SMC) for the primary sphere and the Boards of Governors (BOG) for the secondary sphere are accountable for the daily management of schools. The latter is to a degree in charge of teacher employment (Barasa & Tsisiga, 2014:14). Kiprono, Nganga and Kanyiri (2015:244) point out that the School Management Committee and the Board of Governors are the main institutions of governance for public schools in Kenya. The School Management Committee and Board of Governors oversee managing funds, resolving disputes in the school, making commendations to the District Education Officer, overseeing tendering interviews/approvals for supplies and receiving school supplies (Kiprono, Nganga and Kanyiri, 2015:244).

3.2.4 The principal as school manager in Kenya

Ombonga and Ongaga (2017:170) mention that in Kenya school principals are to a certain extent deemed to be managers. Although the principal has the authority to put into operation all decisions, decision-making is a participatory endeavour shared by a Board of Management (BOM) and a Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) (Ombonga & Ongaga, 2017:170).

According to Kenya's Ministry of Education (MOE), principals have the authority to make pronouncements about the utilisation of the school infrastructure and the budget (Ombonga & Ongaga, 2017:170). They are the accountable figure (protagonist) in charge of supervising and leading the standards of teaching as well as working with all role-players to back educational objectives (Ombonga & Ongaga, 2017:170).

The Teachers Service Commission (TSC), as a structure is responsible for the employment of educators in Kenya. Some of the responsibilities that this structure allocated to the principal are:

- As the accounting officer of the school, the principal must interpret and put into operation policy pronouncements concerning training, the overall regulation of activities in the institution in addition to upholding high teaching standards (Nandhwa, 2011:293).
- Principals are also required to be in control of the Total Quality Management (TQM) practices, which focuses on instructional leadership, uninterrupted development, co-operation and process-based problem-solving (Sangeeta & Banwe, 2004:11).
- The principal is the communication conduit between the parents and the school and significantly impacts and determines the mental attitude of the learners and parents towards the school. When a school yields adequate outcomes, the principal's leadership approach is generally considered as the key to the success (Mwangangi, 2018:16).

3.2.5 Leadership challenges of the Kenyan school principal

The principal faces among others the following challenges regarding the management and governance of the school:

- The principal's management functions are affected by aspects such as obstructive policies put into operation by the state, resource maladministration by officials, financial challenges and lack of role-player support (Mwangangi, 2018:16).
 - The principal's management duties are directly affected by a lack of commitment in terms of timing and the impulsiveness of policy implementation by departmental officials causing policy implementation to fail between the lower, middle and top-level leadership structures in the system (Mwangangi, 2018:6).
 - Education bureaucrats overturn principals' vision for the school (Mwangangi, 2018:6).
 - The principal as the curriculum leader is unable to allocate duties efficiently due to delegated instructions received from the Teacher Service Committee and the District Education Officer (DEO) (Mwangangi, 2018:7).
-

- The inability by the high-level policymakers to offer appropriate information to principals to implement suitable education standards. This is due to education management tension between the District Education Officer (DEO) and District Staffing Officer (DSO) who is the current Teacher Service Commission (TSC) agent. In the end, this leads to curriculum leadership problems and under-performance (Mwangangi, 2018:7). This conflict is the result of the DEO and the DSO not respecting each other's operational boundaries.
- Stakeholders that are misinformed about their mandate and role in the newly devolved systems influence the principals' management negatively (Mwangangi, 2018:7).
- The central government is blamed for delegating duties to the local school community but withholding the real power of decision-making (Mwangangi, 2018:18).
- The duties of principals prior to the implementation of the decentralised policy were not made less to make way for new duties. With principals being at the centre [being the protagonist – my insertion] of the implementation of the policy, this overload may adversely affect the education quality (Mwangangi, 2018:18).

3.3 NIGERIA

3.3.1 Context

Like other African nations, Nigeria was also colonised by the British in the 19th century (Yusuf, 2017:66). The British administrative methodologies were systematically entrenched into the governance of the Nigerian state. In the end, the aim was to transform the local approach of governance issues – politically, socially and economically. According to Yusuf (2017:66) *“it is in this way that political control of society, through colonisation, infused government, trade and religion and changed the social life of the people of Nigeria”*.

Even though Nigeria is one of the first countries to gain independence in West Africa, the country had a peculiar history of democratic governance. Unpredictable and sudden changes in the government leadership have resulted in the failure of a good educational policy. Nigeria had thirteen presidents from the time of independence in

1960. Eight of those thirteen presidents rose to the top position in government because of military rule (Onyemelukwe-Waziri, 2017:21).

On 15 January 1966, the government voted into office at independence was short-lived because of a military revolt initiated by army officers (Yusuf, 2017:8). In March 1967, the eastern regional government launched a sensitisation campaign and started visiting schools in Igbo communities using propaganda to encourage Biafran withdrawal (the Biafran War was a civil war in Nigeria between the government of Nigeria and the secessionist state of Biafra). Children were taught to advocate Biafran sovereignty and were subjected to brutal and gruesome images about the persecutions where government soldiers executed half a million Biafrans to incite rage, apprehension, and terror among the opposition parties. As a result, Igbo teachers from the south-east joined the Biafran Army and several schools were not functioning as teachers and students engaged in the war (Onyemelukwe-Waziri, 2017:6). Due to the excessive expenditures of the war on weapons and other military expenses, the Nigerian state had to lessen the education budget of the education sector (Onyemelukwe-Waziri, 2017:6). Consequently, the unsteady political circumstances in the country had an extremely detrimental effect on the education system of the country.

3.3.2 Nigeria's centralised school system

Ibukun and Aboluwodi (2010:9) indicate that the colonial education system inherited by Nigeria was rejected as being too theoretical to make an insightful impact on the life of Nigerians. It was a system imposed through centralised procedures to teach subjects in schools that mirrored the preferences of the colonial education officials and school curricula were developed to promote colonial values (Ibukun and Aboluwodi, 2010:9). Students were expected to simulate their teachers in subjects like English (Ibukun and Aboluwodi, 2010:9).

Nigeria's independence in the 1960s ushered in an opportunity for the remodelling of Nigerian society through the development of locally sensitive national policies and locally managed development programs. This included the education sector as well, putting the sector in a favourable position to take over segments of the well-being of nations (Ibukun and Aboluwodi, 2010:9).

During the period of uniting the education sector, Nigeria's government changed from a republic to the first era of military rule (1966-1979) (Peters & Nkemakolam, 2019:190). "The Federal Military Government of Nigeria ordained Decree No. 14 of 1967 and established twelve states out of the existing four regions (West, Mid-West, North and East)" (Peters & Nkemakolam, 2019:190). Each state revised its education law when required (Peters & Nkemakolam, 2019:190)". Subsequent decrees had mutual characteristics, such as state control over schools from individuals and voluntary organisations (Peters & Nkemakolam, 2019:190). According to Ngene, Quadri and Bamigboye (2018:544) "*the local government, the third tier in educational management, administration and finance, has been politically and financially weakened by many state governments which gave rise to the centralisation of education management and control*".

3.3.3 Nigeria's decentralised school system

In 1988 a law was promulgated that supported the decentralisation of educational management functions to state, local, district and village education boards and committees (Ikoya, 2005:1). Ikoya (2005:1) emphasises that it is imperative to keep in mind that during the past few eras, the management of education restructuring in Nigeria has been shifting between different phases of centralisation, decentralisation and recentralisation. Ultimately, through several restructurings, the Nigerian educational sector today is deemed by many scholars (Bray, 2003; Babalola and Adedeji, 2003) as one of the best decentralised sectors in the African sub-region (Ikoya, 2005:1).

In this regard, Diarra (2003:15) mentions that

In the Nigerian education system, the administrative works of the education system is decentralised to structures lower down in government. The management of schools is the responsibility of School District Boards (SDB). The co-ordination, planning, financing and direction of the total educational output within the state is in the hands of the State Ministry, Department or Directorate of Education.

The incorporation of educational advancement and policy with national goals and programmes is the responsibility of the Federal Ministry, Department or Directorate of Education (Moja, 2000:4).

Abbass (2012:10) asserts that the decentralised school system also focuses on the value of community participation in education and the advancement of democratic practice in Nigeria to establish robust local community education relationships through the parent-teacher associations (PTAs), school management boards and school community committees.

The Parent-Teacher Associations (PTA) are described as very organised and maintain a leadership role duly elected at a forum or meeting. A vibrant PTA, therefore, could be a purposeful tool in the efficient management of local school matters (Okendu, 2012:202). According to Ekundayo and Alonge (2012:16), the PTA functions as a medium for the exchange of thoughts between teachers and parents about school programmes to enhance the smooth functioning of the school and the realisation of the aims of the school. It is an official connection of communication regarding school affairs between the teachers and parents (Ekundayo and Alonge, 2012:16). The PTA supports the school head in analysing government prerequisites for schools (Okendu, 2012:202). Okendu (2012:202) mentions that the school board must effectively manage the schools. Some of its traditional roles include the employment of staff and personnel, promotion of staff, placement and relocation of staff, developing conditions of service for staff, payment of salaries, allowance and sundry entitlements, supervision of school development, staff training and development and budgeting. School boards must conduct routine inspections or supervision of schools to improve the efficient development of systems. This supports the board's ability to detect urgent problems or log jams at the schools under their auspices.

The school head is the communication channel between the school and the school board (Okendu, 2012:202). The professional management of school activities in the past was traditionally allocated to only the principal, who had to plan for the entire school (Nwangwa and Omotere, 2013:161). To readapt school management along democratic principles, several workshops were organised by the All-Nigeria Confederation of Principals of Secondary Schools (ANCOPPS) with a clear opinion that the management of schools should not hinge on one person but should be a collective undertaking of the school management team (Nwangwa & Omotere, 2013:161). The school management team, therefore, represents the school's management that must keep an eye on putting into operation the education

laws/regulation of the country in their schools. The transformed education sector in Nigeria necessitated principals of schools to set up the school management team that will assist in the management of the schools. The school management team is, therefore, a body made up of many parts to offer effective education according to the educational desires of a specific target group (Nwangwa and Omotere, 2013:162).

3.3.4 The principal (also known as the head teacher) as school manager in Nigeria

Today, the principal has the support of the school management team (Deputy Principals and Heads of Departments) regarding:

- regulating teaching outcomes in the school to meet national goals (Nwangwa & Omotere, 2013:160);
- providing training to staff on information and communications technology (ICT) (Nwangwa & Omotere, 2013:160);
- putting into operation functional management with an under-funded budget on the instructions of robust political leaders who typically base their policies on free education (Nwangwa & Omotere, 2013:160);
- the protection of documentation of specific issues such as educator absenteeism, attention to detail in the planning and provision of lessons and the upkeep of class documentation, logs for visitors and cases of discipline, test results, management of school meals where they exist, school rules and records of important events (UNESCO, 2005:17); and
- drawing up a meticulous budget for the school (Okendu, 2012:202).

3.3.5 Leadership challenges of the Nigerian school principals (head teachers)

Osuji (2011:2) indicates that in Nigeria politics cannot be detached from school management. Osuji (2011:26) points out that *“Politics in Nigeria influences how education procedures such as decision-making, implementation of policy, management, governance and approach by which resources are distributed to diverse ethnic groups to attain their goals are controlled”*.

State meddling in grassroot affairs, bureaucratic government structures, boards of education and the teachers' organisations are well-known to hang on vehemently to

power and the school principal is in many of the cases the role player (protagonist) that is mostly affected by these tensions (Osuji, 2011:26). For example, the issue of government intrusion in education where it has no recourse for the rule of law in the Nigerian educational system has been going on for some time (Olujuwon, 2013:414). Olujuwon (2013:414) cited that *“it is a question of he who plays the pipe dictates the tune”*. Olujuwon (2013:414) further mentions that political interference in education is rife. There are circumstances when a principal/headteacher discipline a learner and the parent, who is an influential figure in government or a politician, gives an order reprimanding the principal or teacher not to discipline the child again. Olujuwon (2013:414) points out that it is not uncommon to hear about incidents where politicians abused their positions to curtail head teachers’ functions. In some cases, headteachers were replaced by military men. The government’s power is also evident during promotion, shortlisting and other issues in school administration (Olujuwon, 2013:414).

3.4 NEW ZEALAND

3.4.1 Context

On 6 February 1840 representatives of the British Crown and more than 500 Māori tribal leaders signed the Treaty of Waitangi to formally bring about a colonial relationship (Gilgen, 2018:12). The agreement provided for an area for systemic settlement from Britain (Gilgen, 2018:12).

The colonisation of New Zealand had a deep impact on several sectors and in particular the education sector. The governance and management of schools moved between different degrees of centralised and decentralised governance approaches since the inception of a formal European approach to education (Calman, 2012).

3.4.2 New Zealand’s centralised school system

During the period from 1900 to 1920, laws were promulgated that gave the Department of Education more power over the administration of schools (Gilgen, 2018:30). Ward (2012:31) indicates that school committees did not carry out any significant administrative tasks and school boards became more economically dependent on the government for educational support. By 1987 the school system was highly centralised, and the local school community was left with little to no autonomy to govern and manage their matters (Ward, 2012:31). The Department of

Education regulated capital funds and made pronouncements on new capital works and school closings, as well as drafting national curriculum guidelines (Ward, 2012:32). The Department's other duties included teachers' development, recordkeeping and discipline, teacher recruitment, and counselling services (Ward, 2012:32). The ten regional education boards that were established in the late 1980s had progressively become directorial bodies executing policy for the Department of Education (Ward, 2012:32). They "*frequently referred matters to the central office in Wellington to ensure compliance with nationally set laws, policy and procedure*" (Gilgen, 2018:33).

3.4.3 New Zealand's decentralised school system

The New Zealand government realised that the education system had to be transformed and instituted a task team to probe education administration. This task team was led by Brian Picot (Ward, 2012:48). The Picot report concluded that the education system was overly centralised and that parents had little control or choice in a school system that was traditionally regulated by bureaucrats (Ward, 2012:48). The Picot report suggested that the control of schools must be decentralised by transferring control from the Ministry of Education to locally instituted Boards of Trustees (Ward, 2012:48). The decentralisation would be complemented by a reinforcement of the new national standards that would be supervised by the Education Ministry and a grouping of offices such as the Education Review Office (ERO), which would be in control of reviewing the progress of schools, and the Teacher Registration Board (TRB). The Teacher Registration Board would watch over teacher standards and the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) would evaluate school qualifications. In October 1989 the task team recommendations were recognised and were passed as "The Tomorrow's School" plan (Ward, 2012:48).

At school level the Board of Trustees relies on the principal, as highest authority in the school, to furnish them with the information they need to be wholly informed on affairs applicable to school management (Highfield, 2018:4). The Board of Trustees is required to hold the principal, as the school's highest authority, accountable for efficient performance (Highfield, 2018:4). Boards are legally accountable for guaranteeing that their schools' function within the framework of the government regulations. This includes the New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education,

2007b) and the National Administration Guidelines (Ministry of Education, 2017), preparing and upholding an annual plan and a long-term plan, and reporting annually to the community and the Ministry of Education in terms of the school's charter (Highfield, 2018:4). The Board of Trustees is responsible for the appointment of all staff members at the school, maintenance and management of the property, financial management of the school's finances and the drafting of rules/regulations that govern the school. The work of the Board of Trustees is audited on a yearly basis by the state's auditor (Highfield, 2018:4).

3.4.4 The principal as school manager in New Zealand

By 1990 there had been a significant transformation in almost all facets in respect of the role that the principal fulfils in the New Zealand school system (Caldwell, 1993:175). The principal is now operating in a decentralised school system (Caldwell, 1993:175). Wylie (1997:7) points out that during the 1990s the Principal's Implementation Task Force drafted a set of discussion documents to make available supplementary guidance concerning the roles/tasks of the school principal in the new decentralised dispensation. They identified seven aspects in respect of the role of the principal, namely:

- Manage according to the local legal necessities, the school policies and delegated authority (Wylie, 1997:7).
 - Manage the daily educational, personnel and administrative affairs and will report to the Board of Trustees regularly (Wylie, 1997:7).
 - Determine educational objectives in collective consultation with the staff. The principal must share these objectives with all groups and put into operation policies and programmes to support the school in realising these objectives. To function efficiently as the educational leader of the school, the principal must delegate enough of the day-to-day operational administrative tasks (Wylie, 1997:7).
 - Make commendations on the appointment of educators to the Board of Trustees (Wylie, 1997:7).
 - Implement a staff development programme (Wylie, 1997:8).
 - Observance of the charter framework's Code of Conduct (Wylie, 1997:8).
-

Wylie (1997:8) points out that in this new decentralised dispensation, there is an important shift in emphasis:

- the legal responsibilities take precedence;
- professional leadership guides the management of the day-to-day activities;
- instructional leadership is extended to educational leadership and is fixed on the harmonisation of objectives with activities instead of direct work with teachers;
- staff development is seen as a matter on its own;
- the fact that daily administration can divert the principal from his/her leadership responsibilities is patently stated and it is required that the principal must delegate some responsibilities to other staff members (Wylie, 1997:8);
- principals have parallel roles. They manage the daily functioning of the school and provide guidance concerning educators' personal professional growth in the school. They oversee activities that extend outside their normal management duties in the school to a leadership function in the school community. (Wylie, 1997:8).

3.4.5 Leadership challenges of the New Zealand school principal (head teacher)

Notman (2015:32) indicates that principals in the New Zealand school system face the following challenges in managing and governing the school:

- reductions in educator posts;
- operational expenditure, and curriculum inflexibility;
- quick educator turnover rate that could lead to low staff motivation;
- conflict among staff, staff and management, between staff and the Board of Trustees, and within the parent community;
- poor standards of teaching and learning;
- financial challenges or imbalances;
- community discontent within the self-governing school environment; and
- schools operating in low socio-economic communities (Notman, 2015:32).

Other reasons include inept appointments where principals and/or deputy principals had been appointed at a management level for which they do not have

sufficient experience and expertise (Notman, 2015:33). Community conflicts and power games that drive certain groups' political agendas (Notman, 2015:33). Furthermore, centralised educational policies were created around the notion of a dominant market forces model in school terms that advocates inter-school rivalry. Schools in low-income locations found themselves ever more deprived in the face of extra public association costs essential to contest for learner enrolments (Notman, 2015:33).

Higham and Earley (2013:15) remark that a general challenge for educational leaders is that they try to address the contending stresses of being a self-governing school while simultaneously being imperilled by government policies that apply total control over local accountabilities. As Fink (2010) argues: *"There is a contradiction between the requirement for leaders to be visionary, creative and entrepreneurial and the policy realities they live with which encourage leadership that is reactive, compliant and managerial"* (Cited in Higham & Earley, 2013:15).

3.5 AUSTRALIA

3.5.1 Context

Pettit (2015:24) denotes that the British were not the first Europeans whose presence impacted Australia, although they were by far the most dominant. Spanish, Portuguese, and Dutch ships had been crossing the Pacific since the fourteenth century.

Jalata (2013:6) mentions that soon after the arrival of the British colonisers, they started to quarrel with the indigenous people whom they believed to be subservient to the British. The English colonisers referred to the native people as aborigines. This name was ultimately introduced to establish a racial border between white Europeans and black Australians to degrade them later. The British settlers began to implement British law and through local militias ensured that the aborigines could not encroach upon their newly claimed land (Pettit, 2015:24). In this regard, Pocock (2008:21) states that the Aborigines Protection Law Amendment Act of 1886 was amended to hand over total control to the British settlers to regulate aboriginal employment, habitation and children.

The Aborigines Protection Law Amendment Act 1886 was the earliest law in Australia to provide a differential treatment for aboriginal natives. Regrettably, the

education of the aboriginal children was also not overlooked by their colonial tormentors. In this regard Bodkin-Andrews and Carlson (2016:784) mention that:

Education has often been cited as one of the prominent aspects in shaping the quality-of-life measures all over the greater part of Western countries and has become broadly recognised as an essential topic of intermediation in the battle against inequities suffered by people from traditionally underprivileged backgrounds". Unfortunately, several lifelong inequities can often be propagated in the very education systems that ought to act as one of the strongest tools to restore such imbalances.

Burridge and Chodkiewicz (2012:11) denote that the antiquity of aboriginal education policies after colonisation can be categorised into three noticeable periods, namely, the Mission Period, the Protection Era, and the Assimilation Period. In line with colonial beliefs of the day, the education of the aboriginal people during the inaugurating period associated with "*missionary apathy to Christianise and civilise, and to do away with the deposits of what was perceived as primitive cultures and to substitute them with a European custom*" (Partington, 1998).

This amounted to an array of regulations that saw, to begin with, the formation of mission schools. Then, after a short time of improved right of entry to government schools in the 1870s, the promulgation of obstructive regulations in the 1880s initiated a period that was called the "*Protection Era*", and from the late 1930s into what was described as the "*Assimilation Period*". Consequently, education offered to aboriginal people has primarily been manipulated to meet the needs of colonial society (Pocock, 2008:79).

3.5.2 Australia's transformation from a centralised to a decentralised school system

Historically Australia's education system was extremely centralised (Looyen, 2000:48). Looyen (2000:48) states that a noticeable characteristic of Australian education is the standardisation of design pertaining to constructions, furnishings, apparatus, approaches and mindsets of pupils and educators. This standardisation is the consequence of where conclusions are reached at high spheres in the education bureaucracy. The Cabinet is the most important structure in the decision-making process.

Decisions and policy design are rarely caucused by the public (Looyen, 2000:48). Looyen (2000:48) states that, even though there were transformations in government, the policies that regulate education stayed unchanged and the controlling party often rubber-stamped their own proclamations as public opinion.

However, three factors were diminishing the degree of centralisation. Firstly, independent schools were emerging quickly, and in 2005 registered 33% of students. While all independent schools received some public funding and had to meet registering stipulations, they had a substantial degree of operating autonomy (Anderson, Gronn, Ingvarson, Jackson, Kleinhenz, McKenzie, Mulford and Thornton, 2007:18).

Secondly, although certain government education departments still retained a substantial degree of central power over the daily functions of schools and staff appointments in the government school sector, there was a rising inclination for decentralising such administrative powers to principals and selected school councils or representative boards (Anderson et al., 2007:18).

Thirdly, the government, Catholic and independent sectors of schooling had opposing views in their governance, autonomy, and funding. Anderson et al. (2007:18) stated that *"...in some school districts, the parents and the local community were prone to be more involved in the governance and management of the school and the school could be seen as an extension of the community"*.

Australian schools are the unswerving duty of the Minister for Education in a specific state or district. Their independent colleagues operate in accordance with the stipulations established by the registering boards, which operate in each state or district. Curriculum decision-making is the duty of the chief executive of education departments, or in some states and districts, it is the Minister and Curriculum Councils (CC) or Boards of Study (BOS) (Anderson et al., 2007:28).

Inside the states and districts, there is an emergent proclivity to decentralise duties to school leaders and elected school councils or school boards (Anderson et al., 2007:28). School councils or representative boards have been created to afford grassroot participation rights at community level. The principal is in general an *ex officio* member of the council. In some states, councils were initially given authority to give guidance/support to the principal and educators, however, in more current

times they have been granted considerably wide-ranging authority. In Western Australia, for example, councils made up of parents, educators and non-educators must review the school's mission and vision, general policy directions, the school budget (Western Australian DET, 2004, pp 30-31).

In 2004, the Australian Government acknowledged "*the importance of more power to school principals over teacher appointments*" in the Schools Assistance (Learning Together – Achievement Through Choice and Opportunity) Act 2004 (Western Australian DET, 2004: 30 -31). The Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (herein after MCEETYA) approved these priorities in 2005. The Act consist of an oath by the Government to provide the principal, and the governing body, of each government school in the State more autonomy over, and responsibility for, education inventiveness, employment, finances, and other facets of the school's processes inside a supportive structure of wide-ranging general policies (Western Australian DET, 2004:30-31).

3.5.3 The principal as school manager in Australia

Since 2011, the Australian Professional Standard for Principals (the Standards) has propounded a public deposition stipulating what school principals are required to have knowledge of, comprehend and do to be successful in their work (AITSL, 2011:3).

The Standard is based on three leadership requirements:

- Vision and values
- Knowledge and understanding
- Personal qualities, social and interpersonal skills (AITSL, 2011:3).

These requirements should be reflected in the following five key professional practices:

• Leading teaching and learning

Principals must establish an encouraging ethos of challenge and support, permitting effective teaching that promotes motivated, self-determining learners, committed to lifelong learning (AITSL, 2011:15).

- **Developing self and other**

Principals are required to work in collaboration with all role-players to form a professional education community with the main goal to improve teaching and learning. Principals must manage operations, support the whole staff to accomplish excellent standards and upgrade their leadership abilities. Principals must demonstrate proficient leadership and must be dedicated to their own continuous professional development (AITSL, 2011:16).

- **Leading improvement, innovation, and change**

Principals must work with the staff and education role-players to create and execute improvement plans and policies for the school (AITSL, 2011:18).

- **Leading the management of the school**

Principals must implement different management approaches to make certain that the schools' assets and staff are efficiently organised and managed to guarantee a workable and safe teaching environment (AITSL, 2011:18).

- **Engaging and working with the community**

Principals must bring about an ethos of high anticipation that must include the diverse school community. Establish and uphold positive associations with learners, families, and guardians of all those involved with the broader school community (AITSL, 2011:19).

3.5.4 Leadership challenges the school principal (head teacher) faces in the Australian school system

In the framework of the Australian education system the literature indicates that in a highly decentralised system where more autonomy is afforded to schools, the principal is the protagonist that is left with more responsibilities.

According, to the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) the policy changes towards more autonomy for schools, instead of administration by means of system and sector bodies, has remarkably increased principals' responsibilities (AITSL, 2017:8). There are apparent advantages for leaders, for example, more control of resource distribution and recruitment of staff (AITSL, 2017:8). In this regard, Watson (2009:4) also recognises the problems involved in restructuring the broad array of duties of principals that increased decentralisation

brings about. Even though several government employers in Australia are now advocating school leadership in instructional terms, they seem hesitant to make amendments to policy/regulations which are associated with principals' managerial roles. For example, the education department as school employer has not put forward a need to adjust the position on the delegation of management duties to schools.

The legal liability for endeavours undertaken by schools and the liabilities thereof rests on the principal's shoulders. The principal must keep an eye on the management of the specific initiatives, and no amount of high-level focus on instructional facets of the principal's role will transform this. These management obligations can only be lessened if employers make amendments to the aspects of administrative decentralisation in terms of the policy (AITSL, 2017:8).

3.6 SOUTH AFRICA

3.6.1 Context

Mhlauli, Salani and Mokotedi (2015:204) expressed the belief that one of the issues that incited racism in South Africa stemmed from the expansion of European colonialism which was part of the dash for Africa in the middle of the nineteenth century and the view of civilizing inferior natives. Mhlauli et al. (2015:204) furthermore mention that the apartheid intonation was then formed as part of the Gesuiwerde Nationale Party (a non-aligned group from Hertzog's National Party in 1934) among Afrikaners in the 1940s. The apartheid system was centred on racial discrimination that proposed separation or segregation of black and white people in several parts of society (Mhlauli et al., 2015:204). To achieve its policy of separation and control, the National Party, voted into power in 1948, promulgated several laws. Some of the more controversial laws were the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages, the Immorality Act of 1950, the Group Areas Act of 1950, which advocated the settlement of blacks and whites in separate residential areas and the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act of 1953, which entailed segregation in the use of public facilities (Mhlauli et al., 2015:204). Consequently, this centralised system of governance also had an influence on the education system in South Africa. Until 1994, the greater number of South African citizens were excluded from actual and equal participation in education. Education was misused as a method to indoctrinate young people that the status quo of inequalities is an acceptable norm (Mncube,

2008:77). It is because of these reasons that South Africa's shift from apartheid to a multiracial democracy is regarded as one of the more remarkable political occurrences of the last century (Inman & Rubinfeld, 2013:1).

Murray & Simeon (2011:232) pointed out that *"in the 1996 Constitution of South Africa, provision is made for a system of multi-level governance separated into three spheres of government – national, provincial and local – that are to be distinctive, interdependent and interrelated"*. Chapter 3 of the Constitution necessitates that all the spheres must have respect for each other's authority and responsibilities and must work collaboratively in shared trust and goodwill (Murray & Simeon, 2011:232). The national government has wide-ranging legislative power to develop laws on any issue with the exclusion of those listed in a schedule that presents a shortlist of exclusive provincial powers (Murray & Simeon, 2011:237). Provinces likewise have the authority to draft laws on issues included in a list of concurrent powers (Schedule 4), but the central government could reject provincial laws through a broad scope of matters (Murray & Simeon, 2011:237).

3.6.2 South Africa's centralised school system

- **The colonial period**

Naidoo (2005:18) mentions that educational policies are developed by specific political dogma. This is apparent in the colonial, apartheid and post-apartheid eras (Msila, 2007:147). The British education system was colonial by nature. The British intended to utilise education as a "tool" for propagating their language and customs in the colonies and as a method to keep social control (Msila, 2007:147). In every colony, English was made an official language, and the church, government offices and schools were all anglicised (Msila, 2007:147). Mission education was instituted to expand the Western manner of life among Africans and to instil in them particular work ethics (Msila, 2007:147).

- **The apartheid period**

Msila (2007:148) indicates that the goals of education instituted by Afrikaner nationalists were almost the same as those of the missionaries because through the politicisation of education and the exploitation of religion the Afrikaner had similar intents. Through apartheid education, the master-servant relationship between the Africans and the whites could be maintained (Msila, 2007:148). Even though the

education department seemed to have the features of a decentralised system since a distinct department of education was set up for each of the racial groups, these departments were still controlled by a central department of education to realise the apartheid dogmas (Msila, 2007:148). Naidoo (2005:22) elaborates:

At the time of the 1994 elections there were fifteen education ministries: four in the independent homelands (Transkei, Ciskei, Venda and Bophuthatswana were granted independence by South Africa, although they were not recognised by any other country); six in the self-governing territories (i.e. the non-independent homelands of GaZankulu, KanGwane, KwaNdebele, KwaZulu, Lebowa, and Qwaqwa), a Department of Education and Training (catering for Africans outside of the homelands); one in each of the tri-cameral houses of Parliament (catering for Whites, Coloureds and Indians) and a Department of National Education.

The Department of National Education was responsible for the setting of national norms and standards, controlling policy and making budgetary allocations (Sayed & Kanjee, 2013:7).

3.6.3 South Africa's decentralised school system

The elections of 1994 ended apartheid rule and announced a constitution with an unambiguous pledge to a representative and participatory democracy (Naidoo, 2005:29). The idea was that citizens ought to participate outside the intermittent national elections in determining their future. This task is taken up in education in several laws and in particular in the SASA 84 of 1996 (Naidoo, 2005:29). The Act describes why specific powers are transferred from the national sphere down to the school/community level. The national Ministry of Basic Education is answerable to the Cabinet and the President and must ensure that sanctioned policy is effectively implemented (Naidoo, 2005:93). The South African Constitution and the National Education Policy Act 27 of 1996 (NEPA) (Republic of South Africa, 1996) and associated education legislation, assign responsibility for education and training to the Minister of Basic Education for the country (Naidoo, 2005:93).

Before 1994 the National Department of Education (DOE) was controlled by a director-general (Head of the Department) responsible for the efficient management and administration of the department, as well as being liable to Parliament for the resources allocated to the department and the Minister for the execution of the policy (Naidoo, 2005:93). The National Department of Education was responsible for

affairs that could not be controlled or executed efficiently by provinces and for matters that required to be co-ordinated in terms of national norms and standards (Naidoo, 2005:93). In the National DBE, the Education Department Support Unit and Education Management and Governance are important structures for governance, policy implementation and development (Naidoo, 2005:93).

A similar situation exists in each province with a Member of the Executive Council (MEC) as the political head and a provincial HOD as the executive head (Naidoo, 2005:93). The Provincial Minister of Education (MEC) oversees policy affairs that exist within national parameters, while the provincial department of education must establish, manage and support schools (Naidoo, 2005:99). Every province has regional and district offices that oversee education at the local level. All nine provincial departments of education have devolved elected functions to regional and district offices and smaller organisational sub-units (circuits or wards). The district officials are the first line of contact between the school/SGB (Naidoo, 2005:103).

The SASA 84 of 1996 provides the means for stakeholders to take part in decision-making at the school level (Naidoo, 2005:29). To lead the application of democratic governance at the school level, the Schools Act lists a series of functions for all school governing bodies, principals and educators (Naidoo, 2009).

In theory, the SGB has wide-ranging powers in the admission and exclusion of pupils, commendation to the province on appointments of educators and non-educators, administration and control of buildings, the determination of school fees, and budgetary and financial management of the school (RSA, 1996a). In addition, in terms of section 21 of the Act, if the provincial head of the department deems it as a requisite capacity, extra functions may be allocated to the SGB that include the power to take care of and improve school property, determine the extra-mural curriculum and choice of subject options, procurement of textbooks, and pay for services rendered to the school (Naidoo, 2005:32).

3.6.4 The principal as school manager and member of the SGB in South African schools

In South Africa there are various laws and policies dealing with the principal's management and governance position.

3.6.4.1 The SASA 84 of 1996

The new policy framework for decentralised decision-making is entrenched in the SASA 84 of 1996 (SASA) (RSA, 1996a) and the rate of change will be determined by the headway that's been made in promoting new capabilities at all spheres. Section 16 of SASA talks to the duties and responsibilities of a principal at a public school. Section 16(3) stipulates that the professional management of a public school is the main function of the principal and the principal functions under the direct instruction of the HOD (RSA, 1996a). Van der Merwe (2005:241) emphasises the fact that *"it is notable that the term 'management' is not used separately, but that it is explicitly called 'professional management'. A valid deduction is that the notion 'professional management' refers to just that – management of the profession"*.

Some of the other professional functions of the principal stipulated in section 16 of SASA are:

- to provide feedback to the HOD concerning the teaching and learning operations of the school;
- in terms of section 58B must draft a plan that outlines the manner in which the school is going to enhance the academic operations of the school;
- provide information in reference to the type of educational activities that are put into operation at the school;
- oversee the duties of the educators and non-educator staff;
- administer the application of LTSM and other resources; and
- implement the policy and laws of the department.

It is important to note that the principal is not just a professional manager. The position of the principal becomes more complex due to the governance component imposed on him through legislation. Section 16(A)(3) of SASA stipulates that the principal of a public-school acts under the authority of the HOD in the SGB acting in an official capacity (RSA, 1996a). In this regard the principal must:

- partake in all meetings of the SGB;
-

- inform the SGB about the professional management matters in the school;
- offer assistance and guidance to the SGB in reference to school discipline;
- assist the HOD in the administration of disciplinary issues concerning educators and non-educator staff employed by the HOD;
- keep the SGB informed on policy and laws; and
- guide and assist the SGB in the execution of its tasks and responsibilities (RSA, 1996a).

In addition to the SASA, various scholars elaborated on the roles and functions of the principal. The school principal is the prime mover and promoter of improvement (Buckner & Jones, 1990:27). The principals' initiates initiatives and must make sure that they are carried out according to plan (Datnow & Castellano, 2001:278). The school principal is accountable for the successes and failures of the school (Pounder & Merrill, 2001:35). Principals must strategize, organise, lead and manage all undertakings in the school (Daresh, 2001:105). The principal is the liable person for all activities that take place the school. The person who acts as principal controls the uncontrollable (James & Vince, 2001:313). He or she is the manager of the school supporting and assisting staff members of the school to realise predetermined objectives and goals (Bryant, 1998:8). The principal is the highest-ranking officials in the school (Crowther (ed.) 1995:918). The principal must oversee school resources (human resources) and delegates the duties in the school (Eden, 2001:97). The school principal takes on the roles of a prominent figure (person), namely a *“referent, expert, rewarder, coercer, legitimate authority, involver, norm-setter and a curriculum leader and is responsible for promoting shared leadership”* (Wallace, 2001).

3.6.4.2 Policy on the South African Standard for Principalship

The Policy on the South African Standard for Principalship (herein after the Standards) was released by the DBE in 2015 to determine what the South African education system requires of those who are accountable for the leadership and management of schools (DBE, 2015:3). The Standards recognises eight key areas which talk to the key roles of the principal in the South African setting (DBE, 2015:3).

- The first key area stipulates that the principal is responsible to ensure that high standards of education is executed in the school (DBE, 2015:10).
-

- The second key area states that the principal must share the future improvement plans for the school (RSA, 2015:15).
- The third key stipulates that the principal must put into operation management structures to make sure that the school operates as a functional organisation (DBE, 2015:15).
- The fourth key area emphasises that the principal must manage the standards of teaching and learning (DBE, 2015:17).
- The fifth key area indicates that the principal has to manage the human resources (staff) in the school (DBE, 2015:18).
- The sixth key area stipulates that the principal must administer and encourage extramural activities (DBE, 2015:19).
- The seventh key area requires the principal to develop his/her own abilities (DBE, 2015:20).
- The eight-key area requires the principal to work together with and for the community (DBE, 2015:21).

3.6.4.3 Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM)

Another document that talks to the duties of the principal is the Personnel Administrative Measures (herein after PAM) that was first published in Government Gazette No. 39684, 12 February 2016. Annexure A7 of the PAM describes the core duties and responsibilities of the principal. The PAM document identifies the aim of the principal's job as ensuring that the school is managed satisfactorily and in compliance with applicable legislation, regulations (RSA, 1999).

PAM divides the core duties of the principal into the following groups:

▪ General/administrative

- In terms of section 16A(3) of SASA, the administrative duties are:
 - Educational programmes and curriculum.
 - Guiding all educators and non-educator staff.
 - The utilisation of LTSM.
 - To execute the assigned duties the HOD delegated to him/her.
 - Safekeeping of all school archives.
 - The execution of policy and legislation.
 - Timetabling, admission and placement of learners.
-

- To open more than one school account and accurately keep/capture financial transactions.
- Recordkeeping of significant events linked to the school.
- Appropriate utilisation of the school grounds and resource.
- To monitor the hostel and all the activities associated with the hostel.
- To communicate all correspondence received at the school.

- **Personnel**

- To be in control of leadership development in school.
- To provide guidance, supervision and offer professional direction in reference to the productivity of all educators and non-educators in the school.
- To make certain that the workload is divided fairly between staff.
- To be initiate staff development programmes.
- To participate in agreed school/educator evaluation practices.
- To make certain that all appraisals are professionally conducted.
- To support the HOD in disciplinary matters concerning educators. (SASA, section 16A(2)(e)).

- **Academic performance of the school (SASA, section 16A(1) (b)(i) – (iv)**

Principals are required to prepare and submit to the HOD an annual report in respect of the following:

- Academic performance (section 6A of SASA), and
- The suitable utilisation of available resources.
- In terms of section 58B of SASA develop a plan stipulating the approaches that will be implemented to improve academic performance at the school.

- **Teaching**

- To participate in class teaching as per the workload of the relevant post level and the needs of the school.
- To be a class teacher if required.

- **Extra- and co-curricular activities**

- To serve on recruitment, promotion, advisory and other committees as required.
 - To play an active role in promoting extra and co-curricular activities in the school.
-

▪ **Interaction with stakeholders**

The SGB

- To serve on the SGB and support the SGB.
- To represent the HOD in the SGB (SASA, section 16A(1)(a)).
- The principal must in compliance with SASA, section 16A (2)(b, c, d, f and (3):
 - (a) Be present and partake in all meetings of the SGB.
 - (b) Provide the SGB with a report regarding the professional management duties of the school.
 - (c) provide guidance to the SGB in managing disciplinary affairs of learners.
 - (d) Inform the SGB about policy and legislation.
 - (e) Assist the SGB in the performance of its functions and responsibilities, but such assistance or participation may not conflict with:
 - (i) Instructions of the HOD;
 - (ii) Legislation or policy;
 - (iii) An obligation that he/she has towards the HOD, the MEC or the Minister;
 - (iv) Provisions of the EEA and the PAM, determined in terms of the EEA.
- To partake in community activities pertaining to with educational matters.

▪ **Communication**

- To work collaboratively with the school staff and the SGB to ensure effective functioning of the school.
 - To liaise with the role-players in the sector.
 - To communicate with appropriate structures regarding school teaching plans and curriculum improvement.
 - Provide feedback to parents pertaining to their children's academic progress.
 - To work together with the SGB regarding all aspects as specified in SASA.
 - To communicate with other applicable government departments.
 - To work with universities, colleges, and other institutions in relation to learners' reports and performance.
 - To partake in departmental and professional committees, seminars and courses.
-

3.6.5 Leadership challenges of the South African school principal

Prinsloo (2006:256) indicates that “the establishment of school governing bodies demonstrates a notable decentralisation of power in the South African school system. Although such decentralisation may well mean a proliferation in democratic participation in the governance of schools, this is not always the case.” In the past few years, the Government, its representatives, and structures of the Government have been making determinations to affirm their authority over schools to an escalating degree by restricting or meddling in the substantive authority that can be put into effect by grassroot school governance structures (Prinsloo, 2006:256).

Since 1996 there has been an increase in court cases (some of which was discussed in paragraphs 2.8; 2.8.1; 2.8.2; 2.8.3 and 2.8.4) in which schools have been vehemently opposing the unlawful actions of the provincial HODs of education and where officials have seemingly neglected to perform their administrative tasks towards schools (Prinsloo, 2006:256).

In each of these cases the Government, through its officials and in some instances political figures, infringed upon the powers of the SGB. When the State limits the SGB’s powers and duties, the principals’ position will also be impacted and to a significant extent restrict the principal in carrying out their own duties. In the sections that follow I highlight some of these challenges the principal faces in the school landscape.

3.6.5.1 Abuse of power

According to Smit and Oosthuizen (2011:62), *“the abuse of power by departmental officials can be ascribed to the lack of a long democratic convention and the democratic inexperience of the bigger part of South Africa’s general public as well as the obliviousness and lack of understanding of democratic doctrines”*. Smit and Oosthuizen’s (2011:62) research findings disclosed that officials misunderstood democracy to mean that the majority must always be victorious regardless of whether fundamental rights are disregarded. Oosthuizen (2011:62) further elaborated that this imprudent misunderstanding of majoritarian *“winner-takes-all”* belief clarifies why a great number of the bureaucratic pronouncements are put into action to compel schools to implement the changes to education envisioned by the

political party controlling government. These transformations transpire without respecting the fundamental rights and conditions of lawfulness.

The research further established that 91,2% of top-level education officials, had incorrectly perceived that their understanding of democratic doctrines is on-par or exceptional (Smit & Oosthuizen, 2011:62). Smit and Oosthuizen (2011:62) further elaborated that 57% of the participants were not knowledgeable about the doctrines of participatory and purposeful democracy as methods to manage diversity and to respect multiculturalism. In effect, the greater part of the participants preferred a bureaucratic method to manage multi-culturalism.

In the following sections, I give examples of how education officials abused their powers through bureaucratic misapplication of democratic principles where they:

- designed mechanisms to dismiss educators;
- violated schools' constitutional rights;
- ignored school policy;
- implemented unjust administrative procedures;
- arrogant behaviour;
- disrespected court orders.

▪ ***Suid-Afrikaanse Onderwysunie case***¹²

In this case, the applicant maintained that the officials' conduct was unreasonable because they had a misconception of their legal authority to make particular pronouncements. In the above-mentioned case, the judge chastised the officials of the Free State Department of Education who had created a procedure to co-ordinate dismissals, which had been, at best, a shocking display of "*imagined power*" [my emphasis]. The officials' abuse of power can be viewed as an example of recentralised governance. Through unlawful dismissals, these officials curtailed all the duties of the educators. (If you dismiss a person from work you take back all the duties that person fulfilled).

¹² *Suid-Afrikaanse Onderwysunie v. Departementshoof, Departement van Onderwys, Vrystaat en 'n Ander* (2001) 3 SA 100 (O)

- ***Diphetohe SGB and others case***¹³

In the Diphetohe case, the HOD curtailed the SGB's duties in terms of section 25 of the SASA 84 of 1996, ignoring section 22 of the same act that must be implemented. The court stated that the HOD's conduct amounted to unjust administrative action. The court established that the HOD decision to take back the functions of SGB was unmerited. In this case, the recentralised decentralisation occurred when the HOD through forceful actions and the abuse of power curtailed the SGB's functions unjustly.

- ***FEDSAS v. the MEC of the DBE Eastern Cape case***¹⁴

This case best demonstrates just how education departments can bluntly ignore court instructions. The Eastern Cape Education Department failed to appoint staff the court had ordered it to appoint. This legal process did not enhance the staffing concerns in schools. It also did not enhance the working conditions of the teachers. This case is a good example that illustrates the degree of dysfunctionality that exist in some departments in the education system. In such a scenario recentralised governance can greatly assist the department to rectify the dysfunctional operations in their own system.

3.6.5.2 School governing bodies interfering in the professional management functions of the principal

In recent years another phenomenon of SGB meddling in the management of the school principal also started to become more prevalent. Several scholars indicate that the most obvious demonstration of authority can be found in the principal and SGB relationship (Van Wyk, 2004; Mncube & Harber, 2013; Bayat et al, 2014). Earley (cited in Van Wyk, 2004: 53) states that "*in the previous year's principals regulated South African schools affording parents, educators and learners very little to no opportunity to make inputs in reference to policy and decision-making*". Educators and parents were functioning merely as secondary governors, reliant on the principal for the information they receive. Principals became used to a custom of control and authority (Heystek, 2004: 310). Having to deal with many role-players

¹³ *Diphetohe SGB and others v Department of Education Free State and others* (4218/2010) [2012] ZAFB

¹⁴ *FEDSAS v. the MEC of the DBE Eastern Cape* (60/11) [2011] ZAECEB

who might become participative parties in the authority relationship presented a challenge to these school principals (Heystek, 2011:29). These unhealthy relationships between school principals and SGBs regarding the management and governance of the school often lead to intervention by the courts. The *Grey College (Bloemfontein)* case is an excellent example where the relationship between the principal and the SGB deteriorated to such levels that the courts had to intervene to give guidance to both parties

▪ ***The SGB Grey College case***¹⁵

In this case, the court determined that the SGB did not have the powers to make the pronouncements in reference to the principal's management responsibilities because the SASA (RSA,1996a) did not sanction it. Therefore, it is imperative to be cognisant of the judgement in this case. Judge Moseneke indicated that in the SGB and the principal relationship:

- the principal is tasked to guide and assist the SGB in the execution of its statutory functions. The SGB can delegate specific parts of their duties to the principal;
- the principal is answerable to the SGB, and it is the SGB that must hold the principal liable for monetary and property affairs that are not specifically delegated to the principal by law (Prinsloo, 2016:6).

▪ ***The Potchefstroom Herald, 15 Maart 2021 - 'Parents and SGB want acting principal of Boys High gone'***. (Van der Westhuizen, 2021)

In this instance, angry parents of the Potchefstroom High School for Boys and members of the SGB got together to protest against the acting principal, Mr Carel Meyer. The meeting was arranged by the SGB urging parents not to take their children to school. The SGB said: *"Parents of learners at Potchefstroom High School for Boys are resolute that the acting principal must be shown the door. This is based on poor results from grade 8 to 12"* (Van der Westhuizen, 2021). The South African Teachers Union (SAOU) pointed out that the SGB is dysfunctional and is

¹⁵ *The SGB Grey College, Bloemfontein v Scheepers and Another* (Case no 506/19) [2020]

manipulating the parents of the school. They were acting outside their jurisdiction (Van der Westhuizen, 2021).

- **Angry parents carry Theresapark principal out of office in chair**

In this incident, the South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU) has expressed their discontented in reference to the unlawful behaviour against the principal of the Theresapark Primary School. Multimedia footage was circulated where the principal was forcefully carried out of her office. It is alleged that the principal was being thrown out by a group of parents and the SGB. The parents and SGB released her from her duties (Mahlokwane, 2021).

3.6.5.3 School principals abusing their powers

The school principal is the highest authority in the school and the central figure (protagonist) responsible for the professional management. In this regard, the principal can implement (re)centralisation management in the school. In the Hoërskool Eldoraïne case the principal was the focus of various newspapers headlines for all the wrong reasons because of his draconian management approaches:

- Maroela Media, 18 Augustus 2021 – *‘Woede na Eldoraïne hoof weer aangestel is’*. (Anja Van der Merwe, 2021)

Parents, learners, and educators at Eldoraïne High School were shocked when the Gauteng DBE instructed Dr. Anton Prinsloo to report back for duty at school. The educators and the school community reported to Dr. Prinsloo to the department because of his continuous bullying behaviour at school.

- Netwerk 24, 27 Augustus 2021 – *‘Skoolhoof wéér verplaas, nuwe ondersoek kom’*. (Raymond Willemse)

The charges against Dr. Prinsloo include victimization of staff members, humiliation of staff members in the presence of others and threats that some staff members' contracts will not be renewed. A law firm recommended that the principal be investigated for misconduct.

3.6.5.4 Conclusion

These cases are examples of the shameful situation where government officials, SGBs and in some instances politicians act beyond the duties allocated to them by law to interfere in the management and governance of schools. In each of these cases, the departmental officials and the SGBs were neglecting their duties, disrespecting the rule of law, and even paid no attention to court orders against them. An important aspect of these judgements is the emphasis on the status of SGBs. In a constitutional democracy based on the rule of law, the reasonable execution of SGBs is an aspect that needs a great deal of attention from the DBE. Another important aspect to take note of is the dual position of the school principal being a member of the SGB as well as an employee of the education department. The SGB expects the principal to assist, provide guidance and look after the interests of the school. On the other hand, the principal is representing the HOD (the employer) in the SGB. The employer expects the principal to implement policy and to follow instructions allocated to him/her. At times, the principal can receive instructions or must implement departmental policies that the SGB does not agree with. This disagreement between the principal and the SGB leads to a lot of tension. It is clear from the literature that SGBs need guidance when there is a disagreement between them and the principal. SGBs cannot be allowed to implement recentralised governance actions curtailing the duties of and even dismissing principals.

Finally, the principal is the highest authority in the school and has the powers to delegate but also to curtail educator duties. The Hoërskool (High School) Eldoraigane case is an excellent example of draconian behaviour where the principal implemented recentralisation management approaches in the form of bullying behaviour, victimising and threatening educators.

3.7 COMPARING SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOL PRINCIPALSHIP WITH PRINCIPALS IN KENYA, NIGERIA, AUSTRALIA AND NEW-ZEALAND

In this chapter, I discussed the education systems of Kenya, Nigeria, New Zealand and Australia to get an international perspective on education management, governance and the position of the school principal in these education systems. An international perspective enabled me as a researcher to establish best practices

regarding school leadership and if South Africa is in line with international standards.

These countries also have certain commonalities with South Africa:

- They were all colonised at one stage.
- These countries all experienced political turmoil between the colonisers and the colonised.
- The education systems of these countries were all profoundly affected by the political and socio-economic conditions of the country.

3.7.1 South Africa *vis-à-vis* Kenya

3.7.1.1 Management functions of South African and Kenyan principals

| Management functions of the South African School Principal | Management functions of the Kenyan School Principal |
|--|--|
| <p>In section 16(3) of the SASA, 84 of 1996 the Act states that the principal is responsible for the professional management of the schools. In this regard the principal must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide the HOD with a report regarding the school's scholastic progress. ▪ In terms of section 58B draft a plan that stipulates the approach the school will implement to improve on its scholastic outcomes. ▪ Specify the type of scholastic programs and curriculum endeavors that are made available for the learners to participate in. ▪ Manage all educators and support staff. ▪ Manage the utilization of learning support material and other resources. ▪ Implementation of policy and legislation. <p>PAM divides the core duties of the principal into the following groups, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ General and administrative ▪ Academic performance of the school ▪ Teaching ▪ Extra- & co-curricular activities ▪ Interaction with stakeholders ▪ Communication | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ School principals are also viewed as managers. The principal has the power to ensure that all decisions that were taken at management and governance level are executed at the school. Decision-making is a collaborative exercise shared by a Board of Management (BOM) and a Parents Teachers Association (PTA) <p>According to Kenya's Ministry of Education (MOE), principals have authority over:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The way school finances are used. ▪ evaluating and guiding the standards of teaching and learning. ▪ Implementation of policy. ▪ Managing the Total Quality Management system. ▪ Linking the school with the community. |

3.7.1.2 Leadership challenges of South African and Kenyan school principals

| Leadership challenges of the South African school principal | Leadership challenges of the Kenyan school principal |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In the last few years, the DBE through its officials and at times politicians have been making attempts to restrict or interfere in the leadership matters of schools that can be exercised at grassroot-level. ▪ Since 1996 a steady rise in court cases have been observed. Schools have been contesting the unlawful actions of Provincial Heads of Education and politicians where they act irrational and beyond their powers. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Restrictive policies that government implement. ▪ The head teacher's (principal's) management duties are directly influenced by an extreme lack of commitment in terms of timing and policy implementation haste by department officials resulting in policy implementation breakdowns between the lower, middle-level and top-level leadership structures in the system. ▪ Education bureaucrats that derail head teachers' (principals) school vision. ▪ Resource mismanagement. ▪ Financial challenges. ▪ Lack of stakeholder support. |

| | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ By restricting the SGBs' powers and duties the principals will also be impacted and significantly limited in the execution of their own duties. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The head teacher as the curriculum leader cannot delegate duties effectively and appropriately due to poorly devolved instructions received from the Teacher Service Committee and the District Education Officer. |
|---|--|

3.7.2 South Africa *vis-à-vis* Nigeria

3.7.2.1 Management functions of South African and Nigerian principals

| Management functions of the South African School Principal | Management functions of the Nigerian School Principal |
|--|--|
| <p>In section 16(3) of the SASA, 84 of 1996 the Act states that the principal is responsible for the professional management of the schools. In this regard the principal must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide the HOD with a report regarding the school's scholastic progress. ▪ In terms of section 58B draft a plan that stipulates the approach the school will implement to improve on its scholastic outcomes. ▪ Specify the type of scholastic programs and curriculum endeavors that are made available for the learners to participate in. ▪ Manage all educators and support staff. ▪ Manage the utilization of learning support material and other resources. ▪ Implementation of policy and legislation. <p>PAM divides the core duties of the principal into the following groups, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ General and administrative ▪ Academic performance of the school ▪ Teaching ▪ Extra- & co-curricular activities ▪ Interaction with stakeholders ▪ Communication | <p>The principal supported by the School Management Team (Principal, Deputy Principals and Heads of Departments) is entrusted with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ measuring teaching outcomes in the school in order to meet national goals; ▪ retraining of staff on ICT to meet specific time-based national objectives; ▪ Safeguarding reports about issues such as teacher absenteeism, lesson planning and the upkeep of class records, log books for visitors, disciplinary hearings, test papers. |

3.7.2.2 Leadership challenges of South African and Nigerian principals

| Leadership challenges of the South African school principal | Leadership challenges of the Nigerian school principal |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In the last few years, the DBE through its officials and at times politicians have been making attempts to restrict or interfere in the leadership matters of schools that can be exercised at grassroot- level. ▪ Since 1996 a steady rise in court cases have been observed. Schools have been contesting the unlawful actions of Provincial Heads of Education and politicians where they act irrational and beyond their powers. ▪ By restricting the SGBs' powers and duties the principals will also be impacted and significantly limited in the execution of their own duties. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Nigerian politics have a big impact on school administration. Politicians have a vested interest in different levels of education. Politicians influence/regulate: decision-making processes, policy execution, management, governance and the way in which resources are apportioned to different racial groups. ▪ State meddling, professional bureaucracy, boards of education and the teachers' organizations are known to hold on tightly to power and the principal are in most of the issues the role player that's the most affected by these tensions. ▪ It is not uncommon to hear how politicians use their positions to limit principals' autonomy and responsibilities. In some cases, head teachers have been removed by government and replaced with military men. ▪ Finances have always been a problem area in schools and it is the responsibility of the principal to draw up an accurate budget for the school. This includes fiscal and material budgeting on agreed periodic and yearly basis. ▪ The implementation of functional management with an underfunded budget under the instructions of tough political leaders who mostly coin their manifestos around free education. |

3.7.3 South Africa *vis-à-vis* New Zealand

3.7.3.1 Management functions of South African and New Zealand principals

| Management functions of the South African School Principal | Management functions of the New Zealand School Principal |
|--|---|
| <p>In section 16(3) of the SASA, 84 of 1996 the Act states that the principal is responsible for the professional management of the schools. In this regard the principal must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide the HOD with a report regarding the school's scholastic progress. ▪ In terms of section 58B draft a plan that stipulates the approach the school will implement to improve on its scholastic outcomes. ▪ Specify the type of scholastic programs and curriculum endeavors that are made available for the learners to participate in. ▪ Manage all educators and support staff. ▪ Manage the utilization of learning support material and other resources. ▪ Implementation of policy and legislation. <p>PAM divides the core duties of the principal into the following groups, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ General and administrative ▪ Academic performance of the school ▪ Teaching ▪ Extra- & co-curricular activities ▪ Interaction with stakeholders Communication | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The principal must manage, in accordance with the local legal requirements, the school policies and other recordings of delegated authority. ▪ Manage the day-to-day educational personnel and administrative affairs and will report to the Board of Trustees on a regular basis. ▪ Establish educational goals in collective consultation with the staff and share these objectives with all groups, implementing policies and programs to assist the school to achieve this goal. ▪ Delegate operational administrative tasks. ▪ Recommend appointments of educators to the Board of Trustees. ▪ The principal must implement staff development programs. ▪ In the new decentralised dispensation, the principal must manage the day-to-day activities of the school. ▪ The principal must provide instructional leadership which is now widened to educational leadership. |

3.7.3.2 Leadership challenges of the South African and the New Zealand principal

| Leadership challenges of the South African school principal | Leadership challenges of the New Zealand school principal |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In the last few years, the DBE through its officials and at times politicians have been making attempts to restrict or interfere in the leadership matters of schools that can be exercised at grassroot-level. ▪ Since 1996 a steady rise in court cases have been observed. Schools have been contesting the unlawful actions of Provincial Heads of Education and politicians where they act irrational and beyond their powers. ▪ By restricting the SGBs' powers and duties the principals will also be impacted and significantly limited in the execution of their own duties. | <p>Principals in the New Zealand school system have the following management and governance challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ reductions in staffing; ▪ a lack of operational revenue; ▪ curriculum rigidity; ▪ teachers leaving the profession for better salaries and opportunities; ▪ disagreement amongst staff, staff and management, staff and the Board of Trustees and with the community; ▪ low standards of teaching; ▪ monetary troubles or inequalities; ▪ community dissatisfaction inside the school setting; ▪ the school serving a low socio-economic community. ▪ Appointments of inexperienced educators in leadership positions. ▪ Community conflict/factions and 'power games' played out to satisfy individual personal agendas. ▪ The competing mandates of being an autonomous school while, at the same time, being subjected to government policies that exert systemic influence over local responsibilities. |

3.7.4 South Africa *vis-à-vis* Australia

3.7.4.1 Management functions of the South African and the Australian principal

| Management functions of the South African School Principal | Management functions of the Australian School Principal |
|--|---|
| <p>In section 16(3) of the SASA, 84 of 1996 the Act states that the principal is responsible for the professional management of the schools. In this regard the principal must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide the HOD with a report regarding the school's scholastic progress. ▪ In terms of section 58B draft a plan that stipulates the approach the school will implement to improve on its scholastic outcomes. ▪ Specify the type of scholastic programs and curriculum endeavors that are made available for the learners to participate in. ▪ Manage all educators and support staff. ▪ Manage the utilization of learning support material and other resources. ▪ Implementation of policy and legislation. <p>PAM divides the core duties of the principal into the following groups, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ General and administrative ▪ Academic performance of the school ▪ Teaching ▪ Extra- & co-curricular activities ▪ Interaction with stakeholders ▪ Communication | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Create an optimistic ethos of guidance, that leads to better teaching that encourages eager, autonomous learners, dedicated to lifelong learning. ▪ Develop a culture of functional teaching. ▪ Planning, supervising and reviewing the efficacy of learning. ▪ Build a professional learning community. ▪ Support all staff to realize acceptable standards and develop their leadership abilities. ▪ Exhibit good leadership. ▪ Continuous improvement of their own professional development. ▪ Develop policies for the development of the school and its facilities. ▪ Manage innovation and change to ensure the vision and strategic plan are put into action across the school. ▪ Ensure that school's resources and staff are used optimally. ▪ Delegate duties to educators and non-educator staff and evaluate their performance. ▪ Embrace inclusivity in the school. ▪ Establish a culture of respect. ▪ Involve the community in school activities. |

3.7.4.2 Leadership challenges of the South African and the Australian principal

| Leadership challenges of the South African school principal | Leadership challenges of the Australian school principal |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In the last few years, the DBE through its officials and at times politicians have been making attempts to restrict or interfere in the leadership matters of schools that can be exercised at grassroot- level. ▪ Since 1996 a steady rise in court cases have been observed. Schools have been contesting the unlawful actions of Provincial Heads of Education and politicians where they act irrational and beyond their powers. ▪ By restricting the SGBs' powers and duties the principals will also be impacted and significantly limited in the execution of their own duties. | <p><u>Accountability and autonomy challenges:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The co-existence of distributed collective obligations with hierarchical accountability. ▪ The principals must transform their schools and involve role-players, although the positive and negative outcomes of these transformations remain solely with the principal. ▪ Consequently, the autonomy conundrum refers to principals working autonomously as the school's leader and also sharing decision-making authority with the board of trustees, parents and government (while being subjected to government policies that exert systemic influence over local responsibilities). <p><u>The efficiency challenges</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Conflict occurs because principals must include the stakeholders in school affairs to reach decisions in which all parties share responsibility, while at the same time principals must implement manpower and resources in such a way that are least wasteful. ▪ The conundrum is that principals must allow other role-players to partake in decisions while being solely accountable, acting autonomously and using resources efficiently. <p><u>Work intensification</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Productivity amplification implies the additional number and intricacies of duties that's assigned to principals, the rapidity with which these additional duties arise and the reduced time frames in which the work must be completed. |

3.7.5 School governance in South Africa *vis-á-vis* Kenya, Nigeria, New Zealand and Australia

3.7.5.1 Introduction

In this section of the literature review, I summarise the approaches to leadership management and governance in five countries to highlight the similarities, to and differences from the South African system.

3.7.5.2 South Africa

According to SASA (RSA, 1996a) the SGB is responsible for school governance in public schools in South Africa. The SGB membership comprises: elected members; the principal, in his or her official capacity and co-opted members.

Section 20 of SASA sets out the functions of the SGB. It is a broad range of functions to promote the best interests of the school; adopt a constitution; develop the mission statement of the SGB; adopt a code of conduct; support the principal, educators and

other staff of the school; adhere to any actions taken by the Head of Department; determine times of the school day; administer and control the school's property; encourage parents, learners, educators and other staff at the school to render voluntary services to the school; recommend to the Head of Department the appointment of educators at the school; recommend to the Head of Department the appointment of non-educator staff at the school; at the request of the Head of Department, allow the reasonable use under fair conditions determined by the Head of Department of the facilities of the school for educational programmes not conducted by the school; discharge all other functions imposed upon the governing body by or under this Act; allow for the reasonable use of the facilities of the school for community, social and school fund-raising purposes; establish posts for educators and employ educators additional to the establishment determined by the Member of the Executive Council; establish posts for non-educators and employ non-educator staff additional to the establishment and, when presenting the annual budget contemplated in section 38, the governing body of a public school must provide sufficient details of any posts envisaged.

3.7.5.3 Kenya

The Basic Education Act 14 of 2013 (KE:2013) indicates that the Board of Management is responsible for the governance of state schools in Kenya. Section (56) of this Act indicates that the composition of the Board of Management must consist of the following members: six persons elected to represent parents of the pupils in the school or local community in the case of county secondary schools; one person nominated by the County Education Board; one representative of the teaching staff in the school elected by the teachers; three representatives of the sponsors of the school; one person to represent special interest groups in the community; and one person to represent persons with special needs and a representative of the students' council who shall be an *ex officio* member.

Section (59) of this Act sets out the functions of the Board of Management namely to: promote the best interests of the institution; ensure the provision of proper and adequate physical facilities for the institution; manage the institution's affairs in accordance with the rules and regulations governing the occupational safety and health; advise the County Education Board on the staffing needs of the institution; determine cases of pupils' discipline and present reports to the County Education

Board; prepare a comprehensive term report on all areas of its mandate and submit the report to the County Education Board; facilitate and ensure the provision of guidance and counselling to all learners; provide for the welfare and observe the human rights and ensure safety of the pupils, teachers and non-teaching staff at the institution; encourage a culture of dialogue and participatory democratic governance at the institution; encourage the learners, teachers and non-teaching staff and other, parents and the community, and other stakeholders to render voluntary services to the institution; allow reasonable use of the facilities of the institution for community, social and other lawful purposes; administer and manage the resources of the institution; receive, collect and account for any funds accruing to the institution; recruit, employ and remunerate such number of non-teaching staff as may be required by the institution in accordance with this Act; and perform any other function to facilitate the implementation of its functions under this Act or any other written law.

3.7.5.4 Nigeria

The Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education in Nigeria established School-Based Management Committees (herein after SBMCs) to contribute to development, planning and decision-making at school level to improve learning outcomes (Ministry of Basic Education and Training, 2017:11). The SBMC consists of 15 members with representations from a diverse range of group : traditional leaders or representatives [1]; head of school [1]; representative of the teachers [1]; representatives of pupils [2]; representative of community women [1]; representatives of Community Development Associations [2]; representatives of Old Pupils' Association of the School (Female and Male) [2]; PTA Representatives (Male and Female) [2]; representatives of artisans working in the community [1] and religious leaders or representatives [1] (Ministry of Basic Education and Training, 2017:11).

The SBMC has to perform a wide range of functions namely to provide avenues for all stakeholders to participate actively in school governance; promote community interest in the school system; provide feedback to the wider community on issues that have to do with school governance, management, inclusion, regulations, and learning outcomes; encourage a harmonious relationship between the school, officials and state education agencies; facilitate and support disadvantaged groups and those with special needs within the community to have access to education;

raise the level of pupil enrolment, retention, attendance, completion and transition across various levels of basic and post- basic education; provide communities with the capacity and mechanisms to demand accountability and transparency from duty bearers in the education sector; promote and support schools to achieve set targets/benchmarks for better learning outcomes and more effective management; provide the mechanism and framework for direct funding to schools, with SBMCs having oversight functions on expenditures by the school management; encourage stakeholders to create safe, friendly and conducive learning environments for all learners; provide a legal framework for involving all stakeholders, including the communities, to participate in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of educational outcomes at the school level and provide and update the School Development Plan (SDP) on an annual basis (Ministry of Basic Education and Training, 2017:11).

3.7.5.5 New Zealand

In New Zealand, a School Board is made up of a cross-section of the community and represents a particular school's stakeholders namely: the principal, who is a full member of the board as well as the educational leader of the school, the chief executive, and an employee of the board; a staff trustee, who is nominated and elected by the school's teaching and non-teaching staff; a student trustee (for schools with students above year 9), who is nominated and elected by the students; parent-elected trustees who, whether or not they are actually, parents of students at the school, bring a parent/community perspective (New Zealand, Ministry of Education, 2010:8). The School Board may also have: co-opted trustees, who may be co-opted for various reasons (for example, because they have an expertise or perspective that is needed by the board or to provide gender or ethnic balance) and proprietors' appointees, who are selected by proprietors of state-integrated schools to help preserve the special character of the school. They are selected to represent the proprietor rather than any other stakeholder group (New Zealand, Ministry of Education, 2010:8)

The School Board has a wide range of responsibilities to: attain a high standard of educational achievement; ensure that the school is a physically and emotionally safe place for all students and staff; give effect to relevant student rights set out in this Act, the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990, and the Human Rights Act 1993; take

all reasonable steps to eliminate racism, stigma, bullying, and any other forms of discrimination within the school and caters for students with differing needs (New Zealand, Ministry of Education, 2010:8).

3.7.5.6 Australia

According to the School Education Act 1999 and the School Education Regulations 2000 (ASTL, 2000) the School Board/Council comprises: a mandated parent representation (except where the majority of students are 18 years of age or over); staff representation (the principal is automatically included); general community representation; optional co-opted community and industry representation; student representation (15+ years for an unincorporated council/board) and where the school has a Parents and Citizens' Association (P&C), the association may nominate a representative to be considered for the parent or general community category of membership.

According to section 128 of the School Education Act 1999 (ASTL, 1999) the following functions are allocated to the School Board/School Council, namely: establishing and reviewing the school's objectives, priorities and general policy directions; planning financial arrangements necessary to fund those objectives, priorities and directions; evaluating the school's performance in achieving those objectives, priorities and direction; formulating codes of conduct for students at the school; take part in the selection of, but not the appointment of, the school principal or any other member of the teaching staff; approve a charge or contribution determined by the principal for the provision of materials, services and facilities; approve the costs determined by the principal to be paid for participation in an extra cost optional component of the school's educational program; approve the items determined by the principal to be supplied by a student for the student's personal use in the school's educational program; approve an agreement or arrangement for advertising or sponsorship in relation to a government school; determine a dress code for students; provide advice to the principal of the school on a general policy concerning the use in school activities of prayers, songs and material based on religious, spiritual or moral values of a school activity as part of religious education; promote the school in the community; liaise with other groups/committees associated with the school e.g., the Parents and Citizens' Association and hold an annual public meeting at least once in every calendar year that is open to the public.

3.8 CONCLUSION

In both of the African countries analysed in this study the Kenyan and Nigerian governments in power realised that a total centralised education system would not be beneficial to the education system in the long run. In Kenya, successive governments have realised that local authorities are required in the development process of education and in 2003 plans were set in motion to decentralise aspects of education. The Nigerian government decided that the Nigerian education system and the administrative component of the education system had to be decentralised to structures lower down in government.

In order to get a perspective of education governance and management beyond the African continent, the education systems of New Zealand and Australia were also scrutinised. In New Zealand the Picot report (NZL, 1988) concluded that the education system was overly centralised and that parents had little control or choice in a school system that was traditionally regulated by bureaucrats. The Picot report suggested that the control of schools had to be decentralised by transferring control from the Ministry of Education to locally instituted Boards of Trustees.

In the Australian context the education system was also extremely centralised. A noticeable characteristic of Australian education is the standardisation of design pertaining to constructions, furnishings, apparatus, approaches and mindsets of pupils and educators. This standardisation is the consequence of decisions being made at high levels of the education bureaucracy. However, inside the states and school districts, there is an emergent proclivity to decentralise duties to school leaders and elected school councils or school boards. School councils or representative boards have been created to afford grassroot participation rights at community level.

The governments of Kenya, Nigeria, New Zealand and Australia seem to believe that a decentralised education system is more beneficial to provide a higher quality of education to their people than a centralised system. By providing stakeholders with a chance to make inputs in education, the system can be more refined to cater for the diverse needs of the communities. In this regard, South Africa moved in the right direction after 1994 by moving away from a highly centralised education system to a decentralised system. However, the literature and data suggest that there are government tendencies to systematically recentralise aspects of school

management and governance back to a central apex in the DBE thereby leaving the local school communities with less discretionary decision-making authority. These recentralisation tendencies are against best international practice. The conundrum the South African school system could face is to move back to a centralised education system similar to the one the Apartheid government in place before 1994. The literature also indicates that, although these countries have decentralised education systems, these systems are also susceptible to politics in various forms such as:

- restrictive policies;
- education bureaucrats that derail principals' vision;
- lack of stakeholder support; and
- state interference/policy that exerts systemic influence over local responsibilities.

The principal is the protagonist in school management in all four of the countries just like their counterparts in South Africa. In Kenya, the school principals are to a certain extent deemed to be managers. Although the principal has the authority to put into operation all decisions, decision-making is a participatory exercise shared by a Board of Management and a Parent-Teacher Association. In Nigeria, the school head is seen as the communication channel between the school and the school board. The professional management of school activities in the past was traditionally allocated to only the principal, who had to plan for the entire school. To readapt school management along democratic principles, several workshops were organised by the All-Nigeria Confederation of Principals of Secondary Schools (ANCOPPS) with a clear opinion that the management of schools should not hinge on one person but should be a collective undertaking of the school management team (Nwangwa & Omotere, 2013:161). In New Zealand the Board of Trustees relies on the principal, as highest authority in the school, to furnish them with the information they need to be wholly informed on affairs applicable to school management. The Board of Trustees is required to hold the principal, as the school's highest authority, accountable for efficient performance. Boards are legally accountable for guaranteeing that their schools' function within the framework of the government regulations. This includes the New Zealand Curriculum and the National Administration Guidelines preparing and upholding an annual plan and a

long-term plan, and reporting annually to the community and the Ministry of Education in terms of the school's charter (New Zealand, Ministry of Education, 2010:8). In Australia the Australian Professional Standard for Principals (the Standards) (AITSL, 2011) was developed to provide guidance on what is expected from the principal in reference to school management. The Standards has propounded a public deposition stipulating what school principals are required to have knowledge of, comprehend and do to be successful in their work. The Standards is based on three leadership requirements: vision and values, knowledge and understanding, personal qualities, social and interpersonal skills.

In all four countries the principal/head teacher is the professional manager of the school like their South African counterparts. Although the principal is the main authoritative figure in school management, he/she is not the only person making decisions regarding the day-to-day operations at school.

One can deduce that, when any of these governments recentralise functions back from the SGB (in the context of South Africa), Board of Management and a Parent-Teacher Association (in the context of Kenya), School Board (in the context of Nigeria), Board of Trustees (in the context of New Zealand) and School Council / School Board (in the context of Australia), the principal's / school head's autonomy to make discretionary decisions more is also restricted.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The focus of my study was to explore the perspectives that principals have regarding recentralised decentralisation of their management and governance functions. It was imperative to design the study in such a way as to get as close as possible to the participants. This allowed me to get an insider's perspective of how principals understand and interpret the impact recentralisation has on their management and governance functions.

According to Creswell and Poth (2017), philosophical beliefs are generally the initial beliefs a researcher has in the development of a study. These philosophical opinions assisted me as the researcher to establish a roadmap on how to successfully execute the research.

My view on reality (ontology) and how I make sense of reality (epistemology) made me choose the interpretive paradigm. Creswell and Poth (2017) mention that in the interpretive paradigm, the main objective of research is to ensure that enough time is put aside for the researcher to get a better perspective on the perceptions the participants have of their situation. Therefore, I made use of a qualitative research approach. My research design is in the form of a case study. The case study as a qualitative approach enabled me to probe into the participants' real-life experiences. The case study is a bounded system, and I used a multiple case study, by making use of in-depth data collection techniques such as in-depth interviews (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

4.2 DECLARING MY POSITION

I need to point out that I was a school principal and that I am currently employed in a senior position at a national teachers' union. There is a real possibility that these two facts might affect how participants responded to my questions. They might also be suspicious about my motivation for the study. I would therefore have to adopt special measures that would limit the possible impact of my standing in education on the results of the study.

In this regard, Smith and Noble (2014) emphasise that *"bias is present in all study designs, even if researchers try to reduce bias. Identifying possible sources of bias*

allows better critical assessment of the research results and deductions". Researchers enter a research project with their own understandings, ideas, predeterminations and individual philosophies, which if it is communicated in the beginning of the study, improve the transparency of possible research bias (Smith and Noble, 2014).

Nagappan (2001) indicates that the problem is that it is easy to take notice of likely sources of bias, but it is not so easy to establish rules to evaluate the validity of particular research papers or fields of research. It is also a difficult to list measures which are to be followed methodically to lessen bias and error. Consequently, a researcher must contemplate on social procedures that could sustain research honesty and enhance its fairness. Researchers need to establish ways to guard against their own biases. Any research approach eventually requires credibility to be useful (Nagappan, 2001).

4.3 LIMITING MY OWN BIAS

According to Nagappan (2001:1), the researcher must do an introspective evaluation of himself/herself concerning the subject that will be researched as a prerequisite for coping with bias. This is the reason why I am declaring my position early in this research study.

In this regard I will implement certain mechanisms to limit the personal biases I might have. Borowska-Beszta (2017:65-66) mentions that *"transparency and reflection right through the research process from the design phase to field data collection, analysis and report writing must be the rule"*. I will send my transcribed data to the participants to assess the accuracy of the transcriptions. The research will also be read by two critical readers. Borowska-Beszta (2017:66) also points to *"the importance of openness to particular and non-standard customs of communicating and knowledge of the particular emotional and physical conduct of the participants to limit bias"*.

Galdas (2017:1), like Borowska-Beszta, states that *"if the researcher critically evaluates their function, potential bias during construction of the research questions, data collection, including sample recruitment and choice of location will be reduced"*. During my interviews, I endeavoured to establish an atmosphere in which the participants felt comfortable and safe to answer the questions honestly. I have sent my interview schedules to the participants in advance for them to familiarise

themselves with what I am going to ask during the interview. I composed the questions in such a way that they were easy to interpret. I also assured participants that the information they share with me would be handled in total confidentiality and would not be linkable to them. Even if they provided information that might upset some of their superiors, the information would not be traceable to me or them.

4.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Smit and Oosthuizen (2011) describe the approach of democracy as stipulated in the Constitution of 1996 as participatory democracy. SASA (RSA, 1996a) was expected to encourage participative decision-making in the education system (Prinsloo, 2006). Section 16(1) of SASA clearly states that the governance of every public school is entrusted to the SGB, and section 16(3) of SASA stipulates that the principal is responsible for the management of the school (RSA, 1996a).

In this regard, important decision-making duties have been delegated from central government to self-governing and self-managing school communities as expressed in the establishment of SGBs and the fact that the principal must execute the decisions of the SGB (Smit, 2001). However, Koelble and Siddle's (2013) research revealed that decentralisation has not realised its promises. South Africa's local government is in a state of palsy, typified by service delivery failures and dysfunctionality. Mbecke (2014) indicates that these unsuccessful decentralisation outcomes are the results of: poor governance; at grassroot level the community is not consulted in important decisions; not enough resources are made available to sufficiently look after the demands of the people; no rational planning; monitoring and evaluation systems are in place; and non-adherence to applicable laws, policies, regulations, and procedures are in the order of the day.

My research problem is focused on this unsuccessful decentralised governance era and the impact it had on the education system. It is also in this decentralised era where the phenomena of centralisation and recentralisation are located. Madsen, Andersen and Due (2001) refer to centralised decentralisation as the relocation or redistribution of decision-making powers between different levels in each system. As a result, the Government is responding with more authority, putting into place more bureaucratic and centralised structures through control, forced actions and compliance to administer unsuccessful decentralised governed systems such as the education system (Du Plessis, 2019).

In this study, I examined the way the government started to implement (re)centralisation to take back control of an underperforming education system. In this regard, I interviewed principals to obtain their perspectives on these recentralisation actions and the impact it had on their management and governance functions.

4.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

4.5.1 Linking the theoretical framework to research questions

Archer (2013:1) believes that education is an arena in which continuous power tussles take place. These power tussles are responsible for the changes in education systems. The changes in the education system are driven by meticulous actions of opposing social groups. Consequently, Archer (2013:1) states that *“the nature of education is rarely, if ever, the practical realisation of an ideal form of instruction as envisaged by a particular group”*. This power tussles in education were evident in the manner how the apartheid government centralised education through policies and laws before 1994. It was also evident in the way in which the British centralised education during their colonisation periods in Kenya, Nigeria, New Zealand and Australia. The apartheid government and the British used education to realise their ideologies.

My main research question contains keywords such as governance, management, recentralised decentralisation, that can be directly linked to these power relationships that occur. In this regard, Fukuyama (2013:3-4) defines governance as follows:

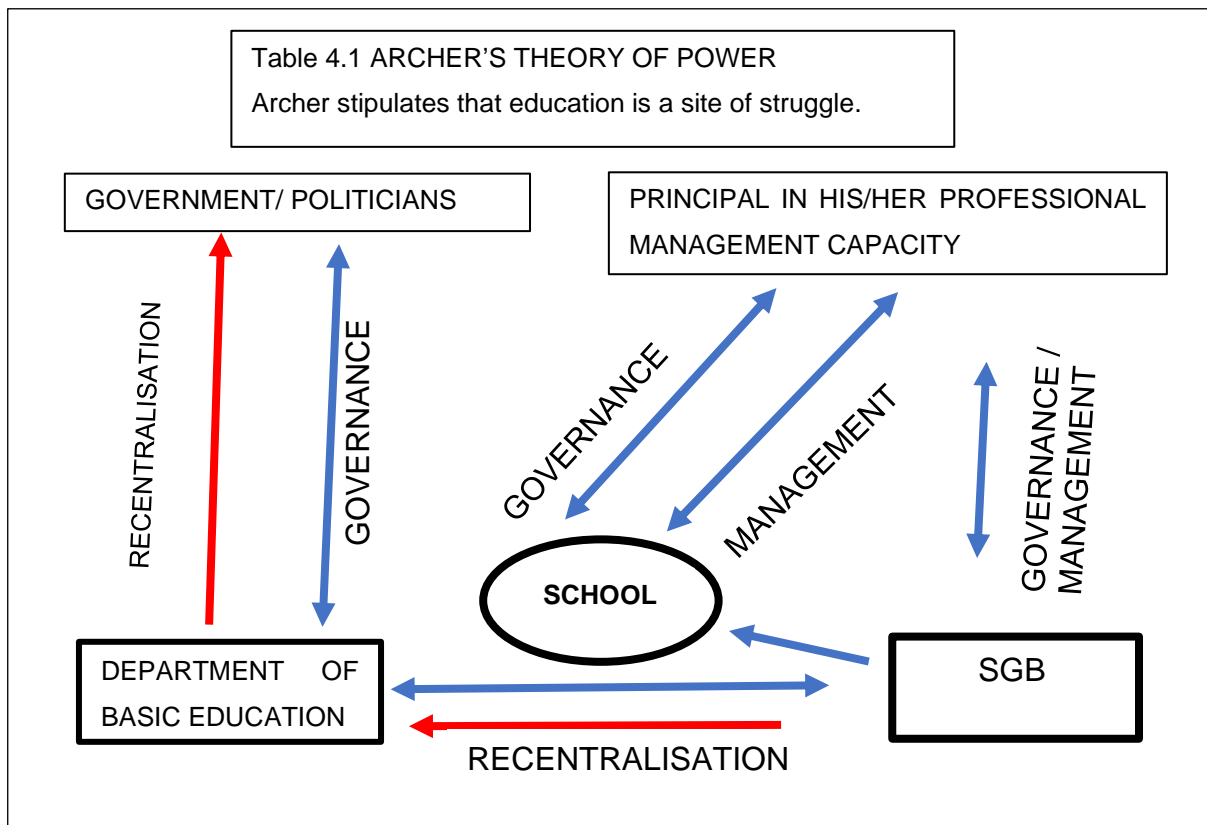
A government’s right to formulate and apply rules, and to provide services, irrespective of whether that government is democratic or not. Through the execution of rules, a power relationship is formed that enforces rules onto citizens.

Olum (2004) views management as:

The art, or science, of achieving goals through people. Since managers also supervise, management can be interpreted to literally mean overlooking or making sure people do what they are supposed to do.

In other words, the manager stands in a position of power and uses this power to achieve goals. Leung (2004:1) states that “*when the loss of control is perceived to be as a result of decentralisation, the process of regaining the authority devolved is called recentralisation*”. On the grounds of this assertion, recentralisation can be described as regaining control and power by the apex structure in the department from the lower spheres in the department and governance to which power has been decentralised. My questions probed the power interactions among the principal and the SGB and the principal and the Department from the principal’s perspective. In these power relations the principal finds him/herself in a precarious position where the Department (the national political authority) and the SGB (the direct school authority) both have the power to delegate but also curtail the functions of the principal through recentralisation actions. The Department can implement policy to realise certain objectives the current government (the ANC) has set for themselves. The SGB might not agree and could force the principal to implement policy at the school that is contrary to the Department’s policy and *vice versa*. Consequently, the principal is caught in the middle of these power tussles where the outcome always has an impact on the principals’ management and governance functions.

Table 4.1 illustrates these power relationships.



The blue arrows represent the governance/management relationship that transpire among the government (the Department of Basic Education) and the SGB and the SGB and the principal. The red arrows represent the governance/management powers that government can recentralise to regain control of the system.

4.5.2 Research questions

❖ Main research question

- What are principals' perspectives of recentralisation regarding their management and governance functions in public schools?

❖ Sub-questions

- What are principals' understanding of the term professional school management?
- Describe the type of leadership/management style principals implement at school. Explain why this style is implemented.
- What is the principal's understanding of the term "school governance"?
- What should the relationship between the principal and the SGB be like?
- What is your understanding of the following sentiment contained in the preamble of the Schools Act: The Schools Act should "promote the acceptance of responsibility for the organisation, governance and funding of schools in partnership with the State"?

4.6 PARADIGMATIC PERSPECTIVE

A paradigm refers a researcher's perception of convictions, morals and viewpoints of the world in which he/she lives, or to put it differently, the methodological postulations or frame of reference that offers guidance to the researcher's work in the specific field of research (Taylor & Medina, 2013:1; O'Neil & Koekemoer, 2016:3). According to Taylor and Medina (2013:2), "*A paradigm takes account of how a researcher perceives reality (i.e., ontology) where ontology refers to the nature of our beliefs about reality*". Researchers have theories (sometimes implicit) about the real world, the way it came to be and what more are we able to find out about it (Rehman and Alharthi, 2016:3121).

In this study, I will make use of the interpretivist paradigm to understand the subjective world of human experience (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017:33). This approach will further allow me to get into the heads of the participants in the study so to speak.

The essence of this paradigm is that every individual has his or her belief about what reality is. By making use of semi-structured interviews with some open-ended probing questions I will be able to access the independent thoughts of each participant (Newcomer, Hatry & Wholey, 2015:189).

4.6.1 Interpretivist paradigm

Interpretivists prefer to use a qualitative approach (Thanh & Thanh, 2015:25). According to Cresswell and Poth (2017:53) *“the ontological matters are related to the nature of reality and its features. When researchers undertake qualitative research, they are embracing the notion of various realities”*. In essence, researchers have diverse perspectives of the various realities the same as to the participants being studied (Cresswell & Poth, 2017). This is an important aspect because a researcher must always strive to get a general perspective.

4.6.2 Ontological perspective

Ontology refers to the perception that there is one certain reality or different, socially created realities (Patton, 2002). Dieronitou (2014:7) indicates that *“ontology can be seen as the philosophical study of issues of existence and reaching an unambiguous sense and interpretation of the things that exist in the world”*.

The ontological position of interpretivism is relativism. Relativism is the perception that reality is subjective and that each person experience reality differently (Scotland, 2012:10). Willig (2016:6) indicates that:

This transpires as a result of collapsing ontological and epistemological concerns into one called the epistemic fallacy, thus creating a realism-relativism dualism which has the result of leaving us with only two opposing views of the nature of reality: one that advocates that there is a singular external reality which can be honestly and objectively captured by the researcher (realism), and another which proposes that what is experienced as real is defined by the state of mind of the person who is experiencing it and that there is no reality outside such subjective realities (relativism).

The realities we experience is determined by our senses. Without consciousness, the world will be purposeless with no meaning. Reality appears when mindfulness connects with things which are already *“pregnant with meaning”* (Crotty: 1998:43).

Reality is individually constructed. Frowe (2001:185) states that *“there are as many realities as individuals. Language does not unreceptively compartmentalize objects but actively shapes and moulds reality”*. Thus, there exists an objective reality that is called realism, and another reality called subjective reality (this is the state of mind of the participants that I will be interviewing). By being mindful of the realism-relativism dualism, I endeavoured to understand the participants' thoughts/perspectives regarding the (re)centralisation tendencies that are currently taking place in the education system.

4.6.3 Epistemology

O'Leary (2017) explains that epistemology is the way we come to have a true comprehension of the world. The rules for knowing the personal epistemologies an individual has will impact how they come to understand the world. Schraw (2013:2) refers to the epistemological worldview as *“the individual's belief system about the type and gathering of knowledge”*. He makes use of the term in relation to additional terms in the literature such as personal epistemology and epistemological viewpoints, the inter-connectivity indicates that there is a sequence of conceptions or an individual theory about wisdom and the way wisdom is justified (Schraw, 2013:3). The epistemological perception of the world encompasses all of an individual's transparent and hidden viewpoints, brashness, and hopes about the realisation, construct, depiction and implementation of knowledge (Schraw, 2013:3).

It is important to be mindful of the disparities between epistemological beliefs and epistemological views of the world. Epistemological beliefs are the grouping of specific views about specific facets of knowledge such as certainty, plainness, origin or validation (Schraw, 2012:2). Epistemological worldviews comprise a set of views that together depicts a person's state of mind about nature and the realisation of knowledge (Schraw, 2013:2).

Consequently, the frame of reference in which the principal grew up will contribute to moulding the principal's views, attitudes and suppositions about the attainment, construction, depiction, and application of knowledge which eventually forms the principal's world view. Inside of this epistemological world view, the principal compartmentalises a precise set of beliefs about particular dimensions of existence that defines their attitude and conduct on particular issues. A further assumption is that the personal epistemological beliefs the principal holds would impact the choice

of management style and the way the principal engages with the educators in the school. Finally, the conclusion can be drawn that the epistemological beliefs principals hold regarding their duties and responsibilities will have a direct influence on how principals execute their functions and responsibilities.

4.7 RESEARCH APPROACH: A QUALITATIVE APPROACH

According to Cresswell and Poth (2017:42-43)

Qualitative research is concerned with research problems related to the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem or phenomenon.

The authors elaborated on the statement and stated:

To study this [meaning – my insertion], researchers use an emergent qualitative approach to inquire. The collection of data takes place in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study, and data analysis is both inductive and deductive and establishes patterns or themes.

A qualitative approach suited my study the best since I wanted to understand principals' perspectives of a human problem, namely the impact that recentralisation has on their functions and responsibilities to manage the school and the governing body's functions and responsibilities to govern the school.

Mayan (2016:43) describes a qualitative approach as “*an exploratory analysis that is mainly true-to-life, interpretive and inductive*”. The qualitative approach is employed by researchers to understand natural occurrences that take place to have a better perception of the people involve in these occurrences (Mayan, 2016:43).

The qualitative approach has distinct characteristics:

- Qualitative researchers generally collect data in the field at the research site where participants are experiencing a specific situation, issue or problem of the study also known as the natural setting (Creswell & Poth, 2017). In my research, I visited selected principals at the schools they professionally manage. I collected and analysed the data by examining and exploring relevant documents, observing behaviour and interviewing participants.
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- The researcher is the protagonist in the study they undertake (Cresswell & Poth, 2017). I gathered, transcribed and analysed all the data myself.
 - Qualitative researchers gather various types of data (Cresswell & Poth, 2017). I supplemented the data I collected through the interviews by conducting in-depth investigations of literature regarding school management and governance. Additionally, I also did document and case law analyses.
 - Qualitative researchers make use of multifaceted thinking processes such as inductive and deductive logic. This concerns the structuring of data patterns inductively into progressively more understandable sections of data (Cresswell & Poth, 2017).
 - Researchers also use deductive thought processes in that they arrange themes that are recurrently being interwoven together with the data (Cresswell & Poth, 2017). The inductive/deductive thought processes indicate that the qualitative researcher employs multi-dimensional thought processes throughout the different stages of the research (Cresswell & Poth, 2017). I used data coding to analyse my data inductively from meaningful segments to codes, then into categories and clusters and finally into themes. In the qualitative research process, researchers continue to concentrate on the 'unearthing' of the participants' problems or issues and not the opinions and beliefs of the other scholars the researcher came across in previous research studies conducted in the field. The participants' understandings further suggest different viewpoints on a topic (Cresswell & Poth, 2017). The essence of my research was to explore the perceptions that principals hold regarding the recentralised decentralisation of their management and governance functions in the school.
 - The research takes place in area where the participants are functioning on a daily basis. To better understand the context in which the problem is being studied, the researcher must orientate himself/herself to have a better insight of the circumstances that the
-

participants work in. This enables the researcher to have a better insight why the participants have certain perspectives of their circumstances. (Cresswell & Poth, 2017). To understand the contextual influences that affect the participants, I visited each school several times to get a better insight into how the school was managed and governed.

- The qualitative research approach is a continuous evolving process. Certain stages of the research process could evolve or change when the researcher enters the site to collect data. This could impact the research approaches the researcher planned to implement (Creswell & Poth, 2017). The qualitative approach allowed me to change the format of my questions or the initial participants that I selected for my research. In other words, the qualitative approach's flexibility helped me to retrieve rich data from information-rich participants.

4.8 RESEARCH DESIGN

In my research I used a multi-case study to analyse different principals' perceptions of recentralised decentralisation of their management and governance functions.

4.8.1 What is a case study?

Cresswell and Poth (2017) defined a case study as follows:

A case study is a qualitative approach in which the researcher explores a real-life, present bounded system (a case), over a time and space, through detailed, in-depth data gathering practices like interviews and the collection and analysis of documents and reports.

Case studies enables researchers to attain a more comprehensive grasp of the context and meaning of the people involved (Dawson, Hancock & Algozzine, 2016). In this regard, I visited school principals in a specific school district. This is the reason why my research can be viewed as a bounded case study. The aim was also to visit schools that are categorised as quintile 1 to 3 schools (poorer schools) and schools that are categorised as quintile 4 and 5 schools (wealthier schools). The quintile system is a system that categorises schools according to their financial means. This is important because the financial position of the school is determined

by the community that the school serves. In essence, this will influence the management and governance approach the principal implements at school.

4.8.2 Characteristics of a case study

A case study has several characteristics. To begin with, a case study enables a researcher to identify a specific case to study. Typically, case study researchers gather data not lost through time of real -life cases that's continuously changing on a day-to-day basis (Creswell & Poth, 2017). In this research, I explored principals' perspectives of recentralisation of their management and governance functions, which is an ongoing phenomenon in schools.

For the case identification, it must be bounded, this implies that it could be described within specific borders (Cresswell & Poth, 2017). My study was bounded because I only conducted my interviews at schools in a specific school district. The multiple case study enabled me to focus on the specific phenomenon, namely recentralisation, while selecting multiple participants to get their perceptions on the issue.

Another characteristic of a strong qualitative case study is that it gives a broad insight to the researcher of the case (Cresswell & Poth, 2017). To achieve this, I explored the literature and documents available on this issue as a supplement to the data that I retrieved from the interviews. The methods in the manner that data is analysed in a case study varies from case to case (Cresswell & Poth, 2017). In this instance, I made use of data coding.

Lastly, case studies often conclude with conclusions regarding assumptions formed by the researcher about the general meaning emerging from the case(s). In the last chapter I discuss the conclusions of my research. A multiple case study method suited the qualitative research I conducted to do an in-depth analysis of the participants I interviewed.

4.8.3 Disadvantages of a case study

It is important to take note of the disadvantages of a case study. Regardless of the advantages of a case study, this approach can also be criticised.

Firstly, case studies are often accused of lack of thoroughness. (Zainal, 2007:4) cautioned prospective researchers: *"The case study investigator must always guard*

against becoming too sloppy, in the sense that vague evidence or subjective views can impact the direction of the results and conclusions”.

Secondly, case studies only offer a small scope to make general statements because they make use small number of participants (Zainal, 2007:4). Thirdly, case studies are often described as being too long and the result is an enormous amount of data. Case studies of ethnographic or longitudinal nature specifically can result in a substantial amount of data over a period. It can become problematic if the researcher did not organise the data systematically.

Fourthly, a common criticism of a case study approach is its dependence on a single case exploration. This makes it an arduous affair to make a general deduction (Zainal, 2007:4).

4.9 PARTICIPANTS AND SAMPLING

I decided to use purposive sampling in the selection of my participants. According to Creswell and Poth (2017), purposive sampling assists the researcher to distinguish between sites and participants to comprehend the problem and research question better. The individuals must have stories to share regarding their own experiences of the phenomena of management and governance of their schools. Participants must be prepared to ponder on and share their experience. Teddlie and Yu (2007:80) refer to purposive sampling as *“selecting components such as individuals, groups of individuals and institutions based on their particular characteristics”*.

To simplify my purposive sampling of participants, I made use of sampling criteria. The sampling criteria are the characteristics considered necessary to pick information-rich participants. The sampling criteria assisted me in the selection of the target population, and the sample was selected from the reachable population situated in the target population. The sample criteria should be appropriate for a study but not so restricted that researchers are unable to attain a suitable number of participants (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

A study should also specify the inclusion or exclusion sampling criteria (Gray, Grove & Sutherland, 2016:332). Inclusion sampling criteria are a set group of criteria that are predetermined in advance to enable the researcher to select the most suitable, data-rich participants for a study. The meticulous selection of inclusion measures

will contribute to the external and internal validity of the study, increase its viability, lower its costs, and address concerns (Gray, Grove & Sutherland, 2016:332). More specifically, thorough selection standards will guarantee the similarity of the sample group, reduce misinterpretations, and increase the chances of discovering a valid relationship between exposure/intervention and outcomes (Salkind, 2010).

4.9.1 Sampling procedures

My sampling procedure commenced with a school visit. During the first visit I presented my planned research to the principal. I enquired about the principal's own experiences in the management and governance of their schools. If I received positive feedback, I requested the necessary permission to conduct my research at the school.

4.9.2 Sampling criteria

According to Laws, Harper and Jones (2013:233) it is important to find excellent participants to gather 'excellent data'. Morse (2007) in Laws et al., (2013) asserts that not all people interested in participating in research will be 'excellent' participants. 'Excellent' participants must be knowledgeable in their experiences of the phenomenon being researched. The researcher needs to pay special attention to how he/she invites people to participate to link to their own specific experiences.

a. Sampling criterion one – principals

I will interview principals. In SASA (RSA, 1996a) some of the functions and responsibilities of the principal are clearly outlined. In section 16(3) the Act stipulates that the professional management of a public school is the sole responsibility of the principal that receives instructions from the HOD (RSA, 1996a). In section 16A the Act stipulates that the principal is the representative of the HOD in the SGB when acting in an official capacity as contemplated in sections 23(1)(b) and 24(1)(j) (RSA, 1996a). The Act further indicates in section 16A(3) that the principal must assist the SGB in the execution of their tasks (RSA, 1996a). In this regard, it is important to take note that the principal may be losing control of these functions and responsibilities to manage and govern because of recentralisation processes. The principal is the person in the system that is directly affected by the recentralisation tendencies of government. I want to understand principals' awareness, understandings and perspectives of these recentralisation tendencies.

b. Sampling criterion two – generational issues

I will interview principals from both the Baby Boomer and Generation X age groups. The Baby Boomer generation in management positions are approaching the end of their careers. This generation may have understandings and perceptions of these recentralising actions that differ from those of younger principals. In this regard, I will also select so-called Generation X principals. This generation has relatively little experience of being principals. With age comes more experience and this influences how a person sees the world. It is understandable that the older generation, that grew up in an era when fundamental human rights were not acknowledged in South Africa, may have perceptions different to those younger generations who grew up knowing that they have fundamental human rights which are entrenched in the Bill of Rights.

c. Sampling criterion three – timeframe of employment as principals

In the selection of the participants, I also had to keep in mind that some of the participants have acted as principals during the decentralising era just after 1994 and in the recentralisation era. This is the reason I decided to include the Baby Boomer generation to get their perspectives because they managed schools during the system 'cross-over' from a centralised to a decentralised system.

4.9.3 Proposed profile of participants

- **Baby Boomers**

1946 - 1964 12 Principals between the ages of 55 - 65 years of age.

- **Generation X**

1965 - 1980 12 Principals between the ages of 39 - 54 years of age.

4.10 DATA COLLECTION

4.10.1 Semi-structured interviews

I opted to make use of semi-structured interviews. According to Blandford (2013:23), *“semi-structured interviews are best suited for understanding people’s perceptions and experiences. Furthermore, the semi-structured interview is a more adaptive type of interview as it allows the researcher the freedom to unearth and probe the interviewee’s answers to obtain greater details”*. The semi-structured interview

enables the researcher to ask extra questions as a method to probe for more knowledge about an issue, which also affords the principal a chance to elaborate on a particular issue. The approach of the researcher, and the pre-arrangements, e.g., supplying the participants with the interview schedules, familiarising themselves with the research site are essential to the attainment of rich data (Dimond, 2015). It is also important to take note of the disadvantages of semi-structured interviews. According to (Adams, 2015:493) semi-structured interviews:

- can take up a lot of time. In this regard, I gave myself sufficient time to conduct the interviews over an extended period. This also allowed me ample time to thoroughly analyse the data that I gathered.
- require interviewer sophistication (interviewers need to be well-informed, to have sympathy, self-assured). I conducted thorough research on the topic to ask well-informed questions to the participants. This enabled me to also respond appropriately to the comments they made. I also visited the school and the principal before the interview to familiarise myself with the environment and culture of the school. This made me more sensitive to the challenges the principals experienced in managing and governing the school.

I mailed a copy of my interview schedule to the participants a week in advance of the scheduled interview date.

4.10.2 Literature review

Tate, Furtmueller, Evermann and Bandara (2015) indicate that studying the preceding literature is an essential aspect in every academic study. A well-researched literature review establishes a firm foundation for producing knowledge, allowing theory development, identify areas where there are a saturation of research and opens areas where research is required (Furtmueller, Evermann & Bandara, 2015).

Literature reviews should truthfully report the facts or data on a topic and offer an all-encompassing review of the best-offered research from previously published studies associated with a particular topic (Baker, 2016:265). Literature reviews support researchers in their decision-making when they choose, explain and enrich hypotheses to uncover limitations in previous research. Literature reviews could therefore be seen as a tool for confirming hypotheses and views by offering insight

to the researcher into the complexities underlying the conclusions of other research and they may offer more decisive outcomes than single primary research (Baker, 2016:265).

I surveyed national and international literature regarding centralisation, decentralisation and recentralisation of school management and governance in South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria, New Zealand and Australia. This enabled me to establish best international practices and whether South Africa is on par with the rest of the world regarding school management and governance.

4.10.3 Case law

Case law can be seen as a part of common law that is made up of judgments enforced by the courts to comprehend the laws applicable to cases brought before them. I investigated case law to get a better understanding of how the courts had to intervene where department officials and politicians abused their positions to control sensitive school management and governance issues that affected the autonomy of the principal in some or other way (Božič, 2015:495).

4.10.4 Legislation

In this study, I investigated the centralisation tendencies of the government. I discussed the proposed BELA (DBE, 2017). Thereafter I explored the *ultra vires* actions of departmental officials and politicians where they acted beyond their authority to take control of issues pertaining to school management and governance.

4.11 DATA ANALYSIS

The method I used to analyse the data is called data coding. Data coding starts with small units of data that stand on their own. We refer to these data parts as meaningful segments, which are used to arrange the data set (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). After I had identified the segments, I used them to formulate codes (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). In the next step, I isolated the appropriate words or phrases and arranged them into categories (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). Then I divided the categories into themes and the themes into clusters of themes. Finally, I grouped the themes and clusters of themes into patterns (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014).

4.12 TRUSTWORTHINESS AND CREDIBILITY

I endeavoured to ensure the trustworthiness and credibility of my research by means of the following:

4.12.1 Credibility

Credibility is the degree of assurance that can be ascribed to the truthfulness of the conclusions made by the researcher (Korstenjens & Moser, 2018). Approaches to guarantee credibility include triangulation, member checking and a reflexive journal.

4.12.2 Triangulation

According to Graue (2015:9), *“triangulation means that the researcher uses data from a variety of sources applying a variety of methods”*. The similarity or variation of data obtained from several different data sets allows the researcher to form an opinion on the reliability of data (Graue, 2015:9).

- **Literature review**

According to Randolph (2018), *“there are many practical and scientific motivations for doing a literature review”*. One practical reason is that it is a means of showing that the author is well-informed about the field, including its terminology, hypotheses, key variables and phenomena, its methods, and its history.

- **Document analysis**

According to Graue (2015), *“document analysis is an approach to documents that accentuates the function of the investigator in the creation of the meaning of, and in texts”*. In this study, document analysis (in the form of content analysis) was chosen as the second method, which would work well alongside the qualitative interviews and can enrich my study throughout the research process. The education stakeholders' comments regarding the proposed amendments to SASA assisted me to explore the possibility that the proposed BELA was an attempt to centralise control in government.

- **Member checks**

According to Madill and Sullivan (2017:323), member checking is often viewed as the golden norm for quality in qualitative research. For some methodologists, stakeholder agreement is key to demonstrating validity. The process involves

sending the analysed and interpreted data back to the participants for them to assess the elucidations made by the researcher. They can then put forward changes if they are not pleased with how the researcher has processed or interpreted the information, they made available or feel that they have been misrepresented (Anney, 2014:277).

- **Reflective journal**

Trustworthiness can also be attained by making use of a reflective journal or field journal. Anney (2014:279) describes reflective journals as “*introspective documents kept by the researcher in order to ponder on, cautiously understand information and plan data collection*”. The reflective journal assisted me to write down everything that happened in the field, specifically personal reflections relative to my study.

4.13 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

According to Cresswell and Poth (2017), ethics is a complicated notion and ethical conduct is contextual. What is thought to be correct or incorrect may be founded on the ethical codes governing a phenomenon. These ethical codes are subjective, and this is the reason why people have different views about ethics. Nevertheless, it does not matter from which angle a researcher thinks about ethics, ethics is a vital notion because it leads and assists researchers in thinking about their own beliefs, stances and, ultimately, their research ways or manners.

Ethics also supports the researcher to reflect on some of the hypotheses made at different design stages of a research study, and so, researchers are expected to analyse whether the judgements they make and the actions they carry out in the field or at a desk are appropriate. Creswell and Poth (2017) mention that ethical standards apply to all the different phases of the qualitative research practice, including before conducting the study (planning); commencement of the study and during the procedure of data gathering and evaluation.

4.13.1 Phase 1 – Ethical considerations prior to conducting the study

According to Cresswell and Poth (2017), it is important to get the consent of the institution’s ethics committee before the researcher embarks with any research processes. Attaining authorisation from different institutional review boards requires evidence that the researcher is aware of key ethical principles such as showing the necessary respect for the participants. In this regard, I had to apply for ethical

clearance at the university and the Gauteng DBE before I could start with my data collection.

4.13.2 Phase 2 - Respect for persons

Respect for participants includes how participants are treated (Cresswell & Poth, 2017). According to Petrova, Dewing and Camelleri (2016:3), these considerations arise from the researcher's mindfulness and appreciation of the value of confidentiality.

To make sure that my research was ethical, I first applied for ethical clearance at the university to conduct my research in the name of the university. Thereafter, I also applied for permission to conduct my research interviews with the identified school principals through the Directors of the Tshwane South, East, North and West School Districts of the Gauteng Department of Education (attached Appendix B).

In Appendix C, which deals with my invitation to prospective participants to participate in my research, I emphasised that the confidentiality of all participants in my research would be protected using pseudonyms.

4.13.3 Phase 3 – Ethical considerations at the beginning of the study

According to Creswell and Poth (2017), the start of the study normally begins where the researcher familiarises himself/herself with the research site and with the participants. It is important to outline the objectives of the research to the participants. This aspect is underlined in the informed consent form that must be completed for the university's ethical committee. As a general requirement, such forms always point out that participation in research is a voluntary and that the participant will not be in any danger. During an initial meeting which I set up with the principals of the participating schools, I explained the purpose of my research and how this research would contribute to the field of education law (see Appendix C).

4.13.4 Phase 4 – Collecting data

Creswell & Poth (2017) indicate that researchers must acquire the necessary approval to research a particular setting and converse to managers, or those in authority, how the researcher will minimise interruption of the site's regular activities while conducting the research. In the permission letter to the principal to grant me permission to conduct research at their school (Appendix C), I clearly stated that my

interviews would be carried out after school hours at a preferred venue and time that would best suit the participant.

4.13.5 Phase 5 – Analysing data

Bengtsson (2016:8) emphasises self-reflection as a key aspect of qualitative research. The researcher must consider his or her pre-understanding both in the planning and the analysis phase to circumvent any prejudice or personal influence making its way into the data. To have a predetermined understanding of the participants and to be familiar with the setting can be an advantage if it does not impact the informants or the interpretation of the results (Bengtsson, 2016:8).

To increase the objectiveness of my research, I reported multiple viewpoints. I achieved diversity by establishing sampling criteria for principals that can be classified into the following two generations, namely, Baby Boomers and Generation X.

4.13.6 Phase 6 – Reporting data

According to Cresswell and Poth (2017), researchers must not communicate any information that would undesirably influence participants in the present or future. Finally, plagiarism should be avoided by establishing what type of permission is needed to cite other researchers' works in a study. My research was supervised and will be sent to external moderators who will assist me in enhancing the quality of my study. This is quite important, as the audience of this report will be the academic community. In terms of acknowledging the authors of existing literature, I made use of the Harvard system in citing other researchers' work to which I referred throughout this study and the thesis in its entirety was submitted to Turnitin®'s originality checks.

4.14 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I described the methodology I used to conduct my research. I made use of a qualitative research approach, while the research design that I chose to implement was a multiple case study. During the sampling stage of my research, I utilised a purposive sampling approach to assist in identifying sites and participants that would assist me in grasping the problem and research question better. The data collection method consisted of semi-structured interviews, an in-depth investigation of the literature, analyses of documents and the case law available on the issue of

interference in the management and governance in schools. Reference was made to credibility and trustworthiness, which is the certainty that can be assigned to the truth of the research findings. In Chapter 5 I analyse the data that I gathered divided into themes that emerged during the analysis of the data.

CHAPTER 5

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 4 I discussed the research design and the methodology used to collect the data. The Chapter outlined the reasons for the selection of specific participants, research sites and data-gathering instruments. The instruments used to gather the data included an exploration of the literature about management and governance in schools, document analysis, legislation and individual interviews with principals.

Chapter 5 focuses on the findings and analysis of the data collected. Data analysis was conducted to identify patterns and relationships. Information observed, heard, and read was organised to make sense of it. Themes have been developed in such a way that they answer the research questions.

5.2 PROFILES OF PARTICIPANTS

To access an appropriate sample of participants, I factored in the unique school quintile system in South Africa. I also focused on two generational groups to interview, namely the Generation X and Baby Boomer generations.

- **School quintiles**

Schools must serve the community in which they are situated. Each community is unique in the sense that they face different challenges. The issues within the community will also affect the internal operations of the school. Consequently, schools will implement different governance and management approaches to deal with context specific challenges experienced in their communities in the best possible manner. This is the reason why I conducted interviews with school principals of schools in affluent, middle- and lower-income communities. This allowed me to obtain broader perspectives and my data is more information rich. A short description of the quintile system is provided in Table 5.1 below.

Table 5.1: An explanation of the quintile system as contained in the National Norms and Standards for School Funding (RSA, 1996a)

| |
|---|
| Quintile system |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All South African public ordinary schools are categorized into five groups, called quintiles, for purposes of the allocation of financial resources. ▪ Quintile one is the 'poorest' quintile, while quintile five is the 'least poor'. These poverty rankings are determined nationally according to the poverty of the community around the school as well as certain infrastructural factors. |
| Quintile 1, 2 and 3 schools have been declared no-fee schools. |
| Quintiles 4 and 5 schools are fee-paying schools. |

▪ The generational gap

I interviewed principals from the Generation X and Baby Boomer generations. This is explained and motivated in Table 5.2 below. This is followed by Table 5.3 in which the profiles of the participants are summarised.

Table 5.2: Sampling criteria for participating principals

| | |
|---|---|
| Sampling criteria | |
| Criterion 1 - Interview principals | |
| I interviewed principals. In section 16A of SASA, some of the functions and responsibilities of the principal are clearly outlined. In this section of the SASA, it is unambiguously stated that the principal is responsible for the management of the school. Because of the (re)centralisation tendencies of government, the principal may be losing control of these functions and responsibilities to the government. The principal is the person in the system that is directly affected by the recentralisation tendencies of the government. I wanted to understand principals' awareness, understandings and perceptions of these recentralisation tendencies. | |
| Criterion 2 – Generational issues | |
| Generation X Twelve interviews | Principals between the ages of 39 and 54 years. |
| This generation has relatively little experience of being principals. With age comes more experience and this influences how a person sees the world. Understandably, the older generation, which grew up in an era when fundamental human rights were not acknowledged in South Africa may have perceptions different from a younger generation who grew up knowing that they have fundamental human rights which are entrenched in the Bill of Rights. | |
| Baby Boomer Twelve interviews | Principals between the ages of 55 and 65 years. |
| The Baby Boomer generation in management positions is approaching the end of their careers. This generation may have understandings and perceptions of these centralising actions that differ from those of younger principals. | |

Table 5.3: Profiles of the participants

| Assigned code | Years of experience as an educator | Years of experience as a principal | Generation group | School quintile | Definition of the area in which school is situated | Language of teaching and learning in the school | Racial profile of learners | Racial profile of educators | Profile of SGB |
|---------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------|--|---|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------|
| P1 | 24 | 10 | Baby Boomer | 5 | Middle income | Dual medium | Multi-racial | White Black Indian Coloured | Multi-racial |
| P2 | 25 | 7 | Baby Boomer | 5 | High income | Afrikaans | White | White | White |
| P3 | 23 | 7 | Generation X | 3 | Low income | English | Multi-racial | White Black Indian Coloured | Black |
| P4 | 25 | 10 | Baby Boomer | 3 | Low income | English | Multi-racial | White Black Indian Coloured | Black |
| P5 | 21 | 9 | Generation X | 5 | Middle/High income | English | Multi-racial | White Black Indian Coloured | Black |
| P6 | 27 | 12 | Baby Boomer | 5 | Middle/High income | English | Indian | White Black Indian | Indian |
| P7 | 19 | 15 | Baby Boomer | 5 | Middle/High income | Afrikaans | White | White | White |
| P8 | 18 | 15 | Baby Boomer | 5 | Middle/High income | Afrikaans | White | White | White |
| P9 | 24 | 11 | Baby Boomer | 5 | Middle/High income | Afrikaans | White Black | White | White |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|------------|----|----|--------------|---|--------------------|-------------|--------------|--------------------------------------|----------------|
| P10 | 30 | 8 | Baby Boomer | 5 | Middle/High income | English | Multi-racial | White Black Indian Coloured | Multi-racial |
| P11 | 24 | 8 | Generation X | 5 | Middle/High income | Afrikaans | White | White | White |
| P12 | 20 | 10 | Generation X | 3 | Low income | English | Black | White Black Coloured | Black |
| P13 | 15 | 17 | Generation X | 5 | Middle/High income | Afrikaans | White | White | White |
| P14 | 23 | 8 | Generation X | 3 | Low income | English | Multi-racial | Black | Black |
| P15 | 15 | 5 | Generation X | 5 | Middle income | English | Multi-racial | White Black Coloured Indian | Multi-racial |
| P16 | 17 | 9 | Generation X | 3 | Low income | English | Multi-racial | Black Coloured Indian | Multi-racial |
| P17 | 23 | 8 | Generation X | 5 | Middle/High income | Afrikaans | White | White | White |
| P18 | 24 | 6 | Generation X | 3 | Low income | Dual medium | Multi-racial | White Black Coloured Indian | Multi-racial |
| P19 | 23 | 9 | Baby Boomer | 3 | Low income | Dual medium | Multi-racial | White Black Coloured | Black |
| P20 | 29 | 8 | Baby Boomer | 3 | Low income | Dual medium | Multi-racial | White Black | White Black |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|--|----|----|--------------|---|-------------|-------------|--------------|----------------------------|-------|
| P21 | 18 | 6 | Generation X | 3 | Low income | Dual medium | Multi-racial | White Black Coloured | Black |
| P22 | 28 | 11 | Baby Boomer | 3 | Low income | English | Black | White Black Coloured | Black |
| P23 | 12 | 3 | Generation X | 5 | High income | Afrikaans | White | White | White |
| P24 | 27 | 11 | Baby Boomer | 5 | High income | Afrikaans | White | White | White |
| <p>The reason I refer to the racial profile of the learners and educators (white, multi-racial, black) as well as the school quintile is to gather more representative data and avoid generalisation. The fact that these schools have diversity in learner and educator composition and operate in different income levels will have a profound impact on the manner in which the school is managed and governed.</p> | | | | | | | | | |

5.3 STRUCTURE OF THE CHAPTER

The main focus of the research was to explore principals' perspectives about the influence recentralisation has on their management and governance functions. In this regard, I asked the following main and sub-questions to enable me to find material with which I could construct answer(s) to the following research questions about principals' perspectives of the influence of recentralised decentralisation has on their management and governance functions:

5.3.1 Main Question

What are principals' perspectives of recentralised decentralisation regarding their management and governance functions in public schools?

5.3.2 Sub-questions

5.3.2.1 What are principals' understanding of the term professional school management?

5.3.2.2 What types of leadership/management style do principals implement at schools? Why do they implement these styles?

5.3.2.3 How do principals understand the term school governance?

5.3.2.4 What should the relationship between a principal and his or her SGB be like?

5.3.2.5 What is principals' understanding of the following as contained in the preamble to SASA: SASA should "promote the acceptance of responsibility for the organisation, governance and funding of schools in partnership with the State"?

After analysing the data collected during the semi-structured interviews, I developed a Venn diagram (see Figure 5.1 below). The Venn diagram enabled me to organise the data visually to assist the reader to see the relationships that are present within the data. In addition, the Venn diagram assisted me to identify similarities and differences that exist between recentralisation, centralisation and decentralisation management and governance approaches. Each circle line represents a border. The red circle represents centralised governance and contains aspects that are associated with a centralised governance approach. The green circle represents decentralised governance and contains aspects that are associated with a decentralised approach. The purple circle represents recentralised governance and contains aspects of governance and management that reverted to greater central control. The overlapping area of the circles in the diagram illustrates the

commonalities as well as the areas of interference in principals' management and governance functions (statutory duties allocated to the principal) that are directly influenced through centralising and recentralising actions of the Department and the SGBs. Circles that do not overlap illustrate the differences in the data. The blue area in the middle of the Venn diagram is the principals' area of autonomy. The principal is in the centre of the diagram because the main focus of the research was to determine principals' perspective of the influence recentralised decentralisation has on their management and governance functions. I will further explain how the data fits into the diagram as the chapter progresses.

I discuss the results of the data I analysed under themes that were derived from the sub-questions I asked the participants.

Theme 1: Principals' perspectives on the dynamics of school management.

Theme 2: Principals' perspectives: Effective leadership and management.

Theme 3: Dynamics of school governance.

Theme 4: Principals' perspectives on the SGB.

Theme 5: The state as protagonist or antagonist in education.

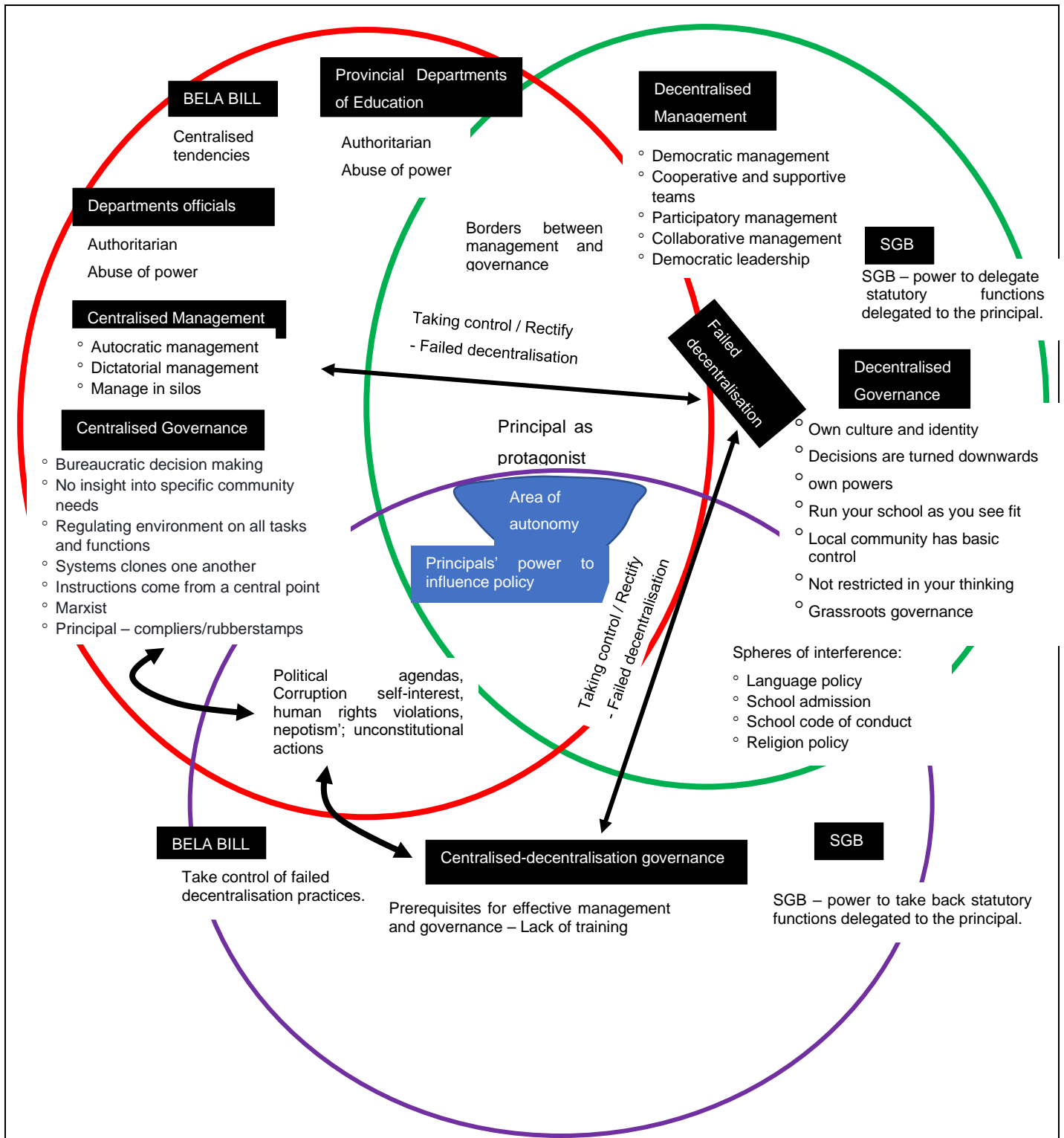


Figure 5.1: Venn Diagram of data differences and commonalities

5.4 THEME 1: PRINCIPALS' PERSPECTIVES ON THE DYNAMICS OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT

According to the Oxford English Dictionary (Oxford Dictionary on Lexico), the word 'dynamics' refers to the forces or processes that produce changes inside a group or system. In my first sub-question, I asked the participants – “*What is principals' understanding of the term professional school management?*” From the responses, I identified sub-themes that I refer to as the forces or processes (the dynamics) that influence school management.

5.4.1 The principal as protagonist

The literature analysis indicates that the positive and negative outcomes of a school depend on the approaches to leadership and management the principal implements at school. In a metaphorical sense, the principal can thus be seen as the leading character (protagonist) in terms of school management, because his/her perceptions and perspectives are crucial. It is how the principal performs his/her various functions and roles that determines the nature and efficacy of school management and governance. In Subsection 3.6.4.1 (Chapter 3) of the literature review various authors refer to the school principal as follows:

A person who plays all the roles of a prominent figure (person), an expert, rewarder, coercer, legitimate authority, involver, norm setter and a curriculum leader and the person responsible for promoting shared leadership in the school (Wallace, 2001:165; High & Achilles, 1986:111).

As the protagonist in school management and governance, the precarious position of the principal came to the fore during the interviews. The principal represents the HOD (the highest education authority in the provincial sphere) at school and in the SGB (the immediate school-based authority). For that reason, the DBE (the national executive and political authority) expects the principal to comply when the employer delegates instructions to their employees through laws, policies or departmental circulars. On the other hand, the principal is also a member of the SGB (the immediate school authority). The SGB expects the principal to support them and to act in the best interests of the school by executing the statutory functions allocated to the principal and implementing the policies of the SGB. The fact that the principal must be compliant with both the Department (the national executive and political

authority) and the SGB (the immediate school authority), places the principal in an undesirable precarious position that could lead to tension.

Participants 2, 5, 9, 10, 13, 17 and 22 alluded to the fact that tension between the principal and the Department occurs when the Department issues instructions to the principal that contradict the SGB's instructions or when the SGB gives instructions contrary to departmental policy. The dilemma that the principals face is that, if they do not heed directives or guidelines of the DBE (the national executive and political authority), the Department, through the provincial HOD in his/her capacity as the employer of the principals, will implement recentralisation measures against principals by curtailing their functions. The employer also has the powers in terms of section 16A of the EEA (RSA, 1998) to institute disciplinary actions against employees on the grounds of insubordination.

Participants 9, 17, 13, 8 and 6 voiced their opinion that the State is their employer and pays their salaries and therefore principals must first and foremost be compliant with the expectations of the national and provincial Departments of Basic Education.

Participants 4, 9, 12, 19 and 22 remarked that the SGB (the direct school authority) also has the tendency to curtail the statutory duties delegated to the principal or even insist that the principal must resign should the principal not adhere to the implementation of their policies. Most of the participants professed that the SGB exerted pressure on them to enforce the policies of the SGB if the SGB has a contradictory view to the approaches, policy, laws, and circulars of the Department.

Participant 8 stated that *"the SGB pushes you in a direction contrary to what the Department expects you to do"*.

Participant 3 said:

The SGB undermines me completely on many occasions. They will call up a meeting with the SGB employed teachers and when we, my deputy and I, go into the meeting, we are asked to leave the meeting.

The principals also seemed to be intimidated by the Department (the national executive and political authority) to be compliant. These intimidation techniques can also be viewed as another form of recentralisation.

Participant 15 said:

I developed a fear or apprehension. I say so because you must make decisions all the time and, if things go wrong, you can get fired as a boss or even lose your job. I still remember so well with our previous director that he just told you straight away that you will lose your job if something goes wrong at school. However, I can no longer remember the exact threatening words.

Participant 6 stated:

If you act in contravention of policy, you will be charged with insubordination because the [provincial] Department will argue that you are not acting in the best interest of the school.

Participant 18 mentioned that:

If you do not play by the rules, you are exposing yourself and you will lose your job. I have dependents and it is not worth taking that risk. I will rather find another way to deal with policies.

The data revealed that the person or persons in charge (the principal and the SMT), will be restricted in their discretionary decision-making through policy, laws, regulations and standards set by a particular authority or authorities (for example, the DBE and the SGB). Therefore, the person or persons in charge must always ask how much discretionary decision-making power they have.

In this regard recentralisation tendencies at grassroots/micro level take place where the SGB (the immediate school-based authority) has the power to curtail the principal's statutory functions/duties delegated to him/her. The data established that the SGB usually implements this drastic approach when the principal and the SGB disagree with each other. The data correlates with the literature. In paragraph 3.6.5.2 the literature referred to *The Grey College* as well as the *Potchefstroom Boys High* cases as an excellent example of where the tension between the SGB and the principal escalated to such levels that the court had to intervene. In the *Grey College* case, the court found that the SGB did not have the authority to make the pronouncement it did and to interfere in the professional management of the principal. SASA and other policies that talk to the duties of the principal do not approve such conduct of an SGB.

Recentralisation can also take place at the macro level where the Department (the national executive and political authority) curtails the professional management duties of the principal because of non-compliance with their instructions. In terms of Section 16 of EEA (RSA, 1998), the Department can impose further sanctions on grounds of insubordination against the principal. The Provincial DBE can also act against the SGB where the SGB is implementing policy contrary to SASA and the Constitution of 1996.

It is also evident that through intimidation the Department tried to compel the principals to comply with policy even if they did not agree with these policies. Intimidation techniques can be viewed as another form of recentralisation.

The findings are also consistent with paragraph 2.4.4 in the literature review in Chapter 2 where I discussed the juxtaposed position of the principal under the heading “*The principal’s two proverbial ‘hats’ in relation to a principals’ management and governance conundrum*”. In this regard, Sefeane (2013:14) points out that “principals wear two hats, namely as a representative of the DBE and the SGB.” In practice, it means that the principal should execute the policies of the provincial education department when operating as a departmental employee, and, when interacting with the department in his/her capacity as governing body member, watch over the interests of the governing body, the school and the parent community (Beckmann, 2002:11).

Finally, the Constitutional Court judgment in the *Head of the Department of Education, Free State Province v Welkom High School and Others* case is an example of the precarious position of the principal as the protagonist in school management and governance. In this case, the SGBs of two schools implemented policy that provided for the immediate omission of pregnant girls. The applicant (the HOD) interfered in the pronouncements of the SGBs and instructed the schools and their SGBs to dispense with the pregnancy policy and to inform the girls to return to school. In this regard, the principals of both schools received pressure from both the Department and the SGB to implement their policies. Subsequently, the HOD made an application to the High Court which also judged that the HOD hijacking the powers to instruct the principals to dispense with the policy of the SGBs.

In the Venn diagram, I placed the principal as the protagonist in school management and governance in the middle. The centre of the Venn diagram represents the principal's area of management and governance autonomy.

5.4.2 Parameters of school management

I observed that the participants were cautious to act beyond the boundaries of the duties/functions allocated to them. Most of the participants referred to the SASA 84 of 1996 (RSA, 1996a) as a source or guide that regulates - sets the parameters for - the degree of management autonomy a school principal has.

Participant 9 said that *"... the Schools Act gives the guidelines for you to operate in"*.

Participant 14 stated that: *"If you follow the SASA efficiently and effectively within the bounds of education law you would be managing the school as it is expected"*.

Participant 20 remarked that *"... the Schools Act provides guidance on what you can or cannot do"*.

Only participants 10, 12 and 22 referred to the Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM) (DBE, 2016a) and the Standard for Principals (DBE, 2016). These documents relate to the specific duties of a principal, and they can also guide principals regarding the do and don'ts of their positions.

Most of the participants only referred to the SASA 84 of 1996 as the source that regulates their functions/duties. SASA (RSA, 1996a) only touches on the governance and professional management of public schools in section 16 and the functions and the responsibilities of the principal in Section 16A. Section 20 lists the functions/powers of the SGBs. Only three of the participants referred to the PAM (DBE,2016a) and the Standard for School Principals (DBE, 2016). The PAM document articulates (DBE, 2016a) the aim of the principal's job as ensuring that the school is managed satisfactorily in-line with appropriate laws. The Standard (DBE, 2016) establishes what the South African schooling sector demands of principals to successfully lead their schools.

It seems that a principal's ignorance or lack of knowledge of policy, laws, regulations and departmental circulars that regulate the education sector could be an impediment the principal places upon him/herself regarding management autonomy.

If a principal is only managing the school in accordance with one specific source such as the Schools Act and does not consider other sources such as case law that might give them more leniency and scope to manage and govern the school in certain areas, the principal will be responsible for restricting his/her own area of management autonomy. The principals' apparent lack of policy and legal knowledge restricts their confidence to act when disputes with authorities arise.

In reference to a principal's knowledge of policy, laws and regulations it is important to take notice of the *Van Biljon v Crawford* unreported case 475/2007 (EC). In this case the court sustained the judgement in *Shidiak v Union Government*, which ruled that, if an employee of the DBE (the principal), is allocated a task and carries out the task to the best of his/her discretionary ability acting in good faith, i.e., *bona fide* not *mala fide*, then the court does not have a right to substitute that decision with the court's decision. Consequently, principals have discretionary decision-making authority in the execution of their functions as long as they act in accordance with policy and law regulating the education sector (principals can only accomplish this if they are familiar with these regulations).

The responses correlate with the literature review in Chapter 3 (paragraph 3.6.3). Naidoo (2005:29) states that SASA (RSA, 1996a) guides democratic management and governance at school level. SASA also provides for a series of functions for the SGB, the principals and the educators to which they must adhere (Naidoo, 2005:29).

5.4.3 Principals' power to influence and implement policy

The following conundrum emerged from the data: If a departmental policy is more of a hindrance than a benefit to school management and governance, should the participants comply with such a policy or act in contravention of it, because in doing so they are acting in the best interest of their school? Consequently, will the principal act beyond the management and governance borders allocated to him/her?

Participants 2, 10, 12, 17, 19 and 24 alluded to the fact that policy must take into consideration that school contexts differ, and schools cannot all be put under the same blanket.

The data revealed that there are principals that do act in contradiction of departmental policy. If the school is not going to benefit from the implementation of

a policy and the policy is going to restrict the school, the principal will either not implement such a policy, or they will bend/circumvent the policy.

Participant 20 stated that: *“Due to the uniqueness of your school and the department sending a ‘one size fits all’ document, you as principal simply cannot implement the policy”*.

Participant 3 remarked that *“... the schools to which you would send your own children contravene policy every day”*.

Participant 7 explained: that *“I am most of the times civil – obedient, but if I see that policy is actually going to burden the school with unnecessary administration, I will deviate and bend policy”*.

Participants 1, 2, 6, 10, 13, 14 and 21 had a more subordinate approach. These participants mentioned that they would take a consultative approach. They informed me that they would communicate substantive reasons to their superiors why a particular policy would not be in the best interest of the school should it be implemented. These participants also underlined the importance of providing alternative approaches to their superiors. The participants believed that if there are disagreements over policy, it is best to propose something as an alternative and it needs to be well communicated and substantiated as to why you wanted to act in contravention of policy.

Lastly, I gathered responses from participants that said that they would never act in contravention of policy the Department instructs them to implement at their schools. These participants emphasised that, if you act contrary to the Department’s instructions, they will implement sanctions against you such as curtailment (recentralisation) of your duties/functions or institute disciplinary action against you. I also observed that these participants seemed fearful and anxious to act contrary to instructions from the Department and that seemed to be the reason why they comply with departmental instructions, even if they do not agree with the Department’s policy or approach.

Participant 24 said: *“You get a lot of conflict between where you are sitting in the seat of the SGB and on the other seat where you represent the HOD, in other words, the employer. So, in certain ways you will bend some rules, but you will not ignore*

them and act outside your jurisdiction. The Department will take disciplinary action against you”.

Participant 14 stressed that *“at the end of the day, the Department can make it exceedingly difficult for you. I say this with hesitation, but there is a great obsession with power. The Department also has this attitude of I will show you who the boss is. You do not want to be in such a situation, you do not want conflict with your employer”.*

Participant 6 stated that *“If you act in contravention of policy, you will be charged with insubordination, because the Department will argue that you are not acting in the best interest of the school”.*

A one blanket fits all approach where the Department is instructing the principal to implement a policy even though that policy will not be to the benefit of the school, will have a negative impact on the school system in general. Schools and the communities that they serve are unique and they differ greatly from each other. A centralised (and a recentralised) governance approach to policy must be limited to schools whose administration does not have the necessary capacity to draft and implement their policy that speaks to the specific needs of that school. The Department must be open for a consultation where functional schools want to table a different approach to a certain policy.

It appears that competent or strong principals may pose a threat to the Department in terms of its expectations that the policy they put into practice at grassroots level is not in-line with their (the Department's) intentions. This may be a reason why some departmental officials take such a forceful approach when they interact with principals. They see intimidation as a means to ensure actual implementation of Department policy. The same assumption also applies to the SGB where competent or strong principals are also more inclined to question and influence policy. This could also be a reason for the tension and conflict that could exist between the principal and the SGB.

A forceful recentralised approach that makes principals fearful and anxious of the Department will have an undesirable impact on the relationship between the principal and the employer and will result in an “us versus them scenario”. Such an approach will take the school system back to the highly centralised education system

that prevailed during the apartheid era where policy was forced upon schools. These intimidation techniques can be viewed as another form of recentralisation.

The responses correlate with the literature. In paragraph 2.7.7 of Chapter 2. Bhengu (2018:2) points out that a principal is in a particularly strong position to control the way policies are construed and put into operation. Bhengu's (2018:4) theory holds that, even if organisations and associations with authority such as policy-makers may come to a decision on a policy content, they do not have any regulation means what materialises at the grassroots level, because they do not put the policy into practice.

The response disclosed that there are principals that ignore or 'bend' policy and that there are principals that prefer to consult with the Department about policy and finally there are principals that implement policy out of 'fear' of the Department. The Department delegated principals with the duty of policy execution at school level. This makes them significant policy actors (Bhengu, 2018:2). This accountability of the principal is also stipulated in section 16(3) which states that the professional management of the school is the sole responsibility of the principal; as well as section 16A that states that the principal must submit an annual report to the HOD regarding the academic performance of the school and section 58B that addresses underperforming schools. Consequently, they are indeed accountable for the professional management of public schools.

I placed the principal in the centre of the Venn diagram above to denote the area of management autonomy that is afforded to the principal by law.

5.5 THEME 2: PRINCIPALS' PERSPECTIVES: EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

From my second sub-question namely, "What types of leadership/management styles do principals implement at schools? Why do they implement these styles?", the following sub-themes emerged:

5.5.1 Principals' perspectives: Healthy and unhealthy leadership and management practices

In Chapter 2 paragraph 2.2.4, I referred to the Education White Paper 2 (Department of Education, 1996) that specifies that good public-school governance and management require a flourishing partnership, based on mutual interest and mutual

confidence in the stakeholders that look after the education sector. The interview responses included the following perspectives:

5.5.1.1 Healthy leadership and management practice

Participants 1, 2, 4, 7, 20, 22 and 24 associated healthy management/leadership and governance with approaches that are based on democratic principles that are transparent, open and ethical. Generally, the participants referred to democratic management and governance as the most effective approaches to involve staff (educators) in the different areas of the school. Participant 7 said: *“I recommend democratic management as the best approach to get the most out of the staff”*.

Participants 1, 2, 4, 7, 20, 22 and 24 pointed out that participatory management is the best management and governance approach to effectively ‘steer’ a school. In addition, participants 1, 9, 15, 19 and 23 mentioned that, when teachers feel that they are co-managers, they will take ownership of and responsibility for their duties. Participant 1 said that he made use of cooperative and supportive teams in his school: *“There is also a strong focus on taking ownership the moment you work with or in a team”*.

The responses correlate with the literature. In Chapter 2 paragraph 2.2.2 SASA (RSA, 1996a) endorses a participative form of democratic management by redistributing power to local school governing bodies and school management teams with the removal of centralised control over certain management and governance functions (Squelch, 1998: 101, Smit & Oosthuizen et al., 2011: 59). Karlsson (2002:37) mentioned that *“these provisions were intended to establish a democratic power-sharing and cooperative partnership among the state, parents, and educators”*.

I conclude that, in healthy leadership and management practices, the principal exhibits exceptional people skills by building relationships with and among staff, encouraging open channels of communication with and between staff members and involving staff in decision-making. Healthy management requires a leader that is steadfast in the sense that he/she is continuously involved with the primary operations of the school.

Recentralisation also seems likely to occur where effective principals pose a threat to authorities in the sense that these principals can cast a bad light on the officials

by demonstrating that they actually do not need the authorities. These principals can then be subjected to malicious and unwarranted efforts by departmental officials attempting to reduce their powers.

In the Venn diagram above, I placed the following responses of the participants in the decentralised sphere: democratic management, cooperative and supportive teams, participatory leadership/management style and collaborative leadership and management. These decentralised leadership and management approaches are aligned with SASA (RSA, 1996a) that endorses a participative form of democratic management through the devolution of power to the school principal by doing away with central control/regulation approaches over specific facets of educational decision-making at local level.

5.5.1.2 Unhealthy leadership and management practices

Participants 4, 6, 8, 11, 12, 15, 21 and 24 viewed an autocratic and/or dictatorial leadership and management style as an undesirable approach and did not recommend it. This approach leads to no-trust relationships. Participant 12 explained that where principals work in silos and do not involve staff and the SGB in decision-making, leadership and management becomes toxic. Participants 7, 12, 13, 19 and 20 are of the opinion that unethical leadership and management practices will obstruct any growth in an organisation, especially a school.

Participant 2 pointed out that: *“Management and governance become toxic the moment you no longer serve the interests of the child, school community and staff because of self-interest, selfishness and corrupt practices.”* Participant 7 linked unhealthy management practices to ethics, saying that *“...management becomes offensive when ethical boundaries are crossed”*.

Participants 1, 6, 13, 16, 17, 18, 22 and 24 also associated unhealthy leadership and management with instances where politics are the driving force behind government actions in education. Participant 17 asserted that *“... where politics is the motivating reason behind certain decisions in the school system, it will adversely affect the management of a school”*.

Participant 12 referred to the so-called *“god culture”*.

The head should not fall into the trap of the god culture where everyone is just waiting to hear what ‘Sir’ is going to say. If a school is driven by

what the principal is autocratically saying or demanding, then the school is constantly satisfying only one person.

Participants 1, 6, 13, 16, 17, 18, 22 and 24 believed that, by implementing autocratic and dictatorial management practices as well as bringing politics into education, the result would be the same unhealthy management practices that prevailed during the apartheid era.

The responses correlate with the literature in Chapter 1 paragraph 1.6.2.6 In this regard, Sibanda, 2017:567 points to the fact that the apartheid education system was regulated “by means of a top-down management system where principals and educators were at the receiving end. In this highly regulated working environment, principals were used to receive instructions from the central departmental of education.” School leadership during the Apartheid era could be seen as a mini form of apartheid governance where the system ordered, and the principal must meet the terms (Sibanda, 2017). According to Lethoko et al. (2001:312) the principals had to execute the instructions from the Department (e.g., the use of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction) in an antagonistic and militant environment.

I conclude that unhealthy management can be seen as an umbrella concept that could include a broad range of aspects such as the violation of basic human rights; improper relations between staff or between an educator and a learner; nepotism; unconstitutional actions; political agendas and/or promoting certain ideologies; deviating from prescribed policies; and acting outside the parameters of regulations and not involving staff in any decision-making processes. Furthermore, unhealthy leadership and management can also be viewed as vested interests that are contrary to the Constitution of 1996 (RSA, 1996b) which states in “section 28(2) that a child’s best interests are of paramount importance in every matter concerning the child (RSA, 1996b) and section 9 of the Children’s Act 38 of 2005 (RSA, 2005) that states that in all matters concerning the care, protection and well-being of a child the standard that the child’s best interest is of paramount importance, must be applied (RSA, 2005).

I placed the following responses of the participants in the recentralised and centralised spheres of the Venn diagram where these spheres overlap with each other: political agendas, corruption, self-interest, human rights violations, nepotism and unconstitutional actions.

5.5.2 Autocratic management/leadership approach: When and why?

The main aim of the research was to probe principals' perspectives regarding recentralisation (the curtailment of their functions or powers). In this regard, it is important to be mindful that, at grassroots level, the principal holds the authority and therefore has the power to delegate as well as the power to curtail management duties in a school. In paragraph 5.6.3 the replies from the participants revealed that, as the authority figures in the public schools, principals prefer to make use of cooperative and supportive teams, and participatory, collaborative and democratic leadership and management styles. However, the participants also referred to the fact that situations do arise when autocratic leadership has a role to play in the principals' leadership and management actions.

From the responses it became apparent that school leadership and management is seen by the participants as a two-fold process. Participants 1, 6, 7, 10, 13, 14, 20 and 21 referred to times when the staff is involved in decision-making. Then there are times where a leader must act more decisively and take a more autocratic leadership/management approach when the staff is indecisive or when the staff cannot find common grounds that will be in the best interests of the learners and the school in general. Participant 14 stated:

It is occasionally necessary to have a bit of an authoritarian approach in your management style. I will use this style when I want to ensure that there is structure and that these structures are maintained in the school and the rules and regulations are adhered to.

Participant 20 said:

I act in an authoritative manner when I see that things are not moving in the right direction or when the school gets negative feedback from parents.

Participant 21 mentioned that "... an autocratic management approach is required if the staff does not buy in on decisions".

The responses correlate with the literature in Chapter 2 paragraph 2.4.1. In this part of the literature, I pointed out that the concept of recentralisation can also be explained by referring to the centralised decentralisation continuum. According to Shah (2010:285), "... the test is not always whether to centralise or to decentralise

authority, it is rather the degree to which the element of concentration shall prevail". Shah (2010:285) also indicates that in real life, we seldom find a system like pure centralisation (where all decisions are taken by a single person) or pure decentralisation (where everyone is actively involved in the decision-making process).

I conclude that, leadership and management approaches are variables that constantly change according to the circumstances and situation. There are instances when principals should follow a democratic (decentralised) approach involving everybody in the decision-making processes. However, there are also instances where principals are required to act more autocratically (centralised), therefore recentralising the functions of leading and managing. The principal then instructs rather than consults. In this regard, principals favour situational leadership. In situational leadership competence, commitment, motivation and confidence are important factors (Thompson & Glasø, 2018:575).

Thompson & Glasø (2018:575) mentions *"that competence is defined as the follower's task-relevant knowledge, and skills acquired during formal education, on-the-job training and experience. Commitment is defined as a follower's motivation and confidence"*.

Thompson & Glasø (2018:575) points out that *"motivation is a follower's interest in the task, and confidence is follower's sense of security or self-assuredness, the degree to which the follower has the conviction that he or she has the capacity to work independently and to execute their functions effectively"*.

Leader behaviour consists of two keys aspects, namely, supporting and directing workers. In the supporting role the leader must have empathy and thoughtfulness, whereas in the directing role the leader must implement structure and evaluate the outcomes. Favourable leadership behaviour is presumed to move with transformation in follower growth/improvement levels (Thompson & Glasø, 2018:575). Consequently, the principal's management approach will continuously move on the centralisation-decentralisation continuum. If the educator has low levels of task-relevant knowledge or skills or low levels of motivation and commitment, the management approach of the principal will move to a more authoritative management plane on the centralised decentralisation continuum. On the other hand, if the educator has high levels of task-relevant knowledge or skills or high

levels of motivation and commitment the management approach of the principal will move to a more democratic and decentralised management plane on the centralised decentralisation continuum.

In the Venn diagram above, I placed autocratic management in the centralised, decentralised and recentralised spheres where they overlap each other.

5.5.3 Principals' perspectives: The importance of establishing boundaries between professional management and governance

In Chapter 3 paragraph 3.6.4 describes the duality of the school principal's management functions. On one hand, he/she is a SGB member. On the other hand, he/she is a departmental employee (Van der Merwe, 2013:242).

This duality of being involved in management and governance featured prominently in the responses. The fact that professional school management and governance are juxtaposed to each other is the main reason why a strong emphasis of establishing borders between management and governance came to the forefront. Participants 4, 6, 10, 12, 18, 19 and 24 were adamant about the importance of establishing clear boundaries between management and governance. The importance of proper communication in setting clear boundaries between management and governance were also highlighted. Participant 10 said: *“Right at the beginning of the SGB’s term, I set the boundaries of professional management and governance.”*

Participant 24 also emphasised that *“If the SGB knows what their duties are and if there is continuous interactive communication, a productive relationship will develop. It is important to communicate the boundaries”*.

Participant 4 informed me that, when she was appointed as a principal, she communicated to the SGB that they must trust her.

This means you do not interfere in my professional management of the school, and you stick to your functions which are the governance of the school. It is important to set firm peripheries regarding the management and governance.

I conclude that it is significant that those participants who outlined the importance of setting clear boundaries gave positive feedback regarding their relationships with

their school governing bodies. The setting of clear boundaries limits the possibility of interference that usually leads to tension. In Chapter 3 (Paragraph 3.6.5.2), I referred to the *SGB Grey College, Bloemfontein v Scheepers and Another* court case. This case is an example of a situation where the SGB acted beyond their boundaries to the extent that the court had to intervene to diffuse the tension between the principal and the SGB. According to the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 (paragraph 2.6.2.8), a determinant of an effective principal and SGB relationship is the respect that the SGB and the principal have for each other's domains and duties (Mohapi & Netshitangani, 2018:8). It should also be observed that it is not the principal's duty to lay down the boundaries as SASA (RSA, 1996a) clearly outlines the roles of the SGB and the professional duties of principals. Subsections 16A(2-3) of SASA (RSA, 1996a) do, however, contain provisions whereby the principal is obliged to assist the SGB in performing its functions. It is also important to take notice of the fact that to construct these provisions as authorisations to make unilateral decisions as suggested by some of the principals, would seem to be out of sync with the concept of participative democracy as outlined earlier.

Finally, if there are no clearly distinguished and agreed upon boundaries between the principal's leadership/management and the SGB's governance domains, the potential for interference in each other's domains increases exponentially and will lead to mistrust and tension. By establishing clear borders between professional management and governance of schools, the principal can protect his/her management domain.

5.6 THEME 3: DYNAMICS OF SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

In the responses to the third sub-question, namely "What is principals' understanding of the term 'school governance?'" a number of sub-themes as set out in the sub-paragraphs below emerged.

5.6.1 Two sides of the coin: Centralised and decentralised governance

South Africa is one of the most diverse and unequal nations in the world. I observed this diversity and unequalness when I started to collect the data for the research. Modisaotsile (2012:4) cited that a large percentage of schools still lack basic teaching resources. In this regard, Modisaotsile (2012:4) mentions that "*Amnesty International reported that 71% of South African teachers work in schools with over*

30% of learners being socio-economically disadvantaged, more than treble the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) average of 20%”. Difficulties are intensified by the various official languages in the country with 60% of educators teaching in schools where more than 10% of learners’ first language is not the language of instruction, compared to the OCED average of 21% (Amnesty International, 2020). In addition, Marais (2016:1) indicates that “South African classrooms are overcrowded. More than 10% of schools have undependable electricity infrastructure, 20% of schools were found to have an unstable water supply, and 30% of schools have neglected the maintenance of toilets and toilet systems because of financial challenges”.

The school districts, the schools serving the communities and the communities surrounding the school all have different and specific needs. The crux of my research was to explore principals’ perspectives of recentralised decentralisation regarding their management and governance functions in public schools. The keywords management, governance and recentralised decentralisation in the main research question are all implemented differently in harmony with the particular requirements of the schools.

In Chapter 2 paragraph 2.6, authors like Archer, Mackatiani, Imbovah and Gakungai (2016:43) underlined the fact that:

A system of education is influenced by the things outside the school even more than the things inside the school, and in most cases, they govern and interpret the things inside the school.

In other words, the authors are arguing that, for one to understand a system of education, it is important to note that behind every system of education, there are factors that influence and shape the way a particular education system is governed, controlled and managed. Consequently, a centralised or decentralised management and governance approach and the degree of autonomy that will be regulated through recentralisation will be determined by factors inside and outside of the school such as work ethics of the staff and learners, community involvement and the conduct of politicians and departmental officials. Some schools may require a more centralised governance approach, while other schools will benefit from more autonomy through decentralised governance approaches. This is the reason why I

decided to call the theme “Two sides of the coin” because I recognise that the contextual diversity in South Africa creates the need for centralisation, decentralisation as well as recentralisation. All these governance approaches have a place in the context of the South African education system. In this regard, I identified the following sub-themes.

5.6.2 Centralised governance: A ‘one size fits all’ approach does not work

The data contained various negative perspectives from the participants regarding centralised governance. Participants 5, 11, 13 and 18 mentioned that a totally centralised governance approach will result in a lack of input and a feeling of isolation of the community and a disregard for the learners’ needs. This will lead to resentment that could undermine the partnership principle as envisaged in the preamble to SASA (RSA, 1996a) and a reduction of contributions by local communities in which public schools reside.

Participants 1, 10, 13, 23 and 24 alluded to the fact that innovation and creativity by schools to solve their own unique problems will be suppressed because every school will be governed under the same regulations. The school culture and ethos will also be diminished if every school is to be governed in the same way.

Participants 2, 7 and 13 emphasised that centralised governance creates an additional burden on those schools whose focus is quality teaching and learning. The burden is due to the additional administrative work required to comply with measures which have little to do with the communities.

Participants 4, 19 and 22 articulated the view that principals would become compliers, because all the decisions are made on their behalf. Participant 21 stated that *“a total centralised approach is nothing else but the hijacking of the school system”*.

The responses correlate with the literature in Chapter 2 paragraph 2.4.1, Brennen (2002:1) mentions that “centralised governance in education generally signifies a situation where the central administrative authority has absolute control over all resources, for instance money, budgets, information, people, legislation, policy and technology.” Hence, it is also crucial to take note of Du Plessis and Heystek’s (2020:847) reference about the appearance of probable difficulty in the leadership/management functions in South Africa. Du Plessis and Heystek

(2020:847) indicate that in public schools the state of mind of managerialism is being implemented by the education bureaucrats. Ironically, policies that are supposed to encourage deregulation and to give more autonomy are considered by several department officials as being implied managerialism and the appearance of a practise of re-regulation or managerial reform towards a system of decentralised centralism (Du Plessis & Heystek, 2020:847). The result is the appearance of a compliance society (Du Plessis & Heystek, 2020:847). Centralisation, in this case, restricts the roles or involvement of the individuals [my insertion- and the community] at the lower levels (Brennen, 2002:1).

Consequently, a totally centralised governance approach will severely put a damper on functional schools that have the administrative capacity to be creative and innovative regarding their academic, sport and cultural approaches. The fact that these schools are creative and innovative set them apart from the average performing school. Creative management and governance issues such as the setting up of exam timetables, the procurement of learning and support material (LTSM), the appointment of educators and the issuing of report cards will, among others, become a regulated exercise where the provincial departments will issue instructions from a central point in the department. Schools will be overwhelmed with paperwork that must be submitted to the department to ensure that the schools are compliant. The danger of this administrative load is that educators need to find the time to complete all the additional administrative duties and less time will be spent on lesson planning and teaching. Consequently, the school culture and ethos will gradually disappear.

In the Venn diagram I placed the keywords and phrases 'rubberstamps' and 'compliers' as used in the responses of participants, in the centralised sphere. In a highly centralised school system where the State dictates and the principal has no option but to comply with all instructions, the SGB has no governance autonomy.

5.6.3 Centralised governance: Taking control of the ship

A ship is dependent on its crew to keep it on course to reach its destination. If the crew lacks the capacity to steer the ship, it can deviate from its course and end up in unsafe waters or even sink. The school is also like a ship. The school's achievements hinges on its staff, the SGB and the school community (the crew) to manage and govern (steer the school) in such a way as to produce acceptable

results in academic, sport and cultural activities. Unfortunately, many schools have crews (staff, the SGB and the school community) who do not have the ability to effectively manage and govern the school.

With reference to the above, participants 1, 2, 5, 7, 8, 11, 13, 14, 17, 21 and 24 all concurred that it is the duty of government (the DBE) to take control of the school system where governance becomes dysfunctional. In this regard, centralised governance also has its advantages. This is the reason I decided to call the sub-theme “*Centralised governance: Taking control of the ship*”.

Participant 2 believed that:

Dysfunctional schools will benefit from a centralised governance approach. In certain neighbouring areas the schools are empty, not because there are no schools, but because the level of education is so pathetic that no right-thinking parent will send his/her child to such a school.

A similar view was expressed by Participant 13:

In schools which are lacking strong insightful management and a strong teaching corps as well as a strong administrative cohort, upskilling and finances need to be assisted by means of a centralised approach.

The responses correlate with the literature in Chapter 2 paragraph 2.4.3, where Murcia (2017:14) describes recentralisation as the national government’s reaction to inadequate levels of local governance (administrative issues) such as:

- Lack of capacity of the lower levels of government to resist captures by local elites or poor service delivery;
 - Weak institutional functionality; and
 - Compromised levels of citizen trust in the public education sector. Therefore, it is important to take note of what Du Plessis (2020) refers to “legitimacy crisis and political realism.” Du Plessis (2020:180) points out that “the functioning of the South African education system has been poor, and its achievements are being questioned more broadly.” The poor performance is exacerbated with practices of dishonesty, benefaction and cadre deployment, and the failure of the education powers to provide dependably on their directives that has prod the DBE (and the education system) into a
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predicament of legitimacy (Du Plessis, 2020:180). Du Plessis (2020:180) emphasised that *“legitimacy is related with the level of trust located in authorities and is considered to be related to a simpler and better-functioning state, as is the inclination to pay taxes and obey state decrees”*.

I conclude that (re)centralisation can be an important governance approach to assist educational institutions that do not have the administrative capacity to effectively coordinate their operations. In this regard, the Department at District level must play a leading role in all correspondence and report sharing between the education authorities and the particular schools. Functional schools in the public and private sectors should assist underperforming schools. Finally, the (re)centralisation approach must be an interim support approach. If the dysfunctional school begins to transform and operate in accordance with acceptable standards more autonomy can be gradually given to the institution.

5.6.4 Decentralisation: Thinking out of the box

Participants 4, 6, 7, 8, 16, 20 and 21 stated that, due to the disparities of the communities across the country, decentralised governance holds an enormous positive benefit for schools that have the means and capability to implement education practices with insight and knowledge. Participant 13 mentioned that the product of these institutions is a first world standard and that the departmental influence is limited, predominantly to administrative functions. Participants 1, 10, 13, 23 and 24 emphasised the idea that, through decentralised governance, schools are allowed to establish a unique school ethos and culture. It is to the benefit of a school where management has the capacity to let that school do just that – manage and govern their own affairs. Participant 14 conveyed the idea that decentralised governance allows school leaders to make decisions that are best for the school: *“We know the needs of the community and our schools best”*.

Participant 7 mentioned that:

A decentralised approach gives schools basic control and enables the school to open up to more creativity and innovation to eventually be able to do their own thing creatively within their own dynamics.

Most of the participants indicated that decentralised school governance is the best approach for schools that have the administrative capacity to operate autonomously.

In this regard the responses correlate with the literature. In Chapter 2 paragraph 2.2.5, Indriyanto (2005:25) pointed out that *“it is only through decentralised governance that democratisation is promoted in the education sector. Such governance gives broad opportunities to educational stakeholders in schools to participate in the management and governance of educational programs”*. According to Mulwa, Richard, Kimiti, Titus and Kituka (2011:90), the underlying principles of successful decentralised governance in education in countless countries are grounded on the following:

- The school principal as manager and governor is the main protagonist in school development.
- Significant transformation comes to fore through learner, educator and public participation.
- Decentralisation supports the professionalism of the teaching profession and *vice versa*, which can lead to more desirable outcomes.

Furthermore, the responses correlate with the proposals in the National Development Plan (RSA, 2012) that refer to a model for different echelons of school autonomy. This model must be in-line with the National Policy on Whole School Evaluation. This means that schools must be allocated different echelons of school autonomy matching the five levels of overall performance rating on the scale as contained in the National Policy on Whole School Evaluation (DBE, 2002:8):

- needs urgent support (Level 1)
- needs improvement (Level 2)
- acceptable (Level 3)
- good (Level 4)
- outstanding (Level 5)

I conclude that a decentralised governance approach could alleviate Government's education burden by allowing functional schools to manage and govern their own affairs. The DBE will have more manpower available to support the non-functional schools through a combination of centralised, recentralised and decentralised governance approaches. In addition, decentralised school governance could be to the advantage of the national government mainly by alleviating the national

government of internal bureaucratic headaches, and financial burdens, whilst simultaneously increasing the lawfulness of central government and the DBE by lessening dishonesty. Decentralised governance could assist local government mainly by augmenting proceeds for education available to local government, growing the capabilities of local governments and improving the receptiveness of national government to the needs of grassroots communities.

5.6.5 Principals' perspectives: Spheres of interference in school governance

Naidoo (2005: 39) refers to Arnott and Raab's (2000) research that indicates that, "both in form and process, governance initiatives involve the concepts of centralisation, decentralisation and recentralisation in the administration and control of education." Together these concepts form a disparate mix of aspects that include the constant movement of certain functions closer to the school and the classroom, reinforcing some decision-making areas and reducing others by curtailing those functions and moving them back to central control, empowering parents and communities and curbing professional control.

In this regard, participants 2, 9, 10, 13, 18 and 21 pointed out that there is macro interference visible mainly in the spheres of school admissions, language policy, school codes of conduct, appointment of educators and religion policy. It seems that, in keeping with Arnott and Raab's (2000) research, the DBE (the State) is attempting to weaken the power of public schools in terms of school admissions, language policy, school codes of conduct, appointment of educators and religion policy. Participants 3, 4, 9, 10, 12, 18 and 19 alluded to the fact that political and ideological motives are the main driving force behind the Department's interference in sensitive matters such as school admissions and language policy. Participants 3, 9, 10, 12, 15, 18, 19, 21 and 22 remarked that the Department's interference is the source that ignites tension between SGBs and the DBE. The participants further explained that the Department usually reacts irrationally when a school does not want to comply with their instructions. The Department then implements recentralisation measures where they act beyond their powers (*ultra vires*).

Participant 2 stated that *"the sword of the department is always over your head in terms of school admission, religious policy and language policy."* Participant 10 said that *"department[al] interferences in school admission, language policy and educator appointments are politically driven. Politicians use education to push*

certain ideologies". Participant 21 remarked that the Department forced them to change the name of the school which was named after a former Afrikaner leader.

Participant 9 indicated that the HOD and the MEC of Education visited their school and pressured them to take in learners who wanted English as their medium of learning and teaching. Had they refused, disciplinary action would have been taken against them. Such actions by the MEC and the HOD can only be described as intimidation, amounting to political interference and a blatant disregard of the SASA.

The responses are supported by the literature. In Chapter 2 paragraph 2.8, Van der Merwe (2013:242) mentioned:

Recentralisation tendencies are becoming a trend where government officials abuse their powers, unlawfully interfering in the management and governance of schools, neglecting their duties, showing no respect for the rule of law and even ignoring court orders against them.

Prinsloo (2006:356) emphasised that the cases varied from SGBs' rights to make pronouncements on a sensitive issue like the language policy of public schools, a SGBs statutory task to ensure a disciplined and focussed school culture, the right of parents to make recommendations regarding the appointment of educators or non-educator staff and the parents' rights regarding the financial management of a public school.

It seems that recentralisation tendencies and the constant interference in schools' language and admission policies are Government's (the Provincial Department's) way of hiding its shortcomings. Clearly Government (the Department) do not have the capacity to effectively plan for new schools and efficiently manage available financial resources to build new schools and, as the population grows, they do not have the capacity to accommodate the influx of learners into the school system. In addition, South Africa's state coffers have been plundered by politicians and state officials and the education system is also experiencing the consequences of these corrupt activities. Politicians and departmental officials are now forced to put pressure on schools to amend their language and school admission policies to accommodate the learners that are entering the school system. To a large extent the inability to provide new schools and to restore and maintain existing infrastructure can be blamed on cadre deployment and political role players like MECs.

In the Venn diagram I placed the sphere of interference in the area where decentralised governance and management overlap with the recentralisation sphere. Principals have the perspective that the SGBs duties as set out in the SASA 84 of 1996 are undermined by the education authorities through recentralised governance practices.

5.7 THEME 4: PRINCIPALS' PERSPECTIVES OF THE SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY

In the responses to the third sub-question namely "What should the relationship between the principal and the SGB be like?", a few sub-themes as set out in the sub-paragraphs below emerged.

Participant 9 stated that:

It is important to take note of the fact that demographics differ, and communities differ. Therefore, principals might give totally different answers regarding their relationships with school governing bodies.

5.7.1 Negative perspectives about the SGB

I received many negative responses from the participants regarding their perspectives of the SGB.

Participant 9 stated: "My SGB chairman tends to be too involved sometimes and actually makes a nuisance of himself. The SGB must know it should be hands off regarding professional school matters." Participant 10 said: "I must deal with very nasty people on my SGB". Participant 12 indicated that "... the SGB is a structure that I dislike, and it is a structure that's more of a hindrance than a help". Participants 4, 9, 12, 19 and 22 informed me that the SGB cautioned them that, if they did not implement the SGB's policies, the SGB would limit their statutory powers and would proceed without the principal.

Participants 3, 10, 12, 14, 18 and 19 further pointed out that the SGB's term is short and, because of this, the SGB only has short-term visions while the principal has long-term visions for the school. This leads to a lot of conflict between principals and SGBs. Participants 12, 14, 18 and 19 emphasised that some SGBs have hidden agendas that are not in the best interest of the school. This leads to conflict and the SGB reacts by withdrawing duties that they allocated to the principal.

Some of the participants indicated that they had multi-cultural and multi-racial SGBs and, if the principal was from a different race group than the rest of the members of the SGB, conflict often occurred and that some SGB members would go out of their way to make the principal's interactions with the SGB unpleasant.

Participant 12 exclaimed that the SGB chairman told him that the school must be led by a person of colour and that transformation is too slow at the school. Participant 21 mentioned that in an SGB meeting it was said that it is unacceptable that the school still has the name of a previous Afrikaner leader and that the school is still managed and governed by a white person. Participant 18 indicated that the SGB informed her that the leadership must be transformed to form better associations with learners and parents.

It needs to be mentioned that participants 3, 12, 14, 18 and 19 all lead schools in low-income communities. Participants 3, 10, 12, 14, 18, 19 and 21 pointed out that the SGB was not appropriately educated and that they lacked the capacity to make rational governance decisions.

Most of these parents work in lower levels of the private and public sector. Consequently, most of them are not familiar with the principles of good governance and they struggle to make positive contributions in the SGB. It is important to mention that my study in this regard is bounded to specific school districts and this deduction is isolated to this district. Although an uneducated parent serving on an SGB can be a good governor, the literature (Xaba, 2011; Mabasa & Themane, 2002:112; Heystek, 2004; Dieltiens, 2005; Grant-Lewis & Naidoo, 2006, Brown & Duku, 2008 and Nonyane, 2016) states that it is not the norm.

In this regard, it is worth mentioning that a principal that had negative experiences with a previous SGB could enter into a relationship with a newly elected SGB with preconceived beliefs that all SGBs are negative. The danger thus exists that such a principal can act too assertively or defensively towards a newly elected SGB, thereby contributing to a potentially toxic relationship.

The responses of the participants correlate with the literature in Chapter 2 (paragraph 2.6.2.8). Mohapi and Netshitangani's (2018:4) research indicates that parent governors find it particularly challenging to implement the functions of the SGB as stipulated by SASA. Mohapi and Netshitangani's (2018:8) further

elaborated that the research indicates that the low levels of education and literacy of some parent governors are associated with low-income areas and in more affluent areas the parent governors have higher levels of education.

Mokoena (2005:14) emphasised:

There are widely varying capacities among SGBs in affluent suburban schools and those in rural areas. SGBs in urban schools are dominated by well-off and highly qualified professionals and managers, predominately whites, but including a small and growing complement of blacks who have accumulated some experience in running schools under the old model C system. SGBs in rural areas are often dominated by parents who are illiterate and without administrative and financial experience to oversee the affairs of the schools.

Mathonsi (2001) cited that when SGBs are literate and well-informed in what is expected from them, they will do good governing work and will enhance the standard of education in South Africa. Mohapi & Netshitangani (2018:8) indicate that some parent governors who are illiterate presented challenges when it comes to parent involvement in school activities level (Mohapi & Netshitangani, 2018:8). The respect that the SGB and the principal have for each other's functions and duties is an additional marker of the functionality of the SGB. Mohapi and Netshitangani (2018:8) mention that the perspectives the two parties have of each other are established by the SGB's encroachment on the professional management functions of the principal and vice versa. This is a good indicator whether their association with each other will be in the best interest of the school or not (Mohapi & Netshitangani, 2018:8). On the other hand, some scholars like, Soudien (2003) and Duku (2006), indicates that SASA mainly caters for middle economic standards, and that SASA is drafted to accommodate the middle-class conditions, not considering the disadvantaged societies. For example, SASA, makes absolute notions about parents; for example: that they have sufficient time to partake in school activities without receiving any compensation for their time, and that the parents have the reserves to make decisions about their children education (Soudien, 2003; Sayed & Soudien, 2005 in Duku, 2006: 140). Consequently, in the non-affluent areas there is a tendency of parents to trust the educators' opinions when it comes to school governance affairs (Duku, 2006; Mncube, 2008).

The respect and trust that the SGB and the principal have for each other's domains, functions and duties is a further indicator of the functionality level of an SGB. Mohapi and Netshitangani (2018:8) mention that the perceptions the two parties have of each other are often determined by the SGB's encroachment on the roles of the principal and vice versa.

I conclude that some principals experienced interference by the SGBs in their professional management. If a principal did not agree with the SGB on governance issues, some SGBs react by curtailing the principal's duties through actions that are not always legal. The fact that some SGB members are not well-educated is also a major factor that impedes a healthy principal and SGB relationship. These SGB members are not familiar with the principles of good governors. Some of their arguments are not always rational and thought through. Some SGB members have hidden agendas and these members often compromise the principal and SGB relationship. In such a case a relationship of distrust exists between the principal and the SGB because there is no transparency and open lines of communication.

Furthermore, it seems as if race could also influence the relationship between a principal and his or her SGB. Although South Africa is in its 27th year of being a non-racial democracy, the issues and sensitivities around race are still a determining factor in many sectors of society, especially in the education sector. Some of the participants indicated that they had multi-cultural and multi-racial SGBs and, if the principal is from a different racial group than the rest of the members of the SGB, conflict often occurred and that some SGB members would go out of their way to make the principal's interactions with the SGB unpleasant.

Lastly, the data also revealed that school demographics can be linked to the functionality or effectiveness of the SGB. I can substantiate this notion through the following observations (this deduction is only isolated to the specific districts in which I gathered the information):

The participants that gave positive feedback regarding their working relationship with the SGB were participants that managed schools in affluent communities. The participants mentioned that they were spoiled by the know-how of the parents that served on the SGB. The participants mentioned that some SGB members were professionals like lawyers, engineers, or chartered accountants. In essence, it is people that understand governance and that can make rational decisions.

The participants that communicated that their SGBs were dysfunctional were the principals that managed schools in more impoverished communities. The parents that served on these SGBs were not professionals and some of these SGB members were poorly educated. The participants emphasised that such members did not understand governance and often made decisions that were not in the best interest of the school. If the principal did not support their decisions, the SGB and principal relationship quickly deteriorated.

5.7.2 Positive perspectives about the SGB

A relatively small percentage of the participants had positive perspectives about their SGBs, namely participants 2, 11, 13, 23 and 24. These participants managed schools in more affluent communities. The schools are also located in the best performing school district in the province. In this regard, some of the participants communicated that they are spoiled with professional parents.

Participant 22 stated that:

Our governing body chairman is an accredited accountant. Our finance committee consists of three chartered accountants. In addition, we have a structural engineer who looks after the school's infrastructure, and we also have two lawyers who serve on the governing body.

In a similar vein, Participant 7 remarked that:

"I have a positive relationship with my SGB. They support me in the vision I have for the school. All of them are professionals and they bring a lot of knowledge to the table".

These participants mentioned that they received a great deal of support from their SGBs and that they had the freedom to approach the SGB with any problem they have at school. Participants 2, 13, 17, 23 and 24 informed me that the SGB entrusted them with many statutory functions.

Participant 23 pointed out that he had a good working relationship with his SGB.

“We have a united front. We also co-opted a person to manage conflicts that might arise between members on the SGB. This makes my work easier”.

The data correlates with the literature. In the literature review Chapter 2, (paragraph 2.2.4) I stated that, according to the Education White Paper 2 (Department of Education, 1995), good public-school governance and management requires a flourishing partnership, based on mutual interest and mutual confidence among the many constituencies that make up and support the school. Visser (2003:113) states that *“at micro level, power is devolved to elected school governing bodies that play a significant role in the governance of their schools as part of the broader decentralisation of power while the professional management of the school is the responsibility of the principal”.*

I conclude that the participants that gave positive responses about their SGBs were participants that managed schools in more affluent communities. The SGB members that stayed in these more affluent communities were professionals like lawyers, engineers, or chartered accountants. In essence, it is people that understand governance and that can make rational decisions. The data indicated that well-educated professionals in SGBs give the principals sufficient support. Some SGBs entrust the principals with their statutory duties. The deduction is that the principal will be given more autonomy if there is a trust relationship between them and the SGB. In essence the election of SGB members must purely be based on the individual's abilities to make positive contributions that is in the best interest of the school. Any other reason will not suffice.

In the Venn diagram above, I placed the SGB in the decentralised and in the recentralised spheres. As the fourth tier of governance, the SGB has the power to delegate, but also to curb the statutory (the SGB is a statutory body established in terms of the SASA. The Schools Act allocates statutory functions to SGB) functions they allocate to the principal. Consequently, at grassroots level, the principal is also exposed to the recentralised tendencies of the SGB.

5.7.3 Keys to a functional principal and SGB relationship

The participants shared their perspectives on aspects that contribute to a functional principal and SGB relationship. The participants mentioned that the relationship between the principal and the SGB must be built around the best interests of the learners and staff. There must be transparency in management and governance. The school principal and the SGB must work in harmony, and they must have a shared vision for the school. The principal must establish cooperation between the SGB and the school management. It is important to establish a cordial relationship with the SGB. The participants stressed the importance of mutual respect and trust that the principal and the SGB must have for each other.

Participant 4 stressed that *“it is important to establish a relationship of trust. You earn trust by keeping the SGB well-informed”*.

Participant 7 indicated that he had an open relationship with his SGB and underlined the importance of always keeping the relationship professional.

Participant 14 emphasised that:

There must be a mutual understanding and a mutual agreement between the principal and the SGB, in other words an amicable relationship, because the principal needs to work with the SGB and the SGB with the principal. A diplomatic relationship must exist.

Participant 1 stated that *“... you need to tie people and you need a collective focus on where the school is heading”*.

The data correlates with the literature (see paragraph 5.7.2). I conclude that the participants that gave positive feedback about their SGBs all referred to one common denominator, namely the relationship they have with the SGB. In the context of the data the word relationship can be viewed as an umbrella concept that includes a wide variety of aspects that, if applied as the foundation of a principal and SGB relationship, could increase the chances of having a functional and productive relationship with the SGB:

- the best interests of the learners and staff,
 - transparency in management and governance,
 - harmony,
-

- shared vision,
- co-operation,
- cordial relationships,
- mutual respect,
- trust,
- professional relationships,
- amicable relationships,
- diplomatic relationships and
- a collective focus.

In the Venn diagram above, I placed the SGB in the decentralised and in the recentralised spheres. As the fourth tier of governance, the SGB has the power not only to delegate, but also to curb statutory functions (the SGB is a statutory body established in terms of SASA (1996a)). SASA (1996a) allocates statutory functions to SGBs which they may delegate to the principal. Consequently, at grassroots level, the principal is also exposed to the recentralised tendencies of the SGB.

5.8 THEME 5: THE STATE AS PROTAGONIST OR ANTAGONIST IN EDUCATION

The following sub-themes emerged from the responses to my last sub-question: *“What is your understanding of the following as contained in the preamble to the Schools Act: ‘a new national system for schools [should] uphold the rights of all learners, parents and educators, and promote their acceptance of responsibility for the organisation, governance and funding of schools in partnership with the State?’”*

5.8.1 Co-operative government: Reality or illusion?

Participants 1, 4, 7, 8, 10, 12, 20 and 22 all pointed out that, in co-operative governance, there must be close collaboration between the different levels of government down to community level, but they can see that it is not taking place. The participants contended that the Department is not adhering to the principles of cooperative governance. They averred that the DBE is making all the decisions and that they are mere implementers thereof. The Department does not consult with stakeholders at a local level.

Participant 20 indicated that:

Co-operative government is non-existent. This is the reason why we see so many protest actions where people vandalise and burn buildings. Remember, people protest to show their disapproval. You see government is not meeting the expectations of the people.

Participant 22 stated:

I do not see cooperative government taking place. To give you an example, I see this in the communications we get regarding the curriculum from the district office. The provincial and the national DBE differ from each other. So, three different things are communicated to us.

Participant 10 asserted that co-operative governance is not taking place:

“In the context of education, Government is busy wresting powers away from SGBs and communities. There are also contradicting laws that appear and you view government as autocratic and dictating to the people. The ruling party is using neo-liberal approaches”.

Participant 8 mentioned that:

I do not think there is co-operation between the school and the state. I rather see it in the light of interference. The way our MEC of Education in Gauteng expresses himself leaves a bitter taste in my mouth. He threatens us more than he preaches cooperation.

Participant 7 pointed out that although there are people who try to make cooperative government a reality, there are also people whose motives are suspect and cause cooperative government to fail. He said that the “*tail swings the dog around’ when we talk about co-operative governance in this country*”.

The responses gathered from the participants are contradicting the literature in Chapter 2 paragraph 2.2.4. In this part of the literature, I referred to Chapter 3 of the Constitution of 1996 (RSA, 1996c). Section 41(1) of the Constitution of 1996 specifically addresses the principles of cooperative government in all spheres of government and obligates all organs of state within each sphere to comply with what Section 41(1) provides, namely:

1) **Co-operate with one another in mutual trust and good faith**

The following responses: *“I do not see collaboration taking place”* (participant 8); *“the Department is making all the decisions and that we are mere implementers thereof”* (Participants 1, 4, 7, 8, 10, 12, 20 and 22); *“the Department does not consult us”* (Participants 1, 4, 7, 8, 10, 12, 20 and 22); *“co-operative government is non-existent. This is the reason why we see so many protest actions where people vandalise and burn buildings. Remember people protest to show their disapproval. You see government is not adhering to the expectations of the people”*. (Participant 20) contradict principle one that refers to co-operation in mutual trust and good faith. The responses contain strongly worded articulations intimating that this aspect of co-operative governance is not visible in the interactions with state organs on the one hand, and between education authorities and SGBs and school management teams on the other hand.

2) **Foster good relations**

The key phrases *“People protest to show their disapproval. Government is not adhering to the expectations of the people”* (Participant 20); *“I do not think there is co-operation between the school and the state. I rather see it in the light of interference* (participant 8); *The way our MEC of Education in Gauteng expresses himself leaves a bitter taste in my mouth. He threatens us more than he preaches co-operation”* (participant 8) also contradict principle two that asserts that good relations must be fostered.

3) **Assist and support one another**

The responses *“... there are people who try to make cooperative government a reality, but there are also the percentage of people whose motives are not right and cause cooperative government to fail”* (Participant 7) and *“The ‘tail swings the dog around’ when we talk about co-operative governance in this country”* (Participant 7) confute principle three that maintains that in co-operative governance the different spheres must assist and support one another. Although the respondents indicated that they were not aware of the practical implementation of assistance and support as contemplated in Section 41 (1) of the Constitution, they did not really provide clear descriptions of what caused them to refute claims of assistance and support. It seems that they had interactions with other stakeholders who forced their views

on them and were not open to discussions and that they were also exposed to situations where one person's opinions or views dominated.

4) Inform one another of, and consult one another on, matters of common interest and co-ordinate their actions and legislation with one another

The responses *"They are making the decisions and we are mere implementers thereof. There is no consultation with us"* (Participants 1, 4, 7, 8, 10, 12, 20 and 22); *"The law is well written that talks to co-operative government, but the execution does not take place"*, *"I do not think there is co-operation between the school and the state. I rather see it in the light of interference. The way our MEC of Education in Gauteng expresses himself leaves a bitter taste in my mouth. He threatens us more than he preaches cooperation"* (Participant 8) and *"Government is busy wrestling powers away from SGBs and communities. There is also contradicting laws that appear and you view government as autocratic dictating to the people"* (Participant 10) gainsay principle four that avers that there must be consultation on common matters and that actions and legislation must coordinate with one another.

I conclude that the responses not only indicated that the participants did not experience consultation as intended, but also testified to their disappointment with the reduction of the importance of what they did (*"We are mere implementers"*, Participants 1, 4, 7, 8, 10, 12, 20 and 22). Not only did the participants not experience consultation, but they also viewed the behaviour of the education authorities as interference. Phrases such as *"threatens more than he preaches co-operation"* (Participant 7); *"Government is busy wrestling powers away"* (Participant 10); and *"... you view government as autocratic, dictating to the people"* (Participant 10) also suggest disappointment with the behaviour of education officials and agencies, resentment towards officials and systems and even anger and bitterness. None of these responses suggest that proper consultations are taking place or are even possible in the current situation.

5) Adhere to agreed procedures

The response: *"... there are also contradicting laws that appear and you view government as autocratic dictating to the people"* (Participant 10), contradicts principle five that stipulates that there must be adherence to agreed procedures. The perceptions that there are contradicting laws and regulations and that

government dictates autocratically to the people, suggest that there had not been any deliberations on the implementation and interpretations of laws and policies and that school representatives' views are ignored.

6) **Avoid legal procedures against each other** (RSA, 1996c).

According to the literature in Chapter 3 paragraph 3.8.6, Prinsloo (2006:256) mentions that "there has been an increasing number of court cases since 1996 in which provincial heads of education departments have been challenged for illegal actions against schools or where officials have allegedly failed to carry out their duties towards schools." In these court case the state, acting through officials and on occasion political figures, encroached upon the powers of the SGB. When the state restricts SGB's powers and duties, principals will also be impacted and to a significant extent be restricted to manage their schools. Incidentally, Du Plessis (2019:81) points out that "*although omitted from SASA (RSA, 1996a) there is no doubt that schools as institutions and SGBs as functionaries do exercise power in terms of the Constitution of 1996 and provincial constitutions and that they exercise a public power because they are organs of state and are therefore also bound by chapter 3 of the Constitution*". But it seems that this important point is overlooked by the department officials. In *MEC for Education in Gauteng Province and others v Governing Body of Rivonia Primary School and others*, the Constitutional Court pointed out a number of principles for co-operative governance to succeed. A government official or functionary cannot merely defy a policy of a SGB employed in terms of the Schools Act, even if the official or functionary is of the opinion that such a policy contradicts SASA (RSA, 1996a) or the Constitution of 1996 (RSA, 1996b). This does, however, not mean that a SGB's policy is not open for criticism and intercession or that the policy must strictly be applied in an inflexible manner in all circumstances (Du Plessis, 2019:82). Officials or functionaries who have the appropriately authority and who deem it crucial to intercede in the policy-drafting function of an SGB, must act procedurally fair (Du Plessis, 2019:82). Reasonable and procedural fair conduct can be associated with cooperative relationships, but the responses provided contradictory feedback that officials to not act reasonably and that their actions are not always procedurally fair.

Consequently, when the state restricts SGBs powers and duties, principals will also be impacted and to a significant extent be limited in the execution of their own duties.

The fact that the data reveal that there is an increase in court cases, is another indication of failed cooperative governance. Therefore, to realise the partnership model as imagined by the notion of cooperative governance, the specific official or functionary and the SGB must collaborate with each other in good trust on any matter of disagreement with the sole aim to act in the best interest of the learners (Du Plessis, 2019:83). Collaboration is therefore an important aspect in the partnership model. In the court findings mentioned in Chapter 2 paragraph 2.8 and the subsections thereof the courts were cognisant of the inability of the parties to collaborate efficiently with one another, which highlights the fact that consultation, co-ordination and communal support should be the key elements of the relationship between SGBs and the provincial education authorities (Du Plessis, 2019:83). The participants' responses were all contradictory to what the Constitution of 1996 (RSA, 1996b) envisioned cooperative governance to be. It is important to remember that the primary goal in realising cooperative governance in South Africa is to instil a democratic approach. The data is clear that there are still major challenges to cooperative governance in terms of getting the correct balance between the duties of the government and local communities to make certain that schools are properly managed. It is therefore important that school and the community are sufficiently equipped for these duties.

Consequently, co-operative governance will also depend on the following aspects:

- Co-operative governance is reliant on the capacity of the school to attract governors who have suitable knowledge and have the same vision, plans and aims for the school. In paragraph 5.7.1, the participants alluded to SGB members that do not understand the principles of good governance and who can obstruct the whole process of cooperative school governance.
 - Schools need to be well-informed of their surrounding conditions to meet the educational demands of the community. Therefore, the principal, SMT and the SGB need to be adaptable to enable school improvements and creativity at the grass-root level. In paragraph 5.8.2.2 the participants aired the challenges they experienced to get the community involved in school activities.
 - Schools are answerable to the communities they serve, and governors must communicate important information on a regular basis with the wider
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community. In paragraph 5.7.3 I established that there are certain key aspects that, if implemented, will lead to an effective working relationship.

- The principal and the SGB are the focal points of educational reform. I established this in paragraphs' 5.4.1 (the principal as the protagonist) and 5.4.3 (the principals' ability to influence and implement policy). In paragraph 5.7, I referred to principals' perspectives of school governing bodies.
- Schools seldom get the necessary assistance from the department provincially and nationally. Almost all the participants alluded to the fact that they receive no support and guidance from the departmental officials (see paragraph 5.8.4).
- A healthy relationship between the SGB and the SMT is a prerequisite to establish an effective co-operative governance relationship. In paragraph 5.7.3 I identified the keys to a healthy principal and SGB relationship.
- Training of SGBs and SMTs is key to a successful co-operative governance relationship. In paragraph 5.7.2 the need for training was expressed under the theme prerequisites for effective school management.
- SGBs must understand the legitimacy and significance of different racial groupings.
- School improvement must be focused on the country's fiscal restoration.
- Schools rarely display the concerns of marginal groups which can obstruct cooperative governance.
- The legalism of legislation (strict conformity to law instead of the spirit in which it was drafted) (<https://www.synonym.com/synonyms/legalism>) often misdirects SGBs to make the correct decisions and a lot of time is wasted on speculation. This is a clear indication that the current training provided to SGBs is inadequate. There must be a greater emphasis placed on the policies and laws that regulate the education sector.
- Parents, in general, are not involved enough in school affairs, which obstructs the successful implementation of cooperative governance. I confirmed this in paragraph 5.8.3.

Finally, government seems to prefer a more centralised governance approach (recentralisation) to govern the various sectors in government and that the education

sector is no exception to the rule. These governance approaches are visible in the education system and are demonstrated by the continuous amendments to SASA (RSA, 1996a), often resulting in a gradual reduction of schools' autonomy, as well as the *ultra vires* interference actions in school management and governance, which are all clear indicators of the government's recentralisation tendencies. However, the participating schools seem to prefer more decision-making authority and their responses suggest an underlying hostility towards the laws, regulations, policies, departmental systems and government officials.

5.8.2 Degree of parent and community involvement in school activities

In Chapter 2 paragraph 2.2.2 of the literature review, I referred to the fact that the SASA (RSA, 1996a) enabled a participative form of democracy in education (Squelch, 1998:101; Smit & Oosthuizen et al., 2011:59).

Most of the participants gave negative responses about parent and community involvement in school activities. The few positive responses came from participants that manage schools in more affluent communities.

5.8.2.1 Positive perspectives

Participants 2, 7, 11, 13, 23 and 24 were all positive about parents and community involvement at their schools. Higher parent involvement in school activities can be directly linked to the financial capacity of parents. These parents do not have transport problems and it is not an effort for them to come to school. Most of the parents stay in modern homes around the school. They are well educated, and they make their children's education their business. The participants also referred to the reality that the communities in which their schools are situated do not have serious issues like gangsterism, drug and alcohol abuse and domestic violence problems.

Participant 2 stated that:

I am blessed in the sense that at this stage the parents and community support the school and assist us to move the school into spaces that will best benefit the school.

Participant 7 mentioned that he had the support of the parents. *“After all, both the parents and the educators have the same goal and that is to best equip their children to be successful someday in the adult world”.*

Parent 23 pointed out that *“the school’s learners come from a stable community environment”.*

I conclude that the economic circumstances and demographic characteristics of a community have a major impact on cooperative governance between the school and the parents or community. In affluent school communities, it is more likely that a cooperative relationship between the school and the parents and the community would exist. In these types of school communities, decentralised governance appears to be the governance approach of choice.

5.8.2.2 Negative perspectives

The participants that responded negatively about parent and community involvement at their schools gave various reasons why there is a lack of involvement. There were participants that informed me that they had seen how the demographic characteristics of the communities around their schools have changed and it had a definite effect on the schools. In this regard, school communities became more impoverished and consequently the schools too.

Participant 3 asserted that:

The community around the school consists mainly of old people that are predominately Afrikaans. The school is now a multi-cultural school, and it seems that there is no connection between the school and the community anymore.

Participant 18 stated that:

My learners come from various places. In other words, it is not the community children around the school. This is a white neighbourhood with learners of colour coming into the community. These learners come from different cultures and belief systems. They have a different upbringing. So, I cannot reach the community.

Participant 14 responded as follows:

Our local community seems to view the school as an institution where the teachers are glorified nannies. They basically send their children to school for us to take care of them, but when it comes to meetings and functions the school host, we have little support from the local community.

Participants 12, 19 and 22 mentioned that the dire economic situation of the parents and the community is one of the main reasons why parents and the community are not involved in school activities. These parents often work and live in another province, and it is the grandparents that must look after their children.

Participant 22 mentioned: *“We are aware of various learners in our school that are raised by their grandparents because their parents work in other provinces. It is not a healthy situation”.*

Participant 4 mentioned that they are aware of child-headed households where the elder brother or sister in the high school looks after their siblings in the primary school. Participant 3, 4, 15 and 21 alluded to the fact that the phenomenon of child-headed households is just one of the legacies of the apartheid education system. These parents are the products of this system. They must work even if their places of work are far away from their children. Work is especially hard to find if you are not properly schooled. Lake et al. (2019:218) pointed out that “there were approximately 55,000 children living in a total of 33,000 child-headed households across South Africa in 2018”. This research indicated that among the reasons for this are parents that migrated to other provinces for work. Statistics SA indicated that the country’s unemployment rate during the fourth quarter of 2020 rose by 1.7 percentage points from the previous quarter to a record high of 32.5% (Mahlaka, 2021). In addition, Participant 20 indicated that *“many parents do not have their own transport to travel to school and they are dependent on public transport that is expensive”.*

Stofile, Linden and Maarman (2011:603) cite Van der Berg’s (2008) research that describes two types of poverty that have adverse effects on education. These are absolute and relative poverty. Absolute poverty implies an absence of financial resources required to maintain a certain standard of living.

Van der Berg (2008:11) asserts:

Absolute poverty results in poor home circumstances for learning (for example, no books, lighting, or places to do homework), affects children's physical well-being and ability to learn, it is associated with low parental education, and limits resources for investing in education.

Poverty restricts a person's autonomy to partake in public activities. Bayat, Louw and Rena's (2014:51) study concluded that most underachieving schools are situated in underprivileged districts that also displayed signs of dysfunctional behaviour. According to O'Connor (2004: 58), a dysfunctional community can be characterized by:

A number of social conditions: symptoms (including a state of mind in a community) such as crime, gang activities, violence and trauma, tuberculosis, alcoholism, substance abuse, teenage pregnancies.

Participants 13 and 21 pointed out that negative community activities like crime, alcohol and drug abuse, create the framework these learners know and are brought up in. The participants emphasised that this type of community will never have positive contributions to make to the school.

Participant 12 pointed out that they have parents who did not finish school themselves and that often the learners are more literate than their parents. These parents hardly come to school. According to Stofile *et al.* (2011:604), socio-economic and parent education levels have a big influence on the relationship between parents and teachers. In this regard, Stofile *et al.* (2011:603) mentions that "*historically, black learners in South Africa were severely disadvantaged in education opportunities and expectations*".

Participants 18 and 22 informed me that the Gauteng Online School Admission System is a reason why the parents and the community are not involved with the schools. A big percentage of the learners travel long distances to school every day. It is not the community's children. The Gauteng Online School Admission System can allocate learners to a school within a 60-kilometre radius. Consequently, the system can allocate learners that do not live in the community around the school to that school. They cited that the community cannot be expected to be involved if the learners are not from the community. According to Lake *et al.* (2019:215) "*many children in South Africa travel long distances to school. One in seven children (13%)*

live far from their primary school and this increases to nearly one in five children (19%) in secondary school”.

The positive and negative deductions correlate with the literature in Chapter 2 (paragraph 2.6.2.8) where it is indicated that a child’s experience of education in South Africa still very much depends on where they are born, how wealthy they are and what the colour of their skin is. As indicated earlier in this chapter, South African teachers are more than three times more likely to work with socio-economically disadvantaged learners than teachers in OECD countries (Amnesty International, 2020). Archer, Mackatiani, Imbovah and Gakungai (2016:43) underline the fact that a national system of education is influenced by *“the things outside the school even more than the things inside the schools, and in most cases, they govern and interpret the things inside the school”*. In other words, for one to understand a national system of education, it is important to note that, behind every system of education, there are factors that influence and shape the governance, leadership and management of a particular education system.

I conclude that communities that face these barriers to parent and community involvement need stronger centralised governance from government (the DBE). The Department must drive initiatives for these schools because the schools are seemingly not taking or are unable to take proper measures to rise above such impediments and guarantee maintainable parent involvement. This idleness is likely to be derived from not properly preparing principals and educators to efficiently introduce and apply sustainable school, family and community collaborations. The data, therefore, echo the current interlude between the provisions of the Schools Act that emphasise maintainable parent-school collaborations as a basis of school functionality and what at present characterise underprivileged schools. Parents are key intermediaries amid the school and the learners, with an irrefutable bearing on performance. Schools therefore must instigate plans that are inclusive, hospitable and heartening with the intent of fostering maintainable parent involvement, rather than participating in a fault finding where parents and educators quibble about the operations of the school. This re-emphasises the need to train principals and educators on school, family and community partnerships. This must be strengthened by training that equips principals and educators with the competencies

to introduce and apply maintainable parent-school-community relations for the benefit of the schools and the learners.

5.8.3 Interrelationships between the principal and the Department of Basic Education

I gathered many negative responses from the participants regarding their relationship with the DBE at provincial level. The positive responses were limited to interactions at district level. It is also important to mention that the positive responses were restricted to only two out of four district offices that were represented by the participating schools. These district offices were situated in two of the better performing school districts.

Participants 1, 3, 4, 7, 10, 18, 19 and 20 mentioned that the provincial DBE is not involved in their schools. These participants reported that they only heard from the department if there was a serious problem at their schools. The participants expressed the opinion that the provincial DBE often undermines the principal and the SGB.

Participant 1 pointed out that there was no relationship and co-operation between the principal and the provincial department:

It is not intimate at all. So, this is a big concern to me. They are not involved, and I find that the relationship is also not healthy. In my district the support is much better, but I think that it is a unique situation. In general terms it is bad.

Most of the participants said that the provincial department was constantly issuing instructions that the school must implement and comply with without consulting the principals first.

Participant 19 indicated that:

After 1996 principals had much more autonomy, but it seems to me that in the last few years this autonomy to make decisions at school level is getting less. More decisions are forced on you as a principal. The provincial department just shows up here and forces things on you... a typical one size fits all approach.

Participant 20 stated that his professional management autonomy is being curtailed bit by bit: *“The Institutional Development and Support Officer (IDSO) [walks] in and says: ‘Sir, you will do this’ and I must comply”*.

Participant 21 believed that political motives are the driving force behind many of the actions of the DBE. The participant went into more detail emphasising that: *“... things like the Gauteng School Admission Policy are forced on principals and that is going to make it difficult to protect the heritage of the school. Politics is going to kill education in South Africa”*.

The positive responses towards the department were all isolated to district level. Participant 17 mentioned that at district level the department is functional. He further elaborated that his school is situated in the best performing school district in Gauteng, and one must realise that this is not the norm: most school districts are dysfunctional. Most of the participants stated that they have a good relationship with the district office because they follow all the instructions they receive from the Department. In this regard Participant 2 mentioned that she had a good relationship with the Department at district level, because she did not question their instructions.

Participant 7 told me that:

I have an exceptionally good relationship with the officials in my district. The department leaves me alone because I follow the ‘white and black’ of their instructions. Here and there I occasionally become civilly disobedient.

Participant 3 remarked that she had a good relationship with the district office thus far. *“It is purely because I follow the rules and stick to policy. I never deviate from policy and when I am not sure, I contact my IDSO”*.

Participant 19 pointed out that he does not have any negative comment about the school district his school is functioning in. The participant stated that if the school is functioning well and produces results, the district office leaves the school alone.

Participant 23 informed me that at district level he has a good working relationship. *“Provincially, however, this is a problem. You see, this is where politics starts to interfere in education”*.

I conclude that the participants have a closer cooperative relationship with the department at district level than at provincial level. This deduction is however limited to two district offices that form part of two of the best performing school districts in the province. I also found the responses of the participants to be contradictory. For example, the participants said that if they complied with the department's instructions and did not query them, the Department would leave them alone. The following statements: *"It is purely because I follow the rules and stick to policy. I never deviate from policy"* (Participant 3); *"I do not question the department's instructions"* and *"I follow the 'white and black' of their instructions"* (Participant 7) are examples of unilateral communication from the department and it seems that the relationship between the department and the school stayed healthy as long as they complied with instructions and did not query the Department. These responses are not aligned with a cooperative relationship because there is one-directional communication. In general, the responses are more in line with a centralised governance approach.

I further conclude that, at a provincial level, the participants all concurred that there is no cooperative relationship at all. It appears that where departmental structures move further away from school or grassroots level, the Department acts more authoritatively and is more politically motivated. The statements that *"...the co-operation between the principal and the provincial department is not there. It is not intimate at all"* (Participant 1); *"the Department at a provincial level is not involved at all with the school"* (Participants 1, 3, 4, 7, 10, 18, 19 and 20); *"you only hear from them if there are serious problems"* (Participants 1, 3, 4, 7, 10, 18, 19 and 20); *"the provincial department undermines the principal and the SGB"*; *"no consultation"*; *"autonomy is getting less. More decisions are forced on you as a principal"* (Participant 19); *"a typical one size fits all approach"* (Participant 19); *"politics is the driving force behind a lot of the actions of the DBE"* (Participant 21) and *"politics is going to kill education in South Africa"* (Participant 21) correlate with the literature in Chapter 2 paragraph 2.4.2. In this regard Du Plessis (2019:48) stated that:

The early post-apartheid rhetoric of democracy and participation is systematically being replaced by rhetoric dominated by compliance assurance to promote efficiency in policy implementation and education delivery through the implementation of greater control measures over schools.

Du Plessis (2019:48) further adduced that, *“at the beginning of democracy, promises were made in respect of participatory decision-making, but it seems that the education authorities have started to escalate their control through more significant regulation and accountability”*. Authorities implement these regulations by means of a bureaucratic state imposition, or at best, through tense negotiations between education departments and other role players (Du Plessis, 2019:48).

Finally, there are undeniable indications that the government’s recentralisation tendencies could take the education system back to an education system similar to that implemented by the previous government during the apartheid era. In Chapter 2 paragraph 2.4.2, Coombe and Godden (1996:37) called the apartheid type of governance *“an excellent example of the profound impact a government’s governance approach could have on the management and leadership practices in schools.”* The main and obvious conclusion from the responses is that principals are experiencing recentralisation approaches by the authorities. There is an emerging picture of a classical example of centralised approaches.

In the Venn diagram I placed the principals’ perceptions of the provincial departments in the centralised governance sphere. The evidence indicates that most of the participants are of the opinion that the provincial departments of education make use of a draconian governance approach. At district level, a small number of participants mentioned that they did have a good relationship with the district officials. However, this good relationship is dependent on the school to comply and not question the department’s instructions.

5.8.4 Principals’ perspectives of departmental officials

Respondents 3, 4, 18 and 22 alluded to the fact they did not receive any guidance from departmental officials. There seems to be a serious lack of leadership from the Department’s side. The officials are never available.

Principal 19 mentioned that the departmental officials are inexperienced.

Many of our Institutional Development and Support Officers’ (IDSOs) have never been principals. Many times, the director and the deputy director have not been principals either. These people are political appointments.

Participant 24 stated that:

I cannot say that I experience well-informed professional management from the department's side. They cannot run a well-managed meeting. They are either late or the people chairing the meetings are inexperienced. There is always an underlying political agenda.

There were also participants that informed me that they were fearful of the departmental officials. In this regard, I had participants referring to departmental officials as bullies. These participants pointed out that the officials abused their powers and that they even acted unethically to get things done their way.

Participant 14 stated that:

I developed a fear or apprehension. I say so because you must make decisions all the time and, if things go wrong, they can dismiss you. I have personally seen this. I still remember so well with our previous director - he just told you straight away that you will lose your job if something goes wrong at school. I can no longer remember the exact threatening words.

Participant 10 was adamant that:

... departmental officials were liars, cheaters and bullies. They bullied me not to process the Gauteng School Admissions that were given to them on time. I find that they act in a very authoritarian manner. In other words, it is not for you to question us, we do not like you.

Participant 21 shared her negative experience when she personally interacted with the provincial HOD and the MEC of Education and said that *"they tried to bully me."* Participant 9 informed me that the relationship between the Department and the principal and the Department and the SGB changed from a consultative approach to abuse of power by the Department.

The responses correlate with the literature in Chapter 2 paragraph 2.8. Van der Merwe (2013:242) stated:

A pattern has emerged in the last few years where departmental officials have acted beyond the authority allocated to them by law. In this regard there are departmental officials that abuse their powers, unlawfully interfering in the management and governance of schools, neglecting their duties, showing no respect for the rule of law and even ignoring court orders against them.

The inability of the department officials to guide/lead the participants' can be directly linked to the concept of cadre deployment, which is unique to South Africa. Ndedi and Kok (2017) mention that:

The concept of cadre deployment may be seen as the appointment by a ruling party of loyalists in an organisation, circumventing the prescribed recruitment and appointment procedures and public reporting lines and bringing that institution under the control of the party, as opposed to the state.

In this regard and in terms of human resources, official appointments in the form of cadre deployments are rewards for loyalty to the African National Congress (ANC) during the struggle, instead of appointments on merit (Bosman, 2019:9-10; Stone, 2014:254-260; Nkomo, 2021). Cadre deployment violates section 197(3) of the Constitution of 1996 (Republic of South Africa, 1996) which provides that "no employee of the public service may be favoured or prejudiced only because that person supports a particular political party or cause." The state has been ignoring this stipulation in the Constitution for close on 25 years and this is leading to donor misgivings about aid.

I conclude that the DBE functions through its officials. If the officials are inexperienced and uninformed (lack capacity) about the laws and policies that regulate the sector, they will not be able to provide appropriate guidance and leadership to schools. This is the reason why the DBE was involved in so many frivolous litigations in the recent years. In the context of this study, the literature is saturated with cases where officials acted *ultra vires* and implemented recentralised governance approaches without having the legal authority to do so.

There are indications that underperforming and unqualified officials take up positions in the DBE because of the cadre deployment policy applied by the ANC

government. Through undue influence, pressure from unions and political parties and vested interests, these candidates are appointed at the expense of deserving candidates. As a result, the DBE is weakening itself.

The data also indicate that the officials use intimidation to force principals to comply. These intimidation techniques can be viewed as part of a recentralised approach. The tone of the language used by the participants when referring to officials bears testimony to their deep-seated lack of trust and respect for the officials, their suspicions of wrongful appointments of officials in the form of cadre deployment and their anger, indignation and sense of humiliation at being bullied and forced to obey 'one-size-fits-all' instructions and even unlawful commands. One senses that the participants are experiencing recentralisation by the DBE at both provincial and district levels and that they find it hard not to show their disapproval of, and even disgust, with the officials who do not and cannot do their work properly.

In the Venn diagram I placed the principals' perceptions of departmental officials in the centralised governance sphere. The empirical evidence indicates that most of the participants are of the opinion that the departmental officials made use of a draconian governance approach when they interacted with the participants. The small percentage of participants that gave positive feedback regarding their interactions with departmental officials, were the participants that lead schools in the best performing school district in the province.

5.8.5 Recentralisation intentions of the DBE

In paragraph 2.4.1 Chapter 2 I referred to Brennen's (2002:1) view that "*centralised governance in education generally signifies a situation where central administrative authority has absolute control over all resources such as money, budgets, information, people, legislation, policy and technology*". In South Africa, the DBE regulates the content of the curriculum, controls the national and provincial budgets and is responsible for the employment of people, the building of educational facilities, learner discipline policies and laws and many other facets of educational governance and management (Brennen, 2002). In this way, centralisation restricts the participation of role players at the lower levels (Brennen, 2002:1). In the following subsection, I discuss the participants' positive and negative responses regarding the Basic Education Laws Amendment Bill.

5.8.5.1 Principals' perspectives of the Basic Education Laws Amendment Bill

The draft Basic Education Laws Amendment Bill (BELA) proposes to amend SASA (RSA, 1996a) and the EEA (RSA, 1998) respectively to align them with changes in the education environment. The amendments are also intended to make certain that systems of learning and excellence in education are put in place in a manner that respects, protects, promotes, and fulfils the right to basic education enshrined in Section 29(1) of the Constitution of 1996 (RSA, 1996b).

Some of the contentious issues that the BELA Bill seeks to amend are:

- Clause 3 of BELA proposes to make changes to section 5 of SASA (RSA, 1996a). It indicates that the HOD has the absolute power to decide if a learner can have access to a public school. It stipulates that the SGB of a public school must put forward the admission policy of the school, and any revisions thereof, to the HOD for endorsement. The HOD must consider some recommended aspects when evaluating the policy or any amendment thereof. If the HOD does not agree with the policy or any changes thereof, he or she must send it back to the SGB with suggestions as may be regarded necessary (RSA, 2017b).
 - Clause 4 of the Bill seeks to amend section 6 of SASA (RSA, 1996a). In this instance the SGB must put forward the language policy of a public school, and any revisions thereof, to the HOD for endorsement. The HOD has the authority to endorse the policy or any amendment thereof, or he or she may send it back to the SGB with suggestions where the policy falls short. The HOD must take into account certain proposed factors when considering the policy or any amendment thereof. The SGB must re-evaluate the language policy every three years, or every time the stipulated factors have been amended, when the situation so necessitates it, or at the intreat of the HOD. The clause also aims to provide more authority to the HOD to instruct a public school to implement more than one language of learning and teaching, after taking specific stipulated aspects into account, and after the prescribed procedures have been followed (RSA, 2017b).
 - Clause 6 seeks to amend section 8 of SASA (RSA, 1996a) by proposing that the code of conduct of a public school should be inclusive of the different
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cultural beliefs and religious celebrations of the learners at the school. The code of conduct must also include an exclusion clause, allowing learners to be excused from conforming to the code of conduct or specific sections thereof (RSA, 2017b).

- Clause 10 seeks to amend section 20 of SASA (RSA, 1996a) by restricting the powers of a SGB to make recommendations for appointments. If the proposed changes are agreed to, a SGB will only be able to make commendations to the HOD for the appointment of Post Level 1 educators, and in the end the appointment of educators on post levels 2 to 4 will be left to the discretion of the HOD (RSA, 2017b).
- Clause 11 seeks to amend section 21 of SASA (RSA, 1996a) to provide authority to the HOD to buy LTSM for public schools from an apex position in the DBE, after meeting with the SGB in respect to the school's resourcefulness (RSA, 2017b).
- Clause 32 seeks to amend section 6 of EEA (RSA, 1998) to provide for a limitation on the post levels for which SGBs may make commendations for appointment to the HOD. Any appointment, promotion, or transfer to any promotional post on post levels 2 to 4 (departmental heads, deputy principals and principals) on the educator establishment of a public school is to be made from amongst candidates identified by the HOD, and educators on these post levels will be appointed directly by the HOD (RSA, 2017b).

Should these proposed amendments to the SASA be promulgated into law, schools will have less authority to manage and govern their own affairs.

5.8.5.2 Principals' negative perspectives on the Basic Education Laws Amendment Bill

Participants 2, 13, 17 and 24 mentioned that the proposed Bill does not recognise that schools have specific contextual needs. The prescriptions of the proposed Bill are the same for all the schools. The needs of a specific school community will be overlooked. Participants 2, 13, 17 and 24 believed that the proposed changes to legislation were politically driven and were the result of certain role players' ideologies.

Participant 6 said:

“Our powers are already curtailed, and it seems that with this Bill the Department wants to curtail our powers even more. So, we are becoming followers of the government and in the end just compliers”.

Participants 1, 4, 7, 13, 23 and 24 indicated that the proposed Bill would undermine the schools' creativity and innovation efforts because schools would have no power to make their own decisions. These participants indicated that the proposed bill would centralise all decisions in the department. The school principal might become a mere implementer of policy. Participants 9, 15 and 20 mentioned that the SGB would become “puppets” and the role of the SGB would become obsolete. Participant 9 explained: *“This proposed Bill will restrict the SGB. The supportive role of the SGB will be taken away. The fact is that we need support from our parents to whom we can go with certain problems.”*

Participant 15 stated that: *“If you think a bit further, the governing body federations will also be powerless bodies and will only be administrative bodies going on into the future.”*

Participants 2, 7, 13, 23 and 24 referred to the importance of the community to have a say in the governance and management of the school. These participants pointed out that the school had to serve the community and at the same time depend on the support of the community. This proposed Bill would jeopardise this relationship.

The more centralised governance approach as envisaged in the Bill must be wisely implemented with due consideration of contextual differences between schools and communities. Consequently, it will be a detrimental decision by Government (the National DBE) to implement a more centralised governance approach as a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach for all schools. There are still many schools in the system that produce world class results in academics, sport and culture. To force these functional schools under the same ‘blanket’ as the dysfunctional schools, the Department will obstruct the creativity of the school. By becoming compliant with the Department's standards, functional schools will in fact be held back because these highly performing schools set much higher standards for themselves. It is also interesting that despite the recommendations of the National Development Plan, this Bill will curtail the autonomy of well-performing schools. I can only ask: Why does

the Department want to fix schools that are not broken? Furthermore, it seems that the areas in the schools Act that are being targeted for amendment, are to a large extent areas in which the DBE lost court cases. So, instead of rectifying the mistakes they made in the past, they (the Government) are resorting to changing the law to make it possible to implement their political agendas.

The following phrases "...the proposed Bill is the same for all the schools"; "curtail our powers" (Participant 7); "we are becoming followers and compliers" (Participant 19); "creativity will be undermined" (Participants 1, 4, 7, 13, 23, 24); "needs of the specific school environment will be overlooked"; "all decisions will be centralised and enforced" (Participants 2, 13, 17, 24); "at functional schools it will be a huge disadvantage" (Participant 19); "more cadre deployment due to political and union affiliation"; "restrict the SGB" and "the SGB will become puppets" (Participants 9, 15, 20) are consistent with the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 paragraphs 2.7.2 and 2.7.3.

In the literature review I referred to the teacher unions' responses regarding the Bill. The literature states that the proposed amendment is intended to give power to the HOD to enforce a policy. This is a further example of the stripping the powers of local school governance structures through centralisation of power. In essence this proposed Bill re-establishes a state school model as opposed to the public school model currently provided for in the Schools Act. If this proposed Bill should be promulgated into law, it could completely contradict the democratic scheme for school governance as proposed in the Education White Paper 2 of 1995 (SAOU, 2019).

Finally, I conclude that if the Bill becomes law, the Government could take the education system back to the highly centralised education system before 1994. The highly centralised school governance system was driven by politics and the education system was used to realise certain political ideologies. History has shown that, as soon as political decisions are made for education learners, educators, schools and communities become the ones that must bear the brunt of these politicians.

5.8.5.3 Principals' positive perspectives on the Basic Education Laws Amendment Bill

Participants 1, 2, 5, 10, 11 believed the proposed Bill was a move in the right direction. These participants alluded to the fact that there are so many schools where unprofessional conduct and mismanagement take place. To centralise everything, you can curb or limit mismanagement. However, the participants also stated that this approach only had to be implemented at dysfunctional schools and that the Department had to leave functional schools alone to manage and govern their own affairs. The conundrum is that the proposed Bill does not make any distinctions between functional and dysfunctional schools.

Some participants also mentioned that Bill would greatly assist schools that have dysfunctional school governing bodies.

Participant 5 said:

At my school, the SGB is just a body that makes it difficult to manage the school. This proposed law will take away their powers and I will then be able to manage the school without fear of constant irrational interferences from the SGB.

Participants 10, 12, 14, 18 and 19 informed me that they had problems regarding their relations with their school governing bodies. Their school governing bodies had hidden agendas that were not in the best interest of the school. They further explained that, if the proposed Bill were promulgated into law, they would not have the school governing bodies to worry about anymore.

Participant 19 mentioned that the Bill provided good and bad things. At functional schools it would be a huge disadvantage.

At schools that are not functional, it will again be beneficial. But if you take the current incompetent hierarchy up there, the schools that are not functional will become even more dysfunctional. The whole Bill is, in my opinion, a political game. It has nothing to do with the quality of the school.

It seems that BELA has both a positive and a negative side. The more centralised governance approach as envisaged in the Bill must be wisely implemented with due

consideration of contextual differences between schools and communities. Consequently, it will be a detrimental decision by government (the National DBE) to implement a more centralised governance approach as a one-size-fits-all approach for all schools. There are still many schools in the system that produce world class results in academics, sport and culture. To force these functional schools under the same blanket as the dysfunctional schools, the Department will impede the creativity of the school.

By becoming compliant with the Department's standards, functional schools will in fact be held back because these highly performing schools set much higher standards for themselves. It is also interesting that despite the recommendations of the National Development Plan (RSA, 2012), this Bill will curtail the autonomy of well-performing schools.

One can only ask: Why does the Department want to fix schools that are not broken? Furthermore, it seems that the areas in SASA (RSA, 1996a) that are being targeted for amendment, are to a large extent areas in which the DBE lost court cases. So, instead of rectifying the mistakes they made in the past, they (the Government) are resorting to changing the law to make it possible to implement their political agendas.

The following statements *"the proposed Bill is the same for all the schools"*; *"curtail our powers"* (Participant 7); *"we are becoming followers and compliers"* (Participant 19); *"creativity will be undermined"* (Participants 1, 4, 7, 13, 23, 24); *"needs of the specific school environment will be overlooked"*; *"all decisions will be centralised and enforced"* (Participants 2, 13, 17, 24); *"at functional schools it will be a huge disadvantage"* (Participant 19); *"more cadre deployment due to political and union affiliation"*; *"restrict the SGB"* and *"the SGB will become puppets"* (Participants 9, 15, 20) are consistent with the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 paragraphs 2.7.2 and 2.7.3. In the literature review I referred to the teacher unions' responses regarding the Bill. The literature states that the proposed amendment is intended to give power to the HOD to enforce a policy. This is a further example of the stripping the powers of local school governance structures through centralisation of power. In essence this proposed Bill re-establishes a state school model as opposed to the public school model currently provided for in the Schools Act. If this proposed Bill should be promulgated into law, it could completely contradict the democratic scheme for

school governance as proposed in the Education White Paper 2 of 1996 (SAOU, 2019).

Finally, I conclude that if the Bill becomes law, the Government could take the education system back to the highly centralised education system before 1994. The highly centralised school governance system was driven by politics and the education system was used to realise certain political ideologies. History has shown that, as soon as political decisions are made for education learners, educators, schools and communities become the ones that must bear the brunt of these politicians.

The statements that *“there are so many schools where unprofessional conduct and mismanagement take place. To centralise everything, you can curb or limit mismanagement. We are already obliged to follow law anyway.”* (Participants 1, 2, 5, 10, 11); *“at schools that are not functional, it will again be beneficial”* and *“the proposed Bill is the correct approach to implement at schools where mismanagement is hindering the schools to excel”* (Participants 1, 2, 5, 10, 11) correlate with the literature in Chapter 2 paragraph 2.4.2.

The statements *“at my school the SGB is just a body that makes it difficult to manage the school. This proposed law will take away their powers and I will then be able to manage the school without fear of constant irrational interferences from the SGB”* (Participant 5); *“there are so many schools where unprofessional conduct and mismanagement take place. To centralise everything, you can curb or limit mismanagement. We are already obliged to follow the law”* (Participants 1, 2, 5, 10, 11); *“school governing bodies have hidden agendas that are not in the best interest of the school”* (Participants 10, 12, 14, 18, 19); *“if the proposed bill is promulgated into law, they won’t have the school governing bodies to worry about anymore”* (Participants 5, 10, 12, 14, 18,19); *“the proposed bill is the correct approach to implement at schools where mismanagement is hindering the schools to excel”*; *“this approach must only be implemented at dysfunctional schools”* and *“the Department must leave functional schools alone to manage and govern their own affairs”* (Participants 1, 2, 5, 10, 11) are in agreement with the findings of the literature review in Chapter 2 paragraph 2.4.2 and 2.6.2.8.

Consequently, some of the participants were of the view that the centralised governance approach that the proposed Bill puts forward has its advantages. Such

an approach implemented at dysfunctional schools through recentralisation measures, where government (the DBE) reverts power and functions back to a central point in the Department to take back control of failed decentralised governance structures, will greatly assist schools that do not have the administrative capacity and leadership to do so by themselves.

In this regard, notice must be taken of Du Plessis's research. Du Plessis (2020:210) makes reference to a model for differentiated levels of school autonomy. In this regard Du Plessis (2020:210) cited as follows:

The model for differentiated levels should be based on the notion that different settings and times will call for specific responses, such as actions of leadership or actions of management. This model stipulates that contextually intelligent school leadership is a prerequisite to guarantee appropriate and maintainable advancement in schools. Also, this model places the emphasis on the capacity building of schools at the local level by taking context into consideration, including the political environment and cultural diversity.

In other words, this model encourages a strong attentiveness to one's surroundings, which is needed to analyse context. The reason is that individuals may be dealing with multiple contexts at a time, therefore a unique skill set is needed for a faster form of management and leadership practice. The model thus encourages an understanding for contextual diversity and more contextually intelligent approaches to capacity building and school improvement (Du Plessis, 2020:210).

Finally, the data are also in line with Murcia's (2017) description of recentralisation. Murcia (2017:14) describes recentralisation in education as "the set of formal and informal policies and reforms that transfer resources, authority, or responsibilities from lower to higher levels of government, after a process of decentralisation" [failed decentralisation – my insertion]. In Chapter 2 paragraph 2.6.2.8, Mohapi and Netshitangani's (2018:4) research indicates that parent component of the SGB found it difficult to execute the duties of the SGB as outlined in SASA (RSA, 1996a). The research further indicates that some duties of SGBs are dependent on social circumstance in which the school is situated (Mohapi & Netshitangani, 2018:4).

I placed the Basic Education Laws Amendment Bill in the centralised sphere of the Venn diagram. The proposed Bill is one of the recentralisation tendencies the

Department seems to want to implement to regain a greater deal of control over public schools.

5.8.6 Principals' perspectives: Aspects of concern regarding the Basic Education Laws Amendment Bill

During the interviews, concerns were raised by participants regarding the Bill's proposed amendments pertaining to the appointment of educators in promotional posts (management positions) and the language policies of schools.

5.8.6.1 Appointments of educators in promotional posts

According to Participants 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 13, 20 and 23, should this proposed Bill be promulgated into law, the Department will take over the function of appointing educators in promotional posts, effectively having sole control of who is being appointed in management positions in schools. The participants stated that parents and the communities are contextually different (language, religion, culture, etc.) and that these contextual differences must be considered and allowed for when appointing educators in management positions.

Participants 1, 4, 6, 13, 16 and 23 expressed concerns that the education system could be captured by cadre appointments or deployments. The person with the right connections will be appointed, irrespective of the competence of the person and with complete disregard for the provisions of the Constitution, labour law provisions as well as the Employment of Educators Act 76 of 1998 (RSA, 1998). There will also be many opportunities for undue influence in the process by unions (as revealed in the Volmink report, RSA, 2016b), political parties and other organisations.

Participant 4 indicated that, when appointing a teacher, the school is already restricted because the school makes a recommendation, and the Department still has the discretion to make the appointment or not. (It should be mentioned that this discretion of Departments to ignore SGBs' recommendations already gave rise to many disputes addressed in the labour law arena – the main problem being that provincial departments seem to believe they can ignore SGBs' recommendations without providing acceptable reasons for their decisions that are often arbitrary and capricious).

Participant 4 explained as follows:

If this Bill becomes law, the school will have no say in appointments. The SGB knows the community and the culture of the school. This is going to cause a lot of problems.

Participant 5 stated that:

Parents and the communities from each school are different and especially with appointments you must appoint an educator that will fit into the community and the school.

Participant 23 furthermore said:

How can someone that is not involved at the school decide what educator to appoint at the school? This approach can only take place in a first world country where most of the people function at the same levels, but not in South Africa. In South Africa, the differences of levels of functioning between schools are just too big.

The statements “*cadre appointments*”; “*right connections*” and “*the school makes a recommendation, and the Department still has the discretion to make the appointment or not.*” (Participants 1, 4, 6, 13, 16, 23) are in line with the literature in Chapter 2 paragraphs 2.6.2.3 and 2.7.4. Ndedi and Kok (2017) explained:

The concept of cadre deployment may be seen as the appointment by the governing party of a loyalist in an organisation, as a means of circumventing public reporting lines and bringing that institution under the control of the party, as opposed to the State.

The policy entails the establishment of a juxtaposed power-entity to the constitution, to enable political party affiliates to respond firstly to the party and secondly to the people while the party improves its own concerns before those of the citizens.

Due to the uniqueness of schools and the communities, they serve, the appointment of educators in promotional posts must recognise the voice that a SGB should rightfully have. The SGB knows the school culture and the inner workings of the school best, and they will be able to make more thought through decisions regarding the appointment of the most suitable and deserving candidates.

By appointing the most deserving candidate the Department can be assured that the school will be managed effectively. The Department can also lessen its workload

by delegating more functions to the schools (giving the school more autonomy) because there is capable leadership driving school matters.

On the other hand, if this proposed Bill is promulgated into law and the Department is left with the sole discretion to appoint educators in promotional posts, cadre deployment will almost certainly hijack the process. Unfortunately, union and political affiliations and having the right connections will then secure appointments in leadership positions in schools. These phenomena are by no means foreign to the rest of the public service. The result will be incompetent school leaders that do not have the ability or vision to manage and govern schools. In the end, the Department is going to weaken its own sector and unnecessary time will be wasted on implementing recentralised governance actions to take control of poorly managed schools.

5.8.6.2 Language policy

Participants 4, 5, 14, 15, 16 17, 19, 22 and 24 expressed the opinion that the proposed amendment to the language policy of the school where the Bill seeks to hand over control to the provincial Department regarding the language policy of a school, is going to lead to a great deal of tension. The participants pointed out that the language policy of a school is a sensitive aspect. The school should decide what languages they will make provision for without disrupting the functioning of the school.

Participant 22 indicated that it is the right of the parents to determine the language policy at the school. *“This proposed Bill stands in contradiction to the Constitution”*.

Participant 16 emphasised the importance of leaving the choice of the language of instruction to the school community: *“The school serves the community and therefore the school community must make such decisions”*.

Participant 24 expressed the opinion that:

If you are going to start prescribing to schools about the language of instruction, you are going to have problems. The DBE puts a lot of pressure on our principals to change or expand the language of instruction in our schools. The principals in my district were called to a meeting and the Department pressured us to take in English-

speaking learners. They instructed us to start with English classes.

This stands against democratic principles.

In the context of South Africa's political history, language is a sensitive subject and, where a language comes under attack by Government and political parties, it leads to tension and in most cases an intervention by the courts is necessary to remedy the situation. Furthermore, if the DBE forces a certain language on a school and a community without valid and lawful reasons, they will act in contradiction of the Constitution. In section 29(2) of the Constitution, it is clearly stated that everyone has the right to receive education in the official language or languages of their choice in public educational institutions where that education is reasonably practicable. To ensure the effective access to, and implementation of, this right, the State must consider all reasonable educational alternatives, including single medium institutions, considering -

- a. equity,
- b. practicability and
- c. the need to redress the results of past racially discriminatory laws and practices.

Furthermore, the Department often tries to force Afrikaans medium schools to also accept English learners because there is usually a shortage of space for learners which flies in the face of the duty of every Member of an Executive Council for Education in the provinces to ensure that there are enough school places so that every child who lives in his or her province, can attend school as required (section 3(3) of the Schools Act). It is not impossible that the pressure to which the participants refer, do not spring from the need to provide education as stipulated in section 29(2) of the Constitution, but that it is rather a façade behind which an MEC who has not done her or his duty as per section 3(3) of the Schools Act, tries to hide his or her failure in this regard.

Finally, if the Department acts in a draconian manner, they will take the education system back to the centralised system that prevailed during apartheid. In the previous education system, Afrikaans was forced upon most of the citizens to realise the ideologies of the apartheid government. Ironically, today most teachers in Afrikaans schools are not proficient enough in English to teach in English. Thus,

forcing these schools to introduce English as a language of teaching and learning will place additional operational pressures on these schools.

Responses like *“the Bill seeks to hand control over to the department regarding the language policy of the school”* (Participant 4); *“the language policy of a school is a sensitive aspect”* (Participant 17), *“the proposed Bill stands in contradiction to the Constitution”* (Participant 22) and *“the school serves the community and therefore the school community must make such decisions”* (Participant 16) support the findings of the literature review in Chapter 2 paragraph 2.8.3. According to Smit and Oosthuizen (2011:61), language rights of African learners as well as Afrikaans single medium schools are disrespected by provincial officials. The quantitative study by Smit and Oosthuizen (2011:61) concluded that the Afrikaans sub-groups in their study (81.5%) maintained robust opinions against a centralised school language policy, while the majority of the Setswana group was in support of a centralised language policy approach. Although 85.8% of the respondents held the same view that home language education will increase learner achievement, the Setswana language group was boldly hostile to the tolerance and accommodation of Afrikaans single medium schools (Smit & Oosthuizen, 2011:65).

5.8.7 Principals’ perceptions: School governance models

During the interviews, the participants asserted that many schools are dysfunctional and that a centralised governance approach is the only way to assist those schools. However, there are also functional schools, and it will be unfair to foist a centralised governance approach on them. In this regard, some of the participants mentioned that different school governance models must be made available to schools to choose from.

Participant 2 stated:

I have a great understanding that there are many dysfunctional schools and that you have to get a much stronger management guidance from above to give people the guidelines and actually enforce them to move in the right direction. My plea, however, is that they should leave good functional schools alone. The department must set some categories of schools. I agree with the Department if schools become dysfunctional these schools must be brought under administration. At the other end of the spectrum, you leave functioning schools delivering excellent performance in terms of academia alone. The schools must be left out

because they have proven performance... give the schools their freedom.

Participant 17 believes that schools must have an option to choose a governance model that will suit them. The participant pointed out that functional schools (in contrast with dysfunctional schools) must have the option to go the independent or semi-independent route.

Participant 10 explained as follows:

...Functional schools must be given options regarding the type of governance and management model they want to implement. The functional schools must have options of becoming independent or semi-private schools regarding their governance and management. The Department can still come and visit these schools. The dysfunctional schools, on the other hand, must be closely monitored and will benefit from a centralised governance and management approach. But I know this will never happen because of politics.

In Chapter 6 I will refer to school models when I discuss the recommendations of the study regarding school management and governance.

5.9 FINAL REMARKS AND THE WAY FORWARD

In this chapter I presented the data that I collected through the semi-structured interviews and document analysis. I made use of a Venn diagram to illustrate the manifestation of the effects recentralisation has on school management and governance. The themes were derived from the identification of meaningful segments, and the selection of code words that I grouped into categories. These categories were then presented as themes. The Venn diagram contains representations of the participants' perspectives which I analysed to generate the themes and sub-themes.

To conclude:

- In essence, the person or persons in charge (the principal and the school management team) seem to feel restricted in their discretionary decision making through policy, laws, regulations and standards set by the DBE and school governing bodies. These recentralisation tendencies can occur at micro and at macro levels.
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- If a principal is only managing the school in accordance with one specific source, namely the Schools Act, and does not consider other sources such as case law that might give them more scope to manage and govern their schools, the principal will be responsible for restricting his/her own area of management and governance autonomy.
 - A “one size-fits-all” approach where the DBE is instructing the principal to implement a policy even though that policy is not to the benefit of the school and disregards the contexts of local communities, will have a detrimental effect on the school system in general.
 - A recentralised governance approach to policy must be limited to schools where schools do not have the necessary capacity to draft and implement their own policies that speak to the specific needs of their schools. However, schools should be assisted and then developed through in-service programmes to improve the quality of education they produce. Recentralisation should be the last option and should be selectively implemented as a temporary measure. Otherwise, the underlying philosophy of schools in the post 1994 era namely that of institutions functioning in a participative democratic system, will become null and void.
 - It appears that competent and ‘strong’ principals may pose a threat to the DBE in terms of its expectations that the policies that are implemented at school level may not mirror their (the Department’s) intentions. This can be a reason why some departmental officials take a forceful approach when they interact with principals. They see intimidation as a means to ensure actual implementation of Departmental policies. The intimidation can also be viewed as a form of recentralisation. At this stage there is no forum where disputes of this kind can be addressed in a spirit of participatory or participative government. This is an issue that the Basic Education Laws Amendment Bill can address.
 - Alternatively, the assertive principals can also appear to be more inclined to implement the policies of their SGBs. On the other hand, these assertive principals also manipulate and influence the SGB regarding the development and implementation of policy to such an extent that it leads to a great amount of tension.
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- If principals are thoroughly prepared and supported for the position of principalship, mismanagement practices will be restricted. This means that the Department can implement a more focused recentralised governance approach at schools where mismanagement still exists.
 - The data and the literature suggest that 'healthy' management and governance approaches will lead to greater management and governance autonomy, because the State (DBE) will trust and not second guess the discretionary decisions of the principals.
 - Unhealthy management and governance approaches inevitably lead to more regulated management and governance approaches by the authorities through recentralisation.
 - The data indicate that management approaches constantly change to adapt to circumstances. There are times when a principal follows a democratic (decentralised) approach involving everybody in the decision-making processes. Then there are times where the principal acts more autocratically (centralised), instructing the staff instead of consulting them.
 - Where there are no clear boundaries between the principal's management and the SGB's governance domains, the potential for interference in each other's domains increases exponentially and will lead to mistrust and tension.
 - A pattern of macro interference in the school by the DBE occurs mainly in the spheres of school admissions, language policy, school codes of conduct, appointment of educators and religion policy. Political ideologies thus seem to be a major factor that affects a school's management and governance autonomy. SGBs and the principals' management and governance autonomy will be reduced, and they will have less discretionary decision-making powers where these political intrusion attempts are successful.
 - A totally centralised education system will take South Africa back to centralised and autocratic education system as experienced during the apartheid era.
 - A centralised governance approach can be implemented to rectify education processes that are ineffective. A centralised governance approach must be
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restricted to schools that are not functioning in accordance with the minimum standards set by the national DBE.

- A decentralised governance approach could alleviate Government's education burdens by allowing functional schools to manage and govern their own affairs.
 - Decentralised school governance could be to the advantage of the national government by alleviating the national government of internal bureaucratic headaches; financial burdens thereby improving the political legitimacy of central government.
 - SGBs have the tendency to curtail duties that they delegated to the principal if there are differences in opinion between them and the principal regarding the future planning of the school (vision planning).
 - Recentralisation can also occur between the DBE and SGBs where the Department curtails the powers of the SGB. In terms of section 25 of the Schools Act, the department can withdraw functions of the SGB if the SGB becomes dysfunctional.
 - In terms of the evidence, the participants are of the opinion that cooperative government is only an illusion. The participants' responses indicated practices contradictory to what the Constitution envisioned cooperative governance to be.
 - The data revealed that most participants are of the opinion that the participation of stakeholders - and in this case the parents and the community as envisaged in the SASA, the National Education Policy Act and the National Development Plan 2030 - is in fact not a reality. Only a small percentage of the participants gave positive feedback.
 - The socio-economic circumstances of a community have a major impact on cooperative governance between the school and the parents and the community. Parents in poor socio-economic communities have jobs that impede their involvement in their children's education.
 - It appears that parents' lack of education contributes to limiting their involvement in their children's education.
 - The DBE functions through its officials. If officials are inexperienced and uninformed about the laws and policies that regulate the sector, they will not be
-

able to provide appropriate guidance and leadership to schools. This is one of the reasons why the DBE was involved in so much litigation over the past few years.

- Underperforming and unqualified officials taking up positions in the DBE is the result of, among others, cadre deployment. Through undue influence and pressure from unions and political parties, these candidates are appointed at the expense of deserving candidates. In the end the Department is weakening itself.

Regarding the main aim of the study, it would seem that all participating principals have to some extent experienced attempts by the DBE to recentralise powers that had been devolved to local communities after 1994. Some principals (mostly in quintile 4 and 5 fee-paying schools) view these interferences as obstructive to their efforts to provide quality education (for which they believe they have access to all the necessary human and other resources). On the other hand, some principals (mostly those in quintiles 1-3 non-fee-paying schools) seem to welcome the idea of greater centralisation and recentralisation because of the lack of general resources and human resource capabilities in their schools. There are merits to both approaches, but the arguments against a recentralised governance approach seem to suggest an education system gravitating back to the practices and principles of the pre-1994 system – something which the country can ill afford.

In the next chapter, I present an overview of each chapter of the dissertation. I reiterate the purpose of the study and then discuss the findings of the study before I offer my conclusion about the working assumptions of this research. I also discuss the limitations and the significance of my research and make recommendations for the improvement of practice and suggest areas for further research before I conclude with what I regard as the greatest contribution of the research.

CHAPTER 6

SYNTHESIS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 5, I presented the data that I collected through semi-structured interviews and document analysis. I made use of a Venn diagram to display the relationships between the overarching themes. The themes were derived from the identification of meaningful segments and the selection of code words that I grouped into categories. These categories then became the themes. The Venn diagram is a representation of the participants' thoughts, feelings and understandings which I analysed to generate the themes and the emerging topics. Five themes emerged and I identified sub-themes under each theme.

In this chapter, I present an overview of each chapter of the dissertation. I recap the purpose of the study and then discuss the findings of the study before I offer my conclusion about the working assumptions of this research. I also discuss the limitations and the significance of my research and make recommendations for the improvement of practice and suggest areas for further research before I conclude with what I regard as the most significant contribution of this study.

6.2 OVERVIEW

6.2.1 Chapter 1: Roadmap

Chapter 1 could be viewed as the roadmap of my research. The chapter started with a discussion of my problem statement. Smit and Oosthuizen (2011:59) describe the South African democracy as depicted in the Constitution of 1996 as a participatory democracy. The SASA (RSA, 1996a) was intended to provide for participative decision-making in the education system (Prinsloo, 2006:355-356). In SASA (RSA, 1996a) section 16(1) the act clearly states that the governance of every public school is entrusted to the SGB, and section 16(3) of the act provides that the principal must manage the public school. In this regard, important decision-making responsibilities have been decentralised from the central government to self-governing and self-managing school communities as manifested in the provision for SGBs in the Schools Act (Smit, 2001) and the principal who must implement the decisions of the SGB. Koelble and Siddle's (2014:312) research revealed that this envisaged decentralisation has not materialised.

South Africa's local government is in a state of palsy, characterised by service delivery failures and dysfunction. Mbecke (2014:267) indicates that these unsuccessful decentralisation outcomes are the results of: poor governance; at grassroot level the community is not consulted in important decisions; not enough resources are made available to sufficiently look after the demands of the people; no rational planning; monitoring and evaluation systems are in place; and non-adherence to applicable laws, policies, regulations and procedures are in the order of the day.

My research problem was positioned in this unsuccessful decentralised governance era and the impact it had on the education system. It is also in this decentralised era where the phenomena of centralisation and recentralisation are located.

I then discussed the purpose of my research which was to conduct an in-depth investigation of principals' perspectives of educational recentralisation in terms of professional management and governance of schools.

Chapter 1 also highlighted the rationale of this research. I was firstly motivated to pursue this research because of my involvement in a teachers' union (the South African Teachers' Union (SAOU)). The SAOU was either directly involved or participated as an *amicus curiae* (friend of the court) to protect the rights of its members in cases such as *The Governing Body of Point High School and Another v The Head of the Western Cape Education Department and others* (584/07) 2008 ZAHHA 48; 2008 5 SA 18 (HHA); 2008 3 All SA 35 (HHA) and *Governing Body of Mikro Primary School and Another v Western Cape Minister of Education and Others* (332/05) [2005] ZAWCHC 14; 2005 (3) SA 504 (C) [2005] 2 All SA 37 (C). The centralisation tendencies of the government are likely to influence principals' management functions and responsibilities as stipulated in section 16A of the Schools Act (RSA, 1996a) and annexure A.7 of the Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM) of 1996 (DBE, 2016). As a result, autonomous professional management and governance at school level could be severely restricted.

Secondly, on the 13th of October 2017 the Department of Basic Education published Government Gazette No 41178 containing the Basic Education Laws Amendment Bill (BELA) (DBE, 2017). This proposed Bill aims to amend the Schools Act. If this Bill is promulgated into law, school governing bodies could, in the opinion of stakeholders like the unions and governing body associations, eventually be

stripped of most if not all their functions and responsibilities regarding the management and governance of schools. As a result, the principal will also be affected by the (re)centralisation of the governing body's governance functions because the principal is the central figure that must implement the decisions of the school governing body whilst simultaneously representing the provincial Head of the Department of Basic Education.

6.2.2 Chapter 2: The decentralisation, centralisation and recentralisation conundrum in public education

This chapter presented a review of relevant literature and commenced with an introduction to the launch of decentralisation and the counter push towards centralisation through recentralisation measures regarding school governance. The Constitution of 1996 espouses representative and participatory democracy, accountability, transparency, and public involvement (RSA, 1996c). As a result, the South African education system also had to be realigned with democratic principles through policy and law reforms (Naidoo, 2005:13). In this regard, the Schools Act provided the instrument that sanctioned the decentralisation of governance and management to the stakeholders at the community level by including them in decision-making processes (Van der Merwe, 2013:238). The literature, however, presents a contrasting picture.

- **Roadmap – Part 1: The periphery of the school landscape in which the principal must operate**

In Part 1 of the literature, I sketched the landscape in which the school principal must function after 1994.

- **Part 2: The principal and the centralisation/recentralisation conundrum in public education**

In Part 2 I started the discussion by putting centralisation into context. Brennen (2002:1) mentions that centralised governance in education generally infers a situation where the central administrative authority has absolute control over all resources such as money, budgets, information, people, legislation, policy and also technology (Brennen, 2002:1). Here I referred to the factors that have shaped recentralisation around the world, namely: economics (e.g., hyperinflation), politics

(e.g., partisan control of government) and administrative (e.g., lack of institutional capacity at the lower levels of government (Murcia, 2017:55).

6.2.3 Chapter 3: International perspective: The principal as manager and governor *vis-à-vis* interference in the principal's management and governance autonomy

In this chapter, I examined the education systems of Kenya, Nigeria, New Zealand and Australia to present an international perspective of the principal's position regarding management and governance. This provided some clarity on the reasons why systems lower down in the government hierarchy are governed through centralised or decentralised governance approaches. I then discussed the governance approaches that are implemented in each specific country's schooling system. This provided me with insights on whether the South African school principals' management functions are aligned with international best practices and if the education system is moving to align itself with international practices regarding management and governance.

6.2.4 Chapter 4: Research methodology

In Chapter 4, I discussed the research design and the methodology I used to collect data. I made use of a qualitative case study approach. A qualitative approach suited my study the best since I wanted to understand principals' perspectives of a human problem, namely the impact of recentralised decentralisation on their functions and responsibilities to manage the school (Creswell & Poth, 2017:43). I used a multiple qualitative case study design. In a qualitative case study, a researcher investigates a real-life system (a case) bounded in time and space through detailed, in-depth data-gathering practices like interviews and the collection and analysis of documents and reports (Cresswell & Poth, 2017; Dawson, Hancock & Algozinne, 2016). Though the use of a multiple case study design I was able to analyse different principals' perspectives of recentralisation and their management and governance functions.

I preferred the use of purposive sampling in the selection of my participants. According to Creswell and Poth (2017:96), purposive sampling assists the researcher to make a distinction between the research environment and participants to understand the problem and research question better. Semi-structured interviews

gave me a broader scope to understand the perspectives of the participants. According to Blandford (2013:23), semi-structured interviews are a more flexible type of interview as they permit the researcher the freedom to follow up on (“dig deeper into”) the interviewees’ answers.

6.2.5 Chapter 5: Data analysis and findings

In Chapter 5, I analysed the data I collected through semi-structured interviews by making use of data coding. Data coding begins with small, meaningful and discrete segments of information standing on their own. These segments divide the data set.

After I had identified the segments, I analysed them to create codes (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). In the next step, I identified information-rich words or phrases and grouped them into categories (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). Next, I arranged the categories into themes and the themes into clusters of themes. Finally, I grouped these themes and clusters of themes into patterns that form connections between categories (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). In addition to the interviews that I analysed, I also analysed the proposed Basic Education Laws Amendment Bill in Government Gazette No. 41178 (DBE, 2017) and relevant case law to develop a better understanding of the recentralisation tendencies of Government regarding education management and governance in South Africa.

6.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of my research was to conduct an in-depth investigation into the perspectives principals have regarding the recentralisation of their management and governance functions in public schools. The data gathered from this research could assist the DBE to make more informed decisions regarding future amendments to education legislation pertaining to the management and governance of schools. The research could also encourage the various stakeholders in education to revisit the management functions and responsibilities of principals. The recently published Policy on the South African Standard for Principals (DBE, 2016) recognises that, due to the diversity of school contexts, principals require particular knowledge, action, and context-specific practical applications in the key areas of managing a school. This can only be determined by an individual principal working within a specific school and its wider community. Finally, the research could assist the DBE

to reaffirm the importance of the autonomy of principals in fulfilling their management functions and responsibilities.

6.4 FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

What are public school principals' perspectives of recentralised decentralisation regarding their management and governance functions?

The participants had both positive and negative perspectives of a totally centralised education governance approach. They emphasised that a totally centralised education governance approach would severely hamper functional schools that have the administrative capacity to be creative and innovative regarding their academic, sport and cultural functions. Furthermore, functional schools' culture and ethos will also be diminished if every school is to be governed in the same way (*cf.* paragraph 5.6.2, Participants 1, 4, 10, 13, 23 and 24). Principals will become compliers because all the decisions will be made on their behalf (*cf.* paragraph 5.6.2, participants 4, 19 and 22). Creative management and governance issues such as the setting up of exam timetables, the procurement of learning and support material (LTSM), the appointment of educators and the issuing of report cards will, among others, become a regulated exercise where the provincial departments will issue instructions from a central point in the department. Consequently, schools will have less time to be creative because they will be overwhelmed with paperwork that must be submitted to the department to ensure that the schools are compliant (*cf.* paragraph 5.6.2, Participants 2, 7, 13, paragraph 5.6.5, Brennen (2002:1), Du Plessis and Heystek (2020:847)). A totally centralised governed education system will take South Africa back to autocratic education system approaches similar to those used by the National Party government (*cf.* paragraph 5.6.2). Participants also highlighted the advantages of a (re)centralised governance approach and the important role it can play in education. They pointed out that through (re)centralisation the DBE can take control of dysfunctional schools where SGBs do not have the administrative capacity to govern their affairs, where financial mismanagement practices take place, the principal and/or the SGB do not follow the prescribed policies of the Department (*cf.* Chapter 2 paragraph 2.4.3, Murcia (2017:14); paragraph 5.6.3, Participants 1, 2, 5, 7, 8, 11, 13, 14, 17, 21 and 24).

On the other hand, the participants indicated that, due to the contextual disparities of communities across the country, decentralised governance holds an enormous

positive benefit for those schools that have the means and qualify to implement education practices with insight and knowledge (*cf.* paragraph 5.6.4, Participants 4, 6, 7, 8, 16, 20 and 21; paragraph 5.6.5, National Policy on Whole School Evaluation (DBE, 2002:8). Decentralised governance will allow schools to establish a unique school ethos and culture. It is to the benefit of a school where governors have the capacity to let schools do just that – govern their own affairs (*cf.* paragraph 5.6.4, Participants 1, 10, 13, 23 and 24).

Decentralised governance will make it possible for SGBs to make decisions that are in the best interest of the school. *“We know the needs of the community and our schools”* (*cf.* paragraph 5.6.4, Participant 14). *“A decentralised governance approach gives schools basic control and enables the school to govern its own affairs that leads to more creativity and innovation within their own dynamics”* (*cf.* Chapter 2 paragraph 2.2.5, Indriyanto (2005:25), paragraph 5.6.4, Participant 7). As a result, a decentralised governance approach could alleviate Government’s education burden by allowing functional schools to manage and govern their own affairs. This is where the National Development Plan 2030 (RSA, 2012) will have an enormous influence on the improvement of the education system. Implementing the National Developments Plan’s suggestions in this regard could result in Government having more resources available to support the non-functional schools through more centralised approaches. Decentralised school governance could benefit the national government primarily by relieving the central government of internal bureaucratic headaches and financial burdens. In addition, decentralised governance could work to the advantage of local school governance structures primarily by increasing revenue streams for education at local level; increasing the capacity of SGBs and by improving the responsiveness of central government to local needs (*cf.* Chapter 2 paragraph 2.2.5; Indriyanto (2005:25).

The national government’s governance approach applied to schools will determine the leadership/management style the principal will implement at school. The participants’ perspectives favoured a democratic and participatory leadership/management approach to lead their schools. They adduced that when educators feel that they are co-leaders and co-managers, they will take ownership of and responsibility for their duties (*cf.* paragraph 5.5.1.1, Participants 1, 9, 15, 19 and 23). By allowing the staff to participate in management decisions, the staff will

be more inclined to buy into the decisions taken by management. Participatory leadership and management will lead to more inputs that could be considered to improve current structures and procedures in a school (*cf.* Chapter 2 paragraph 2.2.2, Squelch, 1998:101, Smit and Oosthuizen et al., 2011:59, Karlson, 2002:37, paragraph 5.5.1.1, Participants 1, 2, 4, 7, 20, 22 and 24).

The participants viewed autocratic and/or dictatorial leadership and management as undesirable approaches. They indicated that such an approach leads to no-trust relationships (*cf.* paragraph 5.5.1.2, Participants 4, 6, 8, 11, 12, 15, 21 and 24). The participants identified unhealthy leadership and management (e.g., abuse of entrusted power, influence of power on others) with political and ideological agendas as the driving force behind many of the actions of the DBE (*cf.* Chapter 2 paragraph 2.6.2.1, paragraph 5.5.1.2, Participants 1, 6, 13, 16, 18, 22 and, 24). Where healthy leadership and management practices are applied, principals exhibit exceptional people skills by building relationships with and among staff, encouraging open channels of communication with and between staff members and involving staff in decision-making. Healthy leadership and management require a leader that is steadfast in the sense that he/she is continuously involved with the primary operations of the school (*cf.* paragraph 5.5.1.1, Participants 1, 9, 15, 19 and 23). The data indicates that leadership/management approaches are variables that constantly change to adapt to circumstances. There are times when principals follow a democratic and/or participatory (decentralised) approach, involving many role players in the decision-making processes. There are also situations where principals act more autocratically, instructing the staff instead of consulting them. Principals favour an autocratic management approach if staff do not buy in on decisions, if things are going in the wrong direction and the principals need to “steer the ship” in the right direction (*cf.* Chapter 2 paragraph 2.4.1 Shah, 2010:285, paragraph 5.5.2, Participants 1, 6, 7, 10, 13, 14, 20 and 21).

Recentralisation governance approaches can also occur between the principal and the SGB. Some SGBs tend to recentralise (curtail) the statutory powers of the principal if the principal does not implement the SGBs policies (*cf.* paragraph 5.7.1 Participants 4, 9, 12, 19 and 22). The SGB usually implements such a drastic approach when the principal and the SGB disagree with each other (*cf.* paragraph 5.4.1, Participants 4, 9, 12, 19, and 22). The data intimate that where there are no

clear boundaries between the principal's management and the SGB's governance domains, the potential for interference in each other's domains increases exponentially and will lead to mistrust and tension. By co-establishing clear boundaries between management and governance domains with the SGB, a principal will protect his/her management autonomy (*cf.* Chapter 3, paragraph 3.6.5.2 of the literature where I referred to the *School Governing Body Grey College, Bloemfontein v Scheepers and Another* case, Potchefstroom Boys High; Chapter 2 paragraph 2.6.2.8 (grassroot governance challenges), Mohapi and Netshitangani (2018:8); paragraph 5.5.3, Participants 4, 6, 10, 12, 18, 19 and 24).

The data further highlighted the fact that SGBs term is relatively short (three years) and, because of this, SGBs only have short-term visions while the principal has long-term visions for the school. This could lead to great tension between the principal and the SGB (*cf.* paragraph 5.7.1, Participants 3, 10, 12, 14, 18 and 19).

The majority of the participants expressed the opinion that some SGBs have hidden agendas that are not in the best interest of the school. This leads to conflict where the SGBs react irrationally and beyond their powers, e.g., by withdrawing the professional duties of the principal (*cf.* paragraph 5.7.1, Participants 3, 10, 12, 14, 18 and 19). Competent or strong principals are also more inclined to question and influence SGB policies. This could also be a reason for the tension and conflict that could exist between the principal and the SGB (*cf.* paragraph 5.4.3.1; paragraph 2.7.7, Chapter 2 Bayeni & Bhengu, 2018:2). Sometimes governing bodies even insist on the resignation of the principal where the principal and the SGB disagree (*cf.* Participants 4, 9, 12, 19, 22, paragraph 5.4.1. and 5.7.1). The data furthermore confirmed that school demographics can be linked to the functionality or effectiveness of the SGB. It is, however, important to qualify that this deduction is isolated to only certain school districts and the sub-districts that make up the greater district in which this study was conducted (*cf.* Chapter 5; paragraph 5.7.1, Participants 3, 12, 14, 18 and 19; Xaba, 2011; Mabasa & Themane, 2002:112; Heystek, 2004; Dieltiens, 2005; Grant-Lewis & Naidoo, 2006, Brown & Duku, 2008 and Nonyane, 2016 Xaba, 2011; Mabasa & Themane, 2002:112; Heystek, 2004; Dieltiens, 2005; Grant-Lewis & Naidoo, 2006; Brown & Duku (2008) and Nonyane, 2016).

The data revealed that race seems to influence the principal and SGB relationship. Although South Africa is in its 27th year of being a democratic country, the issues and sensitivities around race are still a determining factor in various sectors, especially in the education sector. Where the principal is from a different race group than the rest of the SGB, it seems to ignite conflict and some SGB members will go out of their way to make the principal's interactions with the SGB an unpleasant experience (*cf.* Chapter 5 paragraph 5.7.1, Participants 12, 18 and 21).

The data also established that there is a great deal of tension between departmental officials and principals. This tension often leads to *ultra vires* actions taken by officials that can be seen as another form of recentralisation. It is evident from the data that intimidation is used by departmental officials (the national executive authority) to compel principals to be compliant even if they do not agree with some policies of the Department (*cf.* Chapter 5 paragraph 5.4.1, Participants 15, 6, 18; Chapter 2 paragraph 2.8). These intimidation techniques can be viewed as another form of recentralisation. Where principals become fearful and anxious of the Department, the relationship between the principal and the employer will deteriorate and it will become an "us versus them" situation (*cf.* paragraph 5.4.3, Participants 24, 14, 6).

Recentralisation also seems likely to occur where effective principals pose a threat to authorities in the sense that these principals can cast a bad light on the officials by demonstrating that they do not need the authorities. These principals can then be subjected to the malicious and unwarranted efforts by departmental officials in an attempt to reduce their powers (*cf. Chapter 5 paragraph 5.4.1, Participants 4, 9, 12, 19 and 22*). Such an approach will take the school system back to a highly centralised governance school system similar to that which prevailed during the apartheid system where policy was forced upon schools (*cf.* Chapter 3 paragraph 3.6.2, Msila (2007:148), Naidoo (2005:22)). It appears that competent or strong principals may pose a threat to the Department in terms of its expectations that the policies that are implemented at school level may not mirror their (the Department's) intentions. This may be a reason why some departmental officials take such a forceful approach when they interact with principals. They see intimidation as a way to ensure actual implementation of policy. Policy implementation at schools can also become a contentious issue between principals and the department and between

principals and the SGB. Principals sometimes do act contrary to departmental policy. If a school is not going to benefit from the implementation of a policy and the policy is going to restrict the school, the principal either does not implement such a policy or bends or circumvents the policy to suit his/her school's unique circumstances (*cf.* Chapter 5 paragraph 5.4.3, Participants 2, 3, 7, 10, 13, 14, 20, 21; Chapter 2 paragraph 2.7.7, Bayeni and Bhengu, 2018:2).

The data also established that some participants prefer a consultative approach if they do not agree with the policies of the Department. They would prefer to communicate substantive reasons to their superiors why a particular policy would not be in the best interest of the school should it be implemented. Participants also underlined the importance of providing alternative approaches to their superiors (*cf.* paragraph, 5.4.3 Participants 1, 2, 6, 10, 13, 14 and 21). The provincial Department of Basic Education must be open for consultation where functional schools want to table a different approach to a certain policy (*cf.* paragraph 5.4.3, Participants 1, 2, 6, 10, 13, 14 and 21).

Lastly, there were participants that said that they would never act in contravention of policy the DBE instructs them to implement at their schools. These participants emphasised that acts contrary to the Department's instructions, could result in the implement of sanctions e.g., curtailment (recentralisation) of duties/functions or disciplinary action. These participants seemed fearful and anxious to act contrary to instructions from the Department and that seemed to be the reason why they complied with instructions, even if they personally did not agree with the Department's policy or approach (*cf.* paragraph 5.4.3, participants 24, 14 and 4).

The data revealed that participants believe that BELA has both positive and negative consequences for education if it is implemented contextually, and not as a 'one blanket' approach for all.

Some participants pointed out that a centralised governance approach as envisaged in the Bill must be wisely implemented with due consideration of the fact that schools and communities differ from one another. Consequently, it would be an unfortunate and unwise decision for Government (the National Department of Basic Education) to implement a centralised governance approach as a 'one-size-fits-all' approach for all schools. There are still many schools in the system that produce excellent results in their academic, sport and cultural endeavours. By forcing these highly functional

schools under the same blanket as the dysfunctional schools, the DBE will impede the high levels of innovation that characterise these schools (*cf.* Chapter 5, paragraphs 5.6.2, Participants 1, 2, 7, 10, 13, 23 and 24). On the other hand, some participants pointed out that the recentralisation approaches that the proposed Bill puts forward have advantages. Such an approach implemented at dysfunctional schools where Government (the Department of Basic Education) reverts power and functions to a central point in the Department to take back control of failed decentralised governance and management structures will greatly assist schools that do not have the administrative capacity and leadership to do so themselves. A proviso applies namely that this action should not permanently take away decentralised powers, but return them to the schools once these schools have been assisted to raise their performance levels to desired standards (*cf.* Chapter 2 paragraph 2.4.3 and 2.6.2.8, Murcia (2017:14), Sebidi (2009:39); Chapter 5 paragraph 5.8.5.3, Participants 1, 2, 5, 10 and 11)

6.5 CONCLUSION ABOUT THE WORKING ASSUMPTION OF THE STUDY

My working assumption is that principals are aware of the recentralisation tendencies that are limiting their autonomy to perform their management tasks and, in the case of the SGB, their governance tasks. In this regard, it is important to be cognisant of the fact that the principal is in a precarious position. Firstly, the principal must look out for the interests of the department that is also the principal's employer. Secondly, the principal is also a member of the SGB and must guard the SGB's interests. Consequently, the principal's freedom to manage the school can be regulated through (re)centralisation actions of both the department and the SGB.

In the case of the department, it seems that departmental officials prefer to implement (re)centralised governance approaches where 'strong'/assertive principals challenge officials or show officials that they do not need them. The result is officials that implement recentralisation approaches in an *ultra vires* manner in the form of bullying, victimisation, and threatening behaviour to force principals to comply. In this case, some principals comply out of fear of these officials even though they did not agree with the departments' policies. In this regard I did not expect the degrees of animosity principals had towards the departmental officials.

In reference to SGBs, I had an assumption that there is a great deal of tension between principals and SGBs. The data confirmed my assumption. The tension

between the principal and the SGB is the result of 'strong'/assertive principals that challenge the SGB or on the other hand where SGBs do not understand their roles and interfere in the principal's duties. In addition, the data revealed that demographics and the levels of education also have a significant impact on the working relationship that exists between the principal and the SGB.

Finally, I did not assume that race had such a significant effect on the principal and SGB relationship. It seems that where the principal is from another racial group than the rest of the SGB that the SGB will go out of their way to make the interactions the principal has with them an unpleasant experience.

The assumption I had that the principals would be against a centralised education system was only partially correct. In this regard, I gathered both positive and negative responses about the proposed BELA. The principals that experienced relationship challenges with their SGBs all welcomed the possibility that BELA could be promulgated into law. They indicated that the SGB makes the execution of their duties difficult and that they would prefer to only work with the department. The participants also made it clear that a centralised approach will benefit dysfunctional schools that do not have the administrative capacity/leadership to rectify the problems at such a school. It is important to mention that the participants mentioned that a centralised approach must only be implemented at dysfunctional schools and that a 'one size fits all' approach would be detrimental to the education system.

6.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

The South African public has a right to demand a restructured school system for a democratic South Africa that will be more unbiased, and beneficial to all who have a direct interest in the school sector. The vast differences among South African schools necessitate an innovative restructuring of school administration/governance that will be realistic to implement. The administrative and governance structures must be similar and consistent but adaptable to take into account the broad scope of school contexts, the noteworthy differences in the physical environments of schools, the availability or absence of leadership and management competencies, parents' knowledge, or lack thereof, in school governance, and the distances that parents work/live from their children's schools. Consequently, a hybrid centralised decentralised governance approach should be implemented to accommodate the specific needs of schools. The current South African school system includes

functional schools whose functionality is internationally comparable. Year on year these schools produce exceptional academic, sport and cultural results. On the other side of the spectrum are dysfunctional schools. These schools are characterised by low learner pass rates and poor management and governance practices. There are also schools that cannot be labelled as functional or dysfunctional schools. These schools produce average to sub-average results, and they need assistance to improve but not major intervention as in the case of a dysfunctional school. The aim of the research was to provide guidance to the DBE in this regard. Finally, the research will assist the DBE in the future drafting of laws, policies and regulation that talks to education management and governance.

6.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

My personal experiences, first as a former school principal and now as an operational director of a teachers' union, could have potentially limited my objectivity during the process of my study or influenced my understanding of the theoretical framework of this research field. I attempted to overcome these limitations by ensuring member checking by each participant and by recording the interviews to code only what the participants have said. Another limitation would be participants not being truthful in their answers because they did not want to be regarded as incompetent or were worried about possible victimisation by the authorities. The research was also isolated to certain school districts and therefore the deductions I made are also isolated to these specific school districts.

6.8 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

6.8.1 Power relations

Co-operative governance is one of the approaches that can be implemented to realise fair dispersal of education resources/infrastructure. This can only be achieved by allowing parents and learners to take part in school governance. This research has captured mostly negative response from principals regarding co-operative relationships with the SGBs (the local school authority) and the DBE (the national political authority). It will be a valuable addition to the research base to establish:

- The perspectives these authorities have of the school principal.
 - SGBs' perspectives on governance recentralisation.
-

- SGBs' perspectives of the roles of the principal as professional school manager but also as a member of the school governing body.
- Department officials' perspectives of recentralisation and their role in these recentralisation governance approaches.
- The type of school management experience department officials have.

6.8.2 Training

The data was clear that there is a need for appropriate and quality principal training programmes. The modern principal must fulfil a broad range of functions. An in-depth programme must be developed that focuses on human resource aspects, financial management, strategic planning, and entrepreneurship. Leadership aspects like co-operative relationships strongly came to the forefront.

6.8.3 Decentralisation policies

The participants that took part in the study are public school principals. More research must be carried out to obtain a broad perspective of other governors (parents and educators) regarding variables impacting the internal school environment in respect of shared decision-making, the structure of SGBs, and their accountability to the community.

6.8.4 Context school governance model

According to Harmse (2014:13), South Africa is one of the most unequal countries in the world. The policies of the pre-1994 government disregarded the greater part of the citizens by not including them in political, social and economic activities in the country. Unfortunately, education was also impacted by these draconian policies. Although South Africa is in its 27th year of democracy, many communities still experience great inequalities when it comes to quality education. The literature revealed that things outside the school influence things inside the school. In this regard, I propose that further research be conducted on a context school governance model. Some schools will benefit from a more centralised governance system while other schools will benefit from a more decentralised governance model.

6.9 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF PRACTICE

6.9.1 Focused training

- The data made it clear that departmental officials, principals and SGBs must receive in-depth training to ensure that co-operative governance is achieved. The training must concentrate on the key aspects of co-operative relationships such as trust, decision-making, liability and empowerment that should exist between the principal, the SGB and the DBE.
- Insufficient knowledge of democratic dogmas restricts democracy. To counter the following restrictions: unawareness and misapprehensions, using schools for political gain, absolute majoritarianism, homogenous power and single language ascendancy, it is recommended that training must be offered to all role-players in the sector. Universities, departments of education and SGBs all have an important stake in education.
- By establishing co-operative work cultures, it might incite principals, SGBs and the DBE to take ownership of the decisions they make in their schools. Continuous correspondence regarding identified problems and possible solutions to overcome these problems will in the end lead to action. Workshops need to be conducted to empower principals, SGBs and departmental officials regarding legislation, policy and circulars that regulate the education sector.
- Research by Du Plessis (2019) concluded that the South African education sector is typified by decentralised centralism (a phenomenon that requires urgent further research) rather than by decentralism. Du Plessis (2019) further indicated that research into the reasons behind centralised tendencies of the DBE, e.g., the proposed BELA Bill (DBE, 2017) need to be explored.

6.9.2 More focused and differentiated legislation or policy

The Department of Basic Education should draft legislation and policies that are cognisant of the fact that there are functional and dysfunctional schools in the system. A 'one-size-fits-all' amendment to the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 (RSA, 1996a) like the Basic Education Laws Amendment Bill (DBE, 2017) must be avoided. By implementing different governance models which recognise contextual

diversity of schools, the Department can focus recentralisation on schools that need urgent intervention. The DBE does not need to fix schools that are not broken.

6.10 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Meaningful discovery for a researcher is to view and understand how different people experience the world. This journey I undertook was to understand South African public school principals' perspectives on recentralisation regarding leadership, management and governance functions and powers. In a metaphorical sense, the principal is the leading character (protagonist) in terms of school management and governance: his/her perceptions and perspectives are crucial.

As the protagonist in school management and governance, the principal is in a precarious position. The DBE (the national executive authority) and the SGB (the immediate school-based authority) have power to control the degree of autonomy that a principal has regarding decision-making through recentralised or decentralised governance actions. Consequently, the principal must always ask how much discretionary decision-making authority he/she has at school.

The data indicated that principals experience recentralisation approaches in the form of interference from departmental officials and politicians. Most of these recentralisation measures are motivated by political agendas and ideologies that focus on school admission and language policy, as well as the appointment of educators. These issues are sensitive matters in the context of South Africa's tremulous political history. It is also noteworthy that strong assertive school principals seem to be regarded as a threat to departmental officials. This could be a reason why departmental officials and politicians revert to intimidation tactics to bully principals to comply. Such intimidation can be viewed as another form of recentralisation.

Principals are also exposed to recentralisation tendencies at grassroot level where SGBs can either delegate or curtail the functions of principals. The data revealed that there are SGBs that tend to interfere in the professional school management of the principal, often acting in an *ultra vires* manner. These recentralisation tendencies usually occur when a strong assertive principal disagrees with the SGB on issues like policy implementation and matters pertaining to the school's vision and mission. Unfortunately, the data also revealed that when the principal comes from a different

race than the rest of the SGB, the SGB will go out of their way to make the principal's interaction with them an unpleasant experience. The SGB usually institute irrational recentralisation actions to impede the principal to execute their functions. Although South Africa is in its 27th year of democracy many communities still experience enormous backlogs when it comes to quality education. Communities and the schools serving these communities have different needs and therefore decentralised/contextual governance approaches have a role to play in the education sector. Consequently, the National Department of Basic Education must refrain from implementing a one-size-fits-all approach to all schools as proposed in the Basic Education Laws Amendment Bill (DBE, 2017). If this Bill is going to be promulgated into law, it will (re)centralise certain powers of the SGB to a central point in the DBE, in essence stripping SGBs of their powers. The principal as the protagonist in school governance and management will be the role-player most affected by such an approach. Therefore, a total (re)centralised governance approach will take the education system back to the highly regulated education system that prevailed before 1994 that did not serve the majority of children in the country well.

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APPENDIX A: UP ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Education

Ethics Committee
12 March 2020

Mr JHC Kruger
Dear Mr JHC Kruger

REFERENCE: EDU107/19

We received proof that you have met the conditions outlined. Your application is thus **approved**, and you may start with your fieldwork. The decision covers the entire research process, until completion of the study report, and not only the days that data will be collected. The approval is valid for two years for a Masters and three for Doctorate.

The approval by the Ethics Committee is subject to the following conditions being met:

1. The research will be conducted as stipulated on the application form submitted to the Ethics Committee with the supporting documents.
2. Proof of how you adhered to the Department of Basic Education (DBE) policy for research must be submitted where relevant.
3. In the event that the research protocol changed for whatever reason the Ethics Committee must be notified thereof by submitting an amendment to the application (Section E), together with all the supporting documentation that will be used for data collection namely; questionnaires, interview schedules and observation schedules, for further approval before data can be collected. Noncompliance implies that the Committee's approval is null and void. The changes may include the following but are not limited to:

- Change of investigator,
- Research methods any other aspect therefore and,
- Participants.

The Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education does not accept any liability for research misconduct, of whatsoever nature, committed by the researcher(s) in the implementation of the approved protocol.

Upon completion of your research, you will need to submit the following documentations to the Ethics Committee for your Clearance Certificate:

- Integrated Declaration Form (Form D08),
- Initial Ethics Approval letter and,
- Approval of Title.

Please quote the reference number EDU107/19 in any communication with the Ethics Committee.

Best wishes

Prof Funke Omidire
Chair: Ethics Committee

APPENDIX B: GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL



8/4/1/2

GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

| | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Date: | 01 June 2020 |
| Validity of Research Approval: | 04 February 2020 – 30 September 2020 2519/440 |
| Name of Researcher: | Kruger JHC |
| Address of Researcher: | 634 Adela Street Grasfontein Pretoria |
| Telephone Number: | 0824727864 |
| Email address: | jhckruger@gmail.com |
| Research Topic: | Management and governance decentralisation in public schools: Principals perspectives on centralised decentralisation |
| Type of qualification | PHD, Education Management and Policy Studies |
| Number and type of schools: | 12 Secondary School 12 Primary Schools |
| District's/HO | Tshwane South, Tshwane West, Tshwane North and Tshwane East |

Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated above. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the school/s and/or offices involved to conduct the research. A separate copy of this letter must be presented to both the School (both Principal and SGB) and the District/Head Office Senior Manager confirming that permission has been granted for the research to be conducted.


01/06/2020
Making education a societal priority

Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management
7th Floor, 17 Simonsdals Street, Johannesburg, 2001
Tel: (011) 265 0486
Email: Faith.Tshabalala@gauteng.gov.za
Website: www.education.gauteng.gov.za

APPENDIX C: PERMISSION LETTER TO PARTICIPANT.



University of Pretoria

Dear Principal

(Name of school): _____

Name and Surname: _____

(Participant)

RE: Invitation to school principals to participate in my research.

I am a postgraduate student currently pursuing my Ph.D. in the Faculty of Education in the Department of Education Management and Policy Studies at the University of Pretoria. The title of my thesis is **“Management and governance decentralisation in public schools: Principals’ perspectives on recentralised decentralisation”**.

In order to conduct my research, I must collect data through semi-structured interviews. I hereby request your permission to conduct an interview at school with you.

It is important to mention that the names of the participants will be held confidential. Codes will be used in the place of the names. No school name will also be mentioned in my research. A code name will be given in the place of the school’s name.

Background:

My research suggests that legislation pertaining to education promulgated after 1994 that allowed for the decentralisation of government powers to the local school community are being restricted by the Department of Education. That legislation empowered the principal and the SGB. These recentralisation actions where the Department interferes in the professional management and governance of the school, dilutes those powers and appears to be an attempt to reinstate the draconian management style that pertained before 1994. As an example, a reading of the following sections of the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996, pertaining to, school admission, language policy, suspension and expulsion, governance and professional management of public school, functions and responsibilities of the principal and functions of governing bodies have been curtailed. The Basic Education Laws Amendment Bill of 2017 that was published in Government 2 Gazette No 41178 provides further impairments of the powers of schools.

Then all *ultra vires* actions of education department officials and politicians during the past few years who for example tried to force schools (the Welkom case) to ignore national policy or admit learners into a school which was already full in terms of legal provisions (Hoërskool Overvaal) also became a problematic issue. Governmental power is necessary to successfully promote values such as justice, freedom and equality before the law. However, government can also abuse its power. The principal is likely to be the role player in the management structure of a school that will be the most affected by government's centralisation tendencies.

Through this proposed research I want to investigate how principals are experiencing some of the results of recentralisation and, specifically, how principals perceive this recentralisation (taking back / away of their autonomy / powers) in their work as principals. It seems logical that the principal, who is in charge of the professional management of the school, will be directly affected if the governing body's governance functions and responsibilities are centralised. The opposite also seems valid: the governing body will be affected if the principals' management functions and responsibilities are centralised.

Exit Clause:

It is important to mention that as a participant to my research that you are free to exit the research at any time you feel fit to do so. If any data was collected the data will be disregarded. There will also be no negative consequences for any participant that chooses to exit from the research.

Yours faithfully

J.H.C Kruger

Prof. J.L Beckmann

J.H.C Kruger (Student)

0824727964

jhckruger@gmail.com

Prof. J.L Beckmann

johan.beckmann21@gmail.com

Cell: 0825701825 3

PERMISSION LETTER TO PARTICIPANT
-----**PLEASE FILL IN THE FOLLOWING AND SEND IT TO:**

Email: jhckruger@gmail.com

I _____ (Full names and Surname)

hereby give my consent to participate in the research.

Contact details:

Email address: _____

Phone numbers: _____

Other contact details: _____

APPENDIX D: INTREVIEW SCHEDULE

APPENDIX D INTERVIEW SCHEDULE



1. Main research question

What are principals' perspectives of recentralised decentralisation regarding their management and governance functions in public schools?

2. Sub-questions

2.1 What are principals' understanding of the term professional school management?

2.1.1 In your opinion, how have the relationship and cooperation between the state and the principal regarding the autonomy and professional management of the school unfolded since 1996 up to the present day?

2.1.2 How would you describe your own experiences with the department regarding the professional management of the school?

2.1.3 How would you describe your own experiences with the SGB regarding the professional management of the school?

2.1.4 When do you think it will be acceptable for the department to interfere in the professional management of the school?

2.1.5 What can the department do to assist principals regarding the professional management of the school?

2.2 Describe the type of management style principals implement at school. Explain why they implement this style.

2.2.1 What type of management style are you implementing at your school? Why are you implementing this specific management style?

2.2.2 The Basic Education Laws Amendment Bill will have a profound impact on the professional management of schools if it is going to be promulgated into law in its current format. How will this proposed bill influence your duties regarding the professional management of the school?

2.3.4 What are principals allowed to do regarding the professional management?

2.2.4 What are principals not allowed to do regarding the professional management?

2.3 What are principals' understanding of the term school governance?

2.3.1 In your opinion, how have the relationship and cooperation between the state and the SGB and the principal regarding the governance of the school unfolded since 1996 up to the present day?

2.3.2 The Basic Education Laws Amendment Bill will have a profound impact on the governance of schools if it is going to be promulgated into law in its current format. How will this proposed bill influence the SGB's duties regarding the governance of the school?

2.3.3 What are schools allowed to do regarding their own governance?

2.3.4 What are schools not allowed to do regarding their own governance?

2.3.5 What can the department do to assist SGB's regarding the governance of the school?

2.3.5 In your opinion, do you think that there are limits to which the state can influence governing bodies regarding the governance of the school?

2.3.6 When do you think it is necessary for government to recentralise power back to government regarding the governance of the education system in general?

2.3.7 What is your understanding of centralised governance?

2.3.8 What is your understanding of decentralised governance?

2.4 What should the relationship between the principal and the SGB be like?

2.4.1 What is the role of the principal on the SGB?

2.4.2 Did you ever feel conflicted?

2.4.3 How would you describe your own experiences with the SGB regarding the professional management of the school?

2.4.4 In your opinion, is it important that parents must have a say in their children's education? Give reasons for your answer?

2.5 What is your understanding of democracy?

2.5.1 What would a democratic school system look like?

2.5.2 In your opinion, do you think government is moving in the right direction regarding the implementation of a democratic school system? Give reasons for your answer.