THE TRAINING OF SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES IN THE FREE STATE PROVINCE – AN EDUCATION MANAGEMENT PERSPECTIVE

by

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DECLARATION

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I, **STEPHEN MORENA TSOTETSI** declare that:

The training of school governing bodies in the Free State Province

is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to

My late brother, Daniel Taetsi Tsotetsi who died of HIV/AIDS related diseases for his sincerity about life, my mother, Lettia Tsanini Tsotetsi for her truthfulness, my beloved wife Evelina Nombulelo Tsotetsi for her unwaivering support and motivation, my family, relatives and friends who have inspired me through their love, support and encouragement

I am proud to be the link between these special people in my life

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SUMMARY

The aim of the study was to investigate the training of school governing bodies in the Free State Province from an education management point of view. Since 1994 the South African government has adopted a number of policy documents aimed at democratizing education in the country. The transformation of education in the South African context encompasses the idea of partnership in which participants – such as parents, educators, learners (in secondary schools) play an active role in taking decisions on behalf of the school.

The State alone cannot control schools, but has to share its power with other stakeholders. However, this can only happen if participants in school governance are trained to have the power and the capacity to decide on matters affecting their schools. Hence, training is the cornerstone of affirming governors in the execution of their roles and responsibilities. Since school governing bodies are composed of a cross section of people with different ideologies, expectations and levels of education – training is necessary to prepare them for co-operative governance. Without adequate and on-going in-service training, it is unlikely that school governing body members can make informed decisions.

The empirical method, namely qualitative research, was successful in obtaining information from participants about the training offered to them. It also established how participants felt and thought about their experiences and perceptions about the training they received, whether it built capacity or not.
A number of recommendations were made with regard to the research findings for stakeholders to note.

Key terms: Decentralised decision-making, Democratic school governance, Co-operative governance, Collaborative decision-making, Participatory democracy, Qualitative research, School governing body, Empowerment, Capacity building and Training program.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AGIT : Action for Governor Information and Training
ANC : African National Congress
CELP : Centre for Education Law Policy
CEO : Chief Executive Officer
CHE : Council for Higher Education
DE : Department of Education
DES : Department of Education and Science
ERA : Education Reform Act
ESL : English Second Language
FEDSAS : Federation of Associations of School Governing Bodies of South African Schools
FSSEA : Free State Schools Education Act
GEST : Grants for Education Support and Training
GBF ; Governing Bodies Foundation
GMS : Grant Maintained School
HOD : Head of Department
HSRC : Human Sciences Research Council
LEA : Local Education Authority
LSM : Local School Management
LTSM : Learning and Teaching Support Material
MEC : Member of the Executive Office
NAGC : National Association of Governors and Managers
NASGB : National Association of School Governing Bodies
NEPA : National Education Policy Act
NGC : National Governors Council
NGOs : Non-Governmental Organisations
NSBA : National School Board Association
PME : Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation
PTA : Parent Teacher Association
RCL : Representative Council of Learners
RDP : Reconstruction and Development Program
RIEP : Research Institute for Education Planning

RSA	: Republic of South Africa
SASA	: South African Schools Act
SBM	: School Based Management
SCG	: School and College Governors
SGB	: School Governing Body
SMD	: School Management Developer
UK	: United Kingdom
USA	: United States of America
SMT	: School Management Team
SPR	: Schoolteacher's Pay Review

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CHAPTER 1

GENERAL ORIENTATION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

School governance can be viewed as the story of how ordinary people eventually obtained a say in the running of their schools (Gann 1998:7). Although there are various reform education initiatives, the major feature of recent education reform agendas is decentralised education governance at the local school level (Van Wyk 2003:2; Squelch 1999:127). The premise of decentralised school governance is to devolve more authority over education matters to local school communities (Levin 1998:132). According to Karlsson, McPherson and Pampallis (2002:141), decentralisation in South African schooling is aimed at giving greater control to school governing bodies – hereafter referred to as SGB's – which have to ensure that decisions are informed by, and are more suited to local conditions.

Karlsson et al (2002:141) note that the concept of decentralisation means different things in different contexts. For these authors, a common meaning is that in a traditionally decentralised education system, as it exists in many of the states in the United States of America (USA). Karlsson et al (2002:14) argues that decentralisation often means the shift of power from the school district to the school or a shift from national to a provincial or state government. In view of the complex functions that have to be performed by any SGB, it is imperative that sound training should be provided for proper discharge of the multiple duties bestowed upon it to avoid the so-called "muddling through" approach (Holt & Murphy 1993:175). Thus, effective training is central to decentralised decision-making. Capacity building ensures that SGB's exercise their legislated power by providing necessary skills and knowledge.

For SGB's to govern effectively, they have to work co-operatively. This means that a SGB should work as a team in the best interest of the school. The

common goal of the school should bind SGB members to work together to achieve its vision. Dlamini (2001:1) refers to this functioning of the SGB as internal co-operative governance because it takes place among stakeholders within schools. Thus, legislation and policies have been promulgated to ensure co-operation among SGB members in the execution of their duties in the school (Dlamini 2001:1). The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996 – hereafter referred to as the Constitution (RSA 1996a) – sets out principles on co-operative governance in general and this also applies to the governance of public schools. According to section 41(1)(h) of the Constitution (RSA 1996a), all spheres of government and all organs of state within each sphere must co-operate with one another in mutual trust and good faith by:

- fostering friendly relations;
- assisting and supporting one another;
- informing one another of, and consulting one another on matters of common interest;
- co-ordinating their actions with one another; and
- adhering to agreed procedures, and avoiding legal proceedings against one another (RSA 1996a:25-26).

The South African Schools Act, number 84 of 1996 – hereafter referred to as SASA (Republic of South Africa (RSA) 1996b), reflects in its preamble the principles of co-operative governance. The proportional representation of different stakeholders in SGB's (e.g., parents, educators, non-educators, principal and learners in secondary schools) is an attempt by the SASA to realise the co-operative governance goal (RSA 1996b:section 23(2)). In accordance with the National Education Policy Act, 27 of 1996 – hereafter referred to as NEPA (RSA 1996c:section 39), SGB's must inform all parents of their rights and obligations in respect of the governance and the affairs of the school. This will strengthen co-operative governance within the SGB.

Decentralisation is one of the principles on which the South African education dispensation is based as set out in the policy framework contained in the first

White Paper on Education and Training in the democratic South Africa (Department of Education (DE) 1995b) and the Reconstruction and Development Program (ANC 1994) and the NEPA (RSA 1996c). Hence co-operative school governance is a relatively new concept in South Africa as compared to other democracies of the world (Looyen 2000:4). Therefore, it can be argued that co-operative school governance in South Africa can claim its practical existence as from November 1996 when the SASA was enacted.

The following section presents a brief overview of school governance in South Africa.

1.2 SCHOOL GOVERNANCE IN SOUTH AFRICA

1.2.1 Historical overview

During the pre-democratic era (prior to 1994) the structures that were in place for purposes of school management and governance were referred to as 'school committees' (Mabasa & Themane 2002:112). Later these structures were referred to as school boards (in primary schools) and management councils (in secondary schools) (Dlamini 1993:6; Moate 1997:156). These structures did not encourage stakeholder participation and were dominated by school principals reporting directly to the government bureaucracy (and sometimes to the politicians) responsible for education (Mabasa & Themane 2002:112). Consequently, the exclusion of some of the stakeholders (such as learners) created fertile ground for the broader political struggle towards a more inclusive system of governance (Mabasa & Themane 2002:112). Dlamini (1993:5) also argues that the involvement of parents during the apartheid regime was ill founded because it was not based on a genuine belief in rights of people to self-determination. The former government's intention was that parent involvement in school governance would deal with crisis management in schools – particularly black schools – as well as to share in the financing of education by the government and the communities (Dlamini 1993:5).

Since the first democratic elections of 27 April 1994, all South Africans have been able to enjoy their fundamental human rights regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, disability or religious affiliation as guaranteed by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996 (RSA 1996a). Flowing from the Constitution, the present democratic education system is viewed as legitimate because of its non-discriminatory and participatory nature as set out in the Reconstruction and Development Program, usually known as the RDP (ANC 1994:60). It is therefore an irrefutable fact that political changes have influenced every aspect of the education system, including its governance. Van der Linde (2002:511) purports that these changes are evident from macro level or systems level to operational level or school level.

Democracy brought with it many fundamental changes and new challenges as far as school governance is concerned. According to Potgieter, Visser, van der Bank, Mothata & Squelch (1997:11), school governance is one such new challenge, since SGB's are expected to determine policies and rules by which schools are to be organised, controlled and governed. Thus the concern as expressed by Dlamini (1993:5) that the notorious school governance of the past should not continue in the post-apartheid era, was addressed when the SASA brought about legitimacy in school governance. An expectation of SGB's is that they should execute school governance functions effectively and efficiently as stipulated in the SASA (RSA 1996b).

Prior to the democratic era the situation in South Africa was such that principals controlled schools with little or no participation from teachers and parents (Looyen 2000: 67; Mabasa & Themane 2002:112). The role of other stakeholders in school governance was often merely supportive of principals' initiatives (Heystek & Paquette 1999: 191). This unfortunate situation could be attributed to principals' management style, which tended to be more autocratic and bureaucratic in nature, rendering the participation of other stakeholders mere tokenism (Heystek 2002:208).

To overcome tokenism and encourage meaningful participation, the principal's visionary leadership as an *ex officio* member should come to the fore to

ensure teamwork among the SGB members (Moloi, Grobler & Gravitt 2002:89). The following section discusses the influence of the SASA on school governance in South Africa.

1.2.2 The South African Schools Act and school governance

Harber (2001:18) regards the purpose of the SASA as the development of an accountable and democratic school governance system based on a partnership between the state, school and the local community in which the school is situated. According to Sayed (1999:141), this move towards greater devolution of power and participation in schooling increased in momentum after the elections of 1994 and was sanctioned with the passing of the SASA in November of the same year. The SASA (RSA 1996b) mandates the establishment of SGB's in all public schools in order to ensure that parents, educators, non-teaching staff and learners (in secondary schools) can actively participate in the governance and management of their schools (Squelch 1999:137).

According to Karlsson (2002:330), powers and functions of SGB's fall into two categories thereby enabling schools to have different levels of SGB participation in school affairs. The functions in section 20 of the SASA (RSA 1996b), as well as the responsibilities in sections 36, 37, 38, 41, 42 and 43 are mandatory for all SGB's, while those in section 21 are available on application to the head of a provincial education department (Karlsson 2002:330; RSA 1996b:sections 20 & 21). An exception found in section 39 is the setting of school fees, which requires a resolution passed by a majority of a meeting of parents (Karlsson 2002:330; RSA 1996: section 39). Thereafter, the SGB is expected and bound to implement the resolution (Karlsson 2002:330).

According to Van Langen and Dekkers (2001:369), decentralised administration is generally seen as effective and efficient on the basis of three assumptions, namely:

- implementation is better guaranteed when the benefits are experienced at the same level of organisation;
- obvious local choices are not obstructed by central government regulations;
- situation-specific fine-tuning is (cost-) effective.

While it is acknowledged that SASA aims at building partnership between the state and the parent community so that there is shared responsibility for developing and maintaining schools at the local level, the reform also represents the state's diminishing role of involvement in schools by transferring this over to SGB's, which are primarily composed of parents (Karlsson 2002:331). But Marishane (1999:60) does not view the state's devolution of power to the parent community as abdication of responsibility but as partnership in the provision of education.

Unintended outcomes of legislation impede the fulfilment of the state's aim to realise the social transformation of schools and to end the inequalities caused by the discriminatory policies of the former apartheid regime (Karlsson 2002:331; Sayed 1997:359). It has been observed with concern that some functions of SGB's are contingent on social conditions of schools as well as capacity differential of some SGB's, which appears to entrench existing social inequalities at schools (Karlsson 2002:331). Unless all governance functions and responsibilities are equally accessible and practised in schools, the democratisation of schooling in South Africa is tenuous and is mere policy rhetoric (Karlsson 2002:132). The imbalance or 'policy gap' between policy intentions and practice outcomes highlight the need for special efforts to ensure functional participatory democratic processes in school governance (Karlsson 2002:335; Sayed 2002:29).

Sayed (1997:357) observes the paradox:

> The notion of community as an expression of participatory democracy is weakened in the SASA in two ways: first, by making community participation in educational governance structures conditional upon the

agreement of the school governing body; and second, by reducing such participation to an instrumental search for representatives who can lend expertise to but exercise no voting power on the school governing bodies.

It is ironic that community representative on the school governing bodies in South African schools do not have any voting status (Sayed 1997:358). This appears to run counter to the democratic rights of all qualifying citizens to vote for the government of the day.

1.2.3 Training of school governing bodies

Training of SGB's is important because it will enable them to execute duties and responsibilities vested upon them by the SASA (RSA 1996b: sections 20 & 21). It is the state's responsibility in partnership with other stakeholders to develop capacity for governing bodies (Marishane 1999:59). Proper capacity building for SGB members with diverse backgrounds will ensure that SGB's perform their duties and responsibilities effectively and efficiently.

The SASA recognises the legal base of SGB's training for successful school governance as portrayed in Section 19 of the Act (RSA 1996b). The section reads as follows:

19 (1) out of funds appropriated for this purpose by the provincial legislation, the Head of Department must establish a programme to-
(a) provide introductory training for newly elected governing bodies to enable them to perform their functions; and
(b) provide continuing training to governing bodies to promote the effective performance of their functions or to enable them to assume additional functions.
(2) the Head of Education must ensure that principals and other officers of the education department render all necessary assistance to governing bodies in the performance of their functions in terms of this Act.

Although the state is primarily responsible for the initial training of SGB's, it is also expected of parents and the community at large to assist the government as partners in education to realise its goal of capacitating SGB's (Marishane 1999:59). Through meaningful training SGB's will be in a sound position to perform their duties and carry out their responsibilities successfully. Without thorough training, relevant to the needs of the target group, it is doubtful that SGB's – composed of a majority of laypersons with broad and diverse backgrounds – will be able to govern schools effectively.

Due to financial constraints, the initial training for newly elected SGB's does not pose as much of a problem as continuous in-service training. The insufficient budgetary allocation for training should be regarded as a real danger to the newly established decentralised school governance in South Africa, where SGB's have been given considerable powers but in many schools lack the necessary skills to exercise them effectively (Karlsson et al 2002:144).

It is also unfortunate to note that many governance structures in South African schools are still viewed as dictatorial and in some instances, illegitimate (Looyen 2000:3). Badenhorst and Scheepers (1995:122) add that many SGB's are struggling to run effectively because of the non-involvement of the communities in school activities. Part of this non-involvement by the communities can be attributed to a lack of relevant and sustainable training of SGB's (Sibuyi 1997:59).

Moreover, it should be noted that participation cannot be imposed from above (Maile 2002:328), but should develop differently and at a different pace depending on local contexts – including training. Part of empowerment strategy is training in inclusive decision-making by all SGB members which will enhance understanding, commitment and mutual trust amongst them (Monyooe 1999:77).

The next section describes school governance in the Free State Province.

1.3 SCHOOL GOVERNANCE IN THE FREE STATE PROVINCE

According to *South Africa Yearbook 2004/5* (RSA 2004:14), the following salient points briefly describe the Free State province, namely:

- It is the third-largest province in South Africa.
- It has the second-smallest population and the second-lowest population density.
- It houses some 2,7 million people on about 129 280 square km.
- The main languages spoken are Sesotho and Afrikaans.
- Approximately 16% of people aged 20 years or older have had no schooling.
- The official unemployment rate is 30%.
- Many of the towns display a mixture of cultures evident in street names, public buildings, monuments and museums.

Thus, it can be deduced that there is widespread poverty and many people have little or no schooling. The challenge for the province is to provide effective training of SGB's in the context of high illiteracy and across language groups.

The province is demarcated into five District Councils (DCs) (for education) namely, Lejweleputswa, Motheo, Northern Free State, Thabo Mofutsanyana and Xhariep.

The province is committed to empowering its SGB members through the use of a document or instrument entitled: *A Training Manual for School Governing Bodies*, compiled by the Research Institute for Educational Planning (RIEP) of the University of the Free State. The provincial budgets provide for one-off training offered usually by consultants or school management developers (formerly known as circuit inspectors) who have been trained for both their management and governance duties.

Some of the factors determining the clustering of schools for the purpose of training include distance between schools and the total number of SGB members. Thus, the initial training workshops generally consist of training lasting a day or two for clustered schools. Subsequent training sessions are dictated by the needs or problems pertinent to individual schools.

Against this backdrop, the terminology used in this thesis is clarified in the next section.

1.4 TERMINOLOGY

To ensure common understanding of the terminology used in the study, it is necessary to clarify key terms.

1.4.1 Training

According to Allen (1992:1295), training refers to "the act or process of teaching or learning a skill, discipline". The definition embodies an interplay between teaching and learning a skill(s) or discipline through a process.

Training is not a single event but a continuous process of acquiring skills and knowledge. Training can also be viewed as cumulative because an individual can build upon the acquisition of a skill or knowledge step by step. Training can be regarded as a continuous process, which requires discipline from an individual to reach the goal envisaged. Training is not a haphazard event but a premeditated activity with a definite purpose.

1.4.2 School governing body

According to Allen (1992:511), the concept of governance is derived from the Latin word *gubernare* and the Greek word *kubernao*, which literally translated, means to steer or control with authority. In terms of the SASA (RSA 1996b:section 16) a SGB is the lawful structure or group of people responsible and accountable to take and implement decisions on behalf of

the school as a juristic person. Thus, a SGB is a statutory body of people elected to govern the school as set up by an Act of Parliament to represent the school community (Potgieter et al 1997:23).

1.4.3 Distinction and relationship between school governance and management

The SASA (RSA 1996b:section 16 (1)) states categorically that it is the responsibility of a SGB to govern whilst it is the responsibility of the principal to ensure the day-to-day management of the school (RSA 1996b:section 16(2)). In practice this distinction is difficult to ensure. According to Davies (1999:74), there is an intertwined relationship between governance and professional management of a school that frequently leads to a conflict of interests in practice because the boundary between functions is not clear-cut.

None of the above concepts is more important than the other rather each one should be viewed as a pre-condition for the other – hence their interrelatedness.

1.5 PROBLEM FORMULATION

School governing bodies are largely composed of parents who are given functions to perform as dictated by Sections 20 & 21 of the SASA (RSA 1996b). The multiple tasks and the responsibility required primarily of parents who may not be accustomed to fulfilling the various tasks of SGB necessitates the training of such a group of people.

Decentralised school governance is a fundamental challenge to all school governing bodies because they are expected to determine policies and rules by which schools are to be organised, controlled and governed (Potgieter et al 1997:11). For this reason SGB members have to learn how to navigate the future of their schools in the democracy. This derived function of school governance is a complex and diverse task. It therefore suffices to say that for

any person(s) to perform this task successfully, specialised knowledge and skills are needed.

Against this background a need arises to research the way in which SGB members are being trained in the Free State province. The following questions help to demarcate the problem clearly:

- What are the prevailing theories on school governance and decentralised decision-making?

- What are the tasks of school governors and what theories prevail regarding training and empowerment of school governors?

- What are the perceptions and experiences of school governors of their tasks in the Free State province?

- What training is typically offered to SGB members in the Free State province and to what extent does such training fulfil the needs of the school governors?

- How can the findings assist in improving the programmes that are currently being offered to SGB members in the Free State province?

1.6 AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

In the light of the above research problem, the following aims of the research can be identified:

- To investigate the prevailing theories on school governance and decentralised decision-making.

- To investigate tasks or functions of school governors and prevailing theories regarding the training and empowerment of school governors to discharge their governance role.

- To investigate perceptions and experiences of school governors of their tasks in the Free State province.

- To investigate the kind of training typically offered to SGB members in the Free State province and the extent to which such training(s) fulfils the needs of the school governors.

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- To determine how the findings of the study can assist in improving the programmes that are currently being offered to SGB members in the Free State province.

1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In an attempt to investigate the training of school governing bodies in the Free State, a **literature study** of local as well as overseas sources is undertaken.

The focus of this research phase is to gather information and to note challenges faced by both South African and international governments in the training of SGB's. Special attention is paid to prevailing theories regarding school governance and decentralised decision-making. The role, duties and responsibilities of school governance constitute the core of the literature survey. A wide range of primary and secondary sources including but not limited to monographs, journals, educational laws and official documents concerning education in general is undertaken.

Furthermore, an empirical investigation following a **qualitative research approach** is employing data gathering techniques, such as observation and focus group interviews. The qualitative research aims to investigate the typical training of SGB members and the experiences and perceptions of the training.

The advantage of this approach is that it provides rich descriptive data as observed by the researcher during the interaction of participants. A questionnaire was administered before any training was offered to the newly elected SGB members with the sole purpose of gathering biographical and general information on their understanding and experience of school governance tasks. SGB meetings of the three selected schools participating in the training were observed prior to, during and following the training sessions.

The following section briefly sets out the use of qualitative research approach.

1.8 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH APPROACH

While a more detailed explication of the research method will be discussed in Chapter 4, a brief exposition is provided in this section. The principal method of investigation is a qualitative research approach. Typical of this research method is that it produces findings not arrived at by statistical procedures (Strauss & Corbin 1990:17), but focuses on one phenomenon, which the researcher selects to understand in depth (McMillan & Schumacher 1993:375). Generally speaking, qualitative research is typically used to answer questions about the complex nature of phenomenon, often with a purpose of describing and understanding the phenomenon from the participants' point of view (Leedy & Ormrod 2001:101; Bogdan & Biklen 1998:146). The qualitative approach is also referred to as the interpretative, constructivist, or post-positivist approach (Leedy & Ormrod 2001:101).

Marshall and Rossman (1999:2) regard qualitative research as pragmatic, interpretive and grounded in the lived experiences of people. This viewpoint is supported by Bogdan and Biklen (1998:7) who state that qualitative researchers continually ask questions of the people they are learning from to discover "what they are experiencing, how they interpret their experiences and how they themselves structure the social world in which they live". McMillan and Schumacher (1993:372) aver that qualitative research is premised more on what is called a "naturalistic-phenomenological

philosophy". This means that the natural situation dictates the course of events. Hence the typical nature of the qualitative research approach is self-revealing.

In qualitative research, the researcher is acknowledged as an active participant in the research process (Strauss & Corbin 1990:133). The social identity and values of the researcher impact on the data collected and the picture of social reality constructed (Guba & Lincoln 1998:41). O' Connel-Davidson and Layder (1994:52) contend that the researcher should continually monitor his or her assumptions throughout the research process. This process is regarded as reflexive since it results in better research and has the potential to pre-empt, so reducing bias and distortions (O' Connel-Davidson & Layder 1994:52). In this research, the position of the researcher in relation to the training of SGB's in the Free State is continually considered.

In accordance with Patton (1990:42), a qualitative research approach as a primary source data-gathering instrument is important in providing a detailed account of the process of enquiry in order for the credibility of the research to be determined. For this reason, a researcher doing naturalistic study has lengthy, informal and frequent contacts with the participants; some even become lifelong friends (Grinnel 1993:61). Researchers doing naturalistic studies are engaged in " participant observation" and are helped by informants or consultants – words that imply a closer and more equal relationship (Grinnel 1993:61).

In July 2003 all schools in the Free State Province elected new SGB's – hence the motivation for this study. The choice of the three participating schools was motivated by the fact that the researcher is a Free State Provincial Education employee deployed at the district level and tasked with, *inter alia*, the training of SGB's as typically offered to schools in the Free State Province. After the completion of the election of SGB's, a meeting with the three purposefully selected schools namely: a primary school catering for grade R-6 classes, an intermediate school catering for grade 7-9 classes and a secondary school catering for grade 10-12 classes, was convened during

October 2003. The researcher explained the purpose of the research and obtained the informed consent of the participants. After this meeting the SGB members were requested to complete a questionnaire still prior to any training. A questionnaire was completed prior to training with the purpose of obtaining biographical data about the participants.

The composition of the three SGB's included is: two have 13 members each (that is an intermediate and a secondary school) while one SGB has 11 members (a primary school – no learner component). All of the participants (37 in total) from the three SGB's volunteered to take part in the research project. Data gathering techniques employed were observation and focus group interviews. SGB members were observed during their meetings. Thereafter, focus group interviews were conducted to explore about the perceptions of participants concerning their training. The field research took place over a period of 15 months (From September 2003 to December 2004). Notes were taken during observations. Discussions were recorded on an audiotape recorder. Field notes were important tools during the researcher's observations (Stringer 1999:72) although Dane (1990:71) mentions that a tape recorder or a video allows a much fuller record of interactions – especially during interviews or meetings.

This practice is in accordance with Strydom's advice (2002:304) that audiotapes are used to record focus group interviews and those tapes are later transcribed for closer examinations. Although it is acknowledged that the selected schools cannot be "representative" of schools in the Free State, but they are similar to many in the province and even in the Republic of South Africa. The fact that sampled schools are in the same community means that they are similar in some way. This is in accordance with Wolcott's (1995:174) view that an area or group needs to be identified, which is in "some important way like many". Thus, the researcher maintains that sampled schools are in certain important ways like many other schools. Therefore, although findings from them cannot be generalisable to other schools, findings may prove useful in similar contexts (McMillan & Schumacher 1993:387). Likewise, the initial training given to the SGB's of the participating schools is similar to that

which is given in other districts in the Free State Province (cf. 3.3.2). The same training manual is also used throughout the province.

However, the additional training done specifically to address the training needs of participating SGB's is usually not included. The inclusion of additional training in this study was done specifically to allow the researcher to determine to what extent SGB members are equipped for their tasks after only the initial training, and how this improves should more training be provided.

The researcher performed the following tasks during data gathering:

- Conducted a joint discussion meeting with the SGB's of the three schools and administered questionnaire (for biographical data) to governors before the training;
- Observed three SGB meetings, one per SGB, before any training;
- Conducted three focus group interviews just after the *first general training session*, one per SGB;
- Conducted three focus group interviews soon after the *first specific training*, one per SGB;
- Conducted three focus group interviews soon after the *second specific training*, one per SGB;
- Observed three SGB meetings after they had received the training, one per SGB.

In other words the researcher observed all three SGB's twice (2x3 = 6 meetings in all). The researcher conducted one discussion meeting explaining the reasons for the research. Three focus group interviews were conducted with each of the three participating schools (3x3 = 9). The researcher administered the questionnaire before the training – with the purpose of obtaining biographical data from the participants. All three SGB's selected for the research received one general two-day workshopwhere they followed the *Training Manual for School Governing Bodies* in the Free State Province (Department of Education (DE) (Free State) 1998). Two specific training

sessions which lasted one day respectively, were conducted and were based on the needs identified by the participants during focus groups interviews.

The choice of a qualitative approach enabled the researcher to observe participants in their natural context (McMillan & Schumacher 1993:374). Qualitative research approach helps the researcher to concentrate on the qualities of human behaviour (De Vos 1998:240-241). The explorative and descriptive nature of qualitative research will, according to Mouton and Marais (1990:43), help the researcher to gain new insights into the phenomenon. This research is designed to be exploratory and descriptive (Bogdan & Biklen 1998:146). Thus the prime purpose of qualitative enquiry is to obtain descriptive data as understood by participants from their own perspective.

The next section presents the chapter division of the thesis.

1.9 CHAPTER DIVISION

The study can be divided into the following distinguishable components:

Chapter 2: Decentralised decision-making and school governing bodies

In this chapter focus is on a literature study concerning co-operative school governance and SGB's. Local and international literature concerning shared governance is reviewed with a purpose of establishing what other researchers say in this regard.

Chapter 3: The nature, role and capacity building of school governing bodies

The focus in this chapter is on the role of SGB's as well as the theory and practice of their training in South Africa and elsewhere. A literature study was used to gather such information.

Chapter 4: Research methodology

Chapter 4 provides a further discussion of the methodology (cf. 1.8) used to investigate the training of SGB's in the Free State province. The rationale, the choice and assumptions about qualitative research approach are discussed. Data collection methods and strategies as well as both their advantages and disadvantages are also discussed.

Chapter 5: Report on findings

This chapter presents a report on the findings of the research. Direct quotes support the exposition of report findings.

Chapter 6: Summary and recommendations

Chapter 6 is the final chapter of this research report. It includes a summary of the findings of this study as well as recommendations arising from the study itself.

1.10 SUMMARY

This chapter introduces the topic of school governance as a means of decentralised governance through SGB's. Decentralised school governance inevitably results into a redistribution of power, authority and resources. The governance of schools by SGB's leads to a sense of ownership of these institutions by the broader communities. The devolution of control to school communities calls for accountability on the part of those who have been entrusted with power and authority to govern. This important task can be realistically achieved if SGB's are trained for their functions.

Furthermore, a brief overview of school governance in South Africa with reference to the historical background of co-operative school governance, the prescripts of SASA for school governance and the critical importance of the need for the training of SGB's was outlined. Against this broader exposition the training of SGB's in the Free State province was highlighted.

Chapter 2 discusses decentralised decision-making (or co-operative school governance) and SGB's. A literature study concerning decentralised decision-making in South Africa and elsewhere was conducted. The purpose thereof was to determine research findings about co-operative school governance. For any SGB member to perform this essential task of governance, empowerment is crucial. Thus, effective training is central to co-operative school governance. Both the theory and practice of decentralised decision-making as it manifests itself in South Africa and elsewhere is discussed in chapter 2.

CHAPTER 2

DECENTRALISED DECISION-MAKING AND SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Several concepts or terms used for decentralised decision-making or governance are used interchangeably in this research. These include but are not limited to co-operative governance, shared decision-making, self-reliant school, self-managing or regulating school, site-based management and collaborative decision-making. Foster and Smith (2001:7) view decentralisation as a shift of final responsibility and accountability from the centre to the periphery, namely from the centre of the executing authority to the levels where delegation of responsibilities is executed.

Decentralisation of education is often associated with democracy and greater civil participation (Van Wyk 2001:2; Looyen 2000:4; Sayed & Carrim 1997:95). Decentralisation necessitates a delegation of responsibility that in turn requires officials at every level to develop skills to perform their roles. In accordance with Hanson (1998:112), decentralisation is the transfer of decision-making authority, responsibility and tasks from higher to lower organisational levels or between organisations.

A general education trend throughout the world is to give more decision-making powers to the schools, parents and the community (Foster & Smith 2001:8; Looyen 2000:19; Squelch 1999:128). According to the SASA (RSA 1996b) the SGB is the legal forum where the school community can be represented and entitled to participate in matters that interest them.

The ensuing discussion is based on the extensive work of Sayed and Carrim (1997:91-100) as well as on the research done by Dieltiens and Enslin (2002: 13-27), who differentiate clearly between the notions of participation as relating to school governance and educational democracy in South Africa,

namely, community as the basis of participation, stakeholder participation, regulated participation and weighted participation.

2.2 DIFFERENT FORMS OF PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

According to David (1996:7), participatory decision-making does not mean that everyone decides everything – some decisions are best left to the professionals and some to the parents. Nor does it mean that all decisions must be made at local level. Some decisions might be made at central or national level although the institution or system is decentralised. Hence, Shields and Knapp (1999:295) argue that sharing does not necessarily mean that everyone participates equally because it sometimes happens even in a democracy that a particular group may have the most dominant voice. Thus, the illusion of decentralised governance is created without it being materialised in practice (Squelch 1999:130).

2.2.1 Community as the basis of participation

There are many definitions of the concept *community.* To avoid ambiguity, it is preferred to qualify the concept to bring about clarity. Despite the diverse understandings and accompanying difficulties of defining a *community* because of different reference points (territorial, religious, ethnic, cultural, professional, political and so forth), it is generally accepted in the education circles that a *community* refers to a group of individuals with a common interest – education – and as such, should participate in the education of their children as a value in and of itself (Sayed & Carrim 1997:95; Dieltiens & Enslin 2002:13). Decentralised school governance should therefore reflect and serve the interest of the *community* where the school is situated. This value is unequivocally contained in legislative and policy frameworks relating to school governance.

The term *community* signifies common and shared aspects of human interaction (Sayed & Carrim 1997:95; Dieltiens & Enslin 2002:13). However, it is the very basis upon which the *community* participation both constitutes itself

and is constituted that brings to light the tensions that beset the notion of *community* participation in education. The tension (in this case) relates to the fact that, in order for a *community* to engender feelings of group solidarity, it must, of necessity, project group identity as stable, consistent and internally homogenous. This can be achieved by defining *communities* as distinct from others (Sayed & Carrim 1997:95; DE 2004:42; Dieltiens & Enslin 2002:17).

Reality is that as societies become more fragmented along lines of race, class, gender and nationality, it becomes problematic to sustain an unqualified commitment to *community* participation in education. The nature of the contradiction is such that, on one hand, it creates the conditions for the increasing fragmentation of the education system and may mask and gloss over fundamental differences within groups (DE 2004:43; Sayed 2002: 38; Sayed & Carrim 1997:95). On the other hand, it provides a strong sense of solidarity between individuals and consequently a stable form or group participation and representation in the education system (DE 2004:43; Sayed 2002: 38; Sayed & Carrim 1997:95).

Due to the potentially contradictory outcomes of *community* participation, it is not surprising to find policy texts making a qualified commitment to participation. For instance, SASA states that *community* representatives must be acceptable to and elected by the school governing body. The SASA also suggests another qualification of *community* by stipulating that such elected *community* representatives must be people with particular levels of expertise, which could contribute meaningfully to the activities of the school.

The problem with this notion is its exclusionary potential because *community* can be framed in such a way, that it permits the privileging of some and the marginalisation of others (DE 2004:42; Sayed & Carrim 1997:95).

2.2.2 Stakeholder participation

A particularly South African manifestation of community participation is *stakeholder* participation. This means that in educational governance

structures, the SGB as a legitimate structure is made up of elected individuals – the *stakeholders* – who are granted the rights to participate (Dieltiens & Enslin 2002:18; Squelch 1999:130; Sayed & Carrim 1997:95) in the affairs of their schools. Thus, SASA makes provision for participation of *stakeholders* such as parents, educators, non-educators, learners (in secondary school) and the community on school governing bodies. The difficulty with this discourse, on one hand, is the shift from community to *stakeholder* in the use of terminology and 'translation' on the other hand (DE 2004:42; Sayed & Carrim 1997:95). The problem of translation refers to how the right of *stakeholders* to participate, translates into practical policy terms:

- Does it imply that stakeholders have the right to decide policy?
- Do they do so autonomously?
- Are each of the 'stakeholders' assumed necessarily to have the same interest?
- Are particular "stakeholders" necessarily to be treated as a single entity, such as parents?
- At the same time, the question of who or what is a 'stakeholder' becomes critically in need of clarification.

To illustrate the complexity of translation, it is not clear whether the concept of *stakeholder* refers to an individual or an organised and homogenised entity or not. Moreover, on what basis are *stakeholders* decided upon and who decides which stakeholder should be represented on the school governance structure (Dieltiens & Enslin 2002:42; Sayed & Carrim 1997:96). Thus, the answers to the problem of translation might not be as simple as the question seems.

The notion of *stakeholder* suggests that certain people have more of a stake than others in particular contexts. In essence, this delimits who in fact may be claimed to be legitimate participants in making particular decisions in particular situations. There is an implicit suggestion that not all things are open to all people all of the time (Sayed 2002:38; Sayed & Carrim 1997:95). This is quite different from the notion of community participation, which tends to be far more inclusive and open to who may be in that community. All

members in a community are viewed to be equally legitimate, no matter what other positions they may occupy in social life (DE 2004:4; Sayed & Carrim 1997:95).

This, in governance terms, would mean that people who make up the school community would be eligible for participation in school governing bodies – regardless of the nature of their work in the society. However, with the notion of *stakeholders*, not all members of the community are necessarily eligible for participation. Instead, only those who are deemed to have a 'stake' in the school are entitled to contribute to the affairs of the school (DE 2004:43; Sayed & Carrim 1997:95).

As pointed out already, in school-based situations *stakeholders* refer to parents, educators, non-educators and learners (in secondary schools) as contained in Section 26(3) of the SASA (RSA 1996b). The SASA allows SGB's constituted on the basis of these *stakeholders* to co-opt other members of the community onto the governing body if they deem it necessary. In so doing, those who are *stakeholders* grant *stakeholder* status to those they regard, for whatever reasons (of 'expertise'), important to have on the governing structure (DE 2004:4; Sayed & Carrim 1997:95). In this way, a single person in the community, that is, one who is not a parent, not a member of the school in any way (for example, an educator, a non-educator or learner – in secondary school), could become a participant in the process of the school. But, it is only under the above-mentioned conditions that such a person may become a 'stakeholder'.

Ironically, as Sayed and Carrim (1997:95) argue, on the surface it seems necessary and unavoidable that *stakeholders* with expertise can be co-opted by the SGB onto the governing structure. However, it is possible that people who are not *stakeholders* may have the most useful contribution to make to the enhanced performance of the school, just as it is conceivable by the same token, that those who are regarded as legitimate *stakeholders* may not have anything substantive to contribute (DE 2004: 44; Sayed 2002:39; Sayed & Carrim 1997:95). This is where again a fundamental question of translation

comes into play. Similar to the notion of community as the base of participation, it is apparent that, together with the issue with stakeholder participation, the question of inclusiveness is important (DE 2004:42; Sayed 2002:39; Sayed & Carrim 1997:95).

The relevance of this aspect to SGB's is that the composition of these structures must accommodate the participation of other stakeholders such as learners in secondary schools. Active means of tapping into the 'expertise' of other stakeholders, who could be elected onto SGB's, should be sought after, like the co-option of such stakeholders to strengthen the work of SGB's.

2.2.3 Regulated participation

Unlike community-based and stakeholder approaches to participation, *regulated participation* is an attempt to move away from the difficulties posed by these forms of participation and simultaneously to avoid over-determination by the state (DE 2004:44; Sayed & Carrim 1997:96). In its simple version, *regulated participation* refers to the process by which broad-based participation by communities and stakeholders is affirmed, but the nature of interaction is limited or regulated. The agency of regulation is normally the state.

The assumption of *regulated participation* is that no single agency is, or should be able to, unilaterally transact educational decision-making (Sayed & Carrim 1997:96). Consensus between agencies/groups/individuals is possible by creating forums of negotiation and mediation (DE 2004:45; Sayed 2002:39; Sayed & Carrim 1997:97). For example, the Council for Higher Education (CHE) is a body made up of stakeholders and expert representatives, which advises or makes recommendations to the National Minister of Education but leaves the final decision-making to the Minister who may choose to delegate certain functions to the CHE (DE 2004:45; Sayed 2002:39; Sayed & Carrim 1997:96).

According to the DE (2004:43), mediational forums are already present within the governance landscape, such as the advisory council to the Minister, but, and this is the problem with this form of participation (regulated participation), the precise character of the regulation process is under-described and under-specified. Consequently, the *Ministerial Review Committee* on school governance strongly recommended in its report to the Education Minister that statutory governance councils should be established at the national and provincial levels – while acknowledging that their proposal has application only at high-level policy-making strata within the system and not at the individual school site (DE 2004:43).

Notwithstanding the various notions of *regulated participation*, there is recognition of the possibility of collaboration in the education system. The interests of groups and individuals are therefore not perceived to be always fundamentally antagonistic. Furthermore, unlike the community-based approach, *regulated participatory* approach does not presume that the different sectors are a homogenous group (DE 2004:43; Sayed & Carrim 1997:96). For instance, parents may at times share similar views with one another as a group, whereas at other times they may disagree with each other.

2.2.4 Weighted participation

Weighted participation could embrace all of the above options, but essentially speaks to the point that some people have more rights than others within decision-making structures (Sayed & Carrim 1997:96; DE 2004:43; Sayed 2002:39). Typical of *weighted participation*, is a limiting factor on the numbers of people on such a structure. For example, the SASA stipulates that, parents need to constitute the majority on the SGB. In so doing, it 'weights' parental involvement more than that of the other members on the SGB.

Another way in which 'weighting' may work is to give more voting rights to different constituencies. For example, every vote by a parent may count for two votes, where votes by educators, non-educators and learners (in

secondary schools), may count as single votes (DE 2004:43; Sayed & Carrim 1997:96). What is significant about 'weighted' participation is that it establishes control within the structures concerned so that the monitoring and regulating functions are endemic and structural. This is opposed to the external controls that regulated participation entails (DE 2004:43; Sayed & Carrim 1997:96).

Nonetheless, it is important to ponder on the problem of parental voice as central to school governance. Whilst it is obvious that parental participation is critical to ensuring democratisation, the question arises of why the rights of a particular group of citizens (parents) should be privileged in the education system. This approach does not consider prioritising the rights of other citizens like educators, non-educators and learners in secondary schools (DE 2004:43; Sayed 2002:39; Sayed & Carrim 1997:96). Thus, the unqualified espousal of parental participation requires more careful scrutiny particularly in the light of international experiences, for example, in England and Wales, where parental participation has simply privileged the middle class (Sayed & Carrim 1997:96). It is common knowledge that in South Africa, the law gives parents more voice in the affairs of their learners because they are recognised as partners in the provision and control of education.

To this end it is be necessary to discuss the principles and values on which decentralised decision-making is based. An attempt is also made to explain the relevance or implications for SGB's.

2.3 VALUES AND PRINCIPLES OF DECENTRALISED GOVERNANCE

South Africa is founded on democratic principles as enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996 (RSA 1996a) – hereafter referred to as the Constitution. These principles are values in themselves because they reflect the grounded conviction of a just society, which allows stakeholder participation in structures that formerly excluded all school governors. These values or principles are mutually inclusive and intertwined. For this reason, they are distinguished in the following paragraphs

for the purpose of discussion only. The discussion itself might not be exhaustive but its intention is to provide an idea of elements that underlie and hold the country together.

All the principles and values discussed in the following paragraphs have relevance for school governing bodies in South Africa and elsewhere. The challenge lies with SGB's to realise these values and principles in their daily governance responsibilities.

2.3.1 Decentralisation

Decentralisation refers to the transfer of decision-making power from the central or national authority to the local or school level (Karlsson et al 2002:141). The main purpose of decentralisation is to devolve more authority over education matters to local communities (Levin 1998:132). It is because of its localised nature that decentralised school governance is considered to be a more effective and appropriate form of governance, especially in this day and age (Squelch 1999:129). As a form of devolvement of power, decentralisation can manifest itself in three or four different forms – depending on the degree of transfer of authority (Hanson 1998:112; Davies 1990:12; Winkler 1989:5; Karlsson et al 2002:140-141), namely:

- *Deconcentration* is the simplest form of decentralisation. It involves the transfer of certain tasks and work to other units in an organisation except authority. This means that, although decisions can be made at the local level, officials remain accountable to the central or national authority.
- *Delegation* is the transfer of decision-making power except authority from higher to lower hierarchical units of the organisation (which may or may not be democratically elected), but delegation can be withdrawn from the discretion of the delegating unit – without new legislation being enacted.
- *Devolution* is the transfer of authority to a unit that can act on its own without asking for permission from the authority body of figure. Thus,

the unit functions independently and accepts far greater responsibility for its actions. Since devolution is legislated to give power and authority to the local decision-making bodies, it cannot be withdrawn without legislative amendment or an Act of Parliament, as demanded by the Constitution.

- *Privatisation* occurs when power to make decisions is transferred to the owners of educational institutions. Depending on the legal arrangements permitting it, privatisation can be regarded as a variant of either delegation or devolution.

However, it should be noted that all the above forms of decentralisation are idealised because any system of education may contain a combination of different forms at the same time (Karlsson et al 2002:141; DE 2004:23). The assumption about decentralisation as a form of devolution of power is that, schools will be more effective in addressing local needs when the strategy of 'bottom-up' rather than 'top-down' is employed (Looyen 2000:7). In this way local school communities will feel respected by the state and therefore feel in control of their school affairs. School governors will take full responsibility and accountability for their decisions and actions.

2.3.2 Democracy

Dieltiens and Enslin (2002:7) purport that, like most political terms, 'democracy' does not fit neatly into a single definition since it includes a host of indices, for instance, elections, institutions of participation and political parties. Hence, various formulations of democracy exist with some theorists claiming to be true democrats according to the relative weight they give to particular indices (Dieltiens & Enslin 2002:7). According to Allen (1992:308), the word 'democracy' is derived from Greek words, *'demos'* and *'kratos'*, meaning 'people' and 'power' respectively, when literally translated.

According to an old adage, democracy is a form of government by the people, for the people. Here common values and norms are cherished and respected because individuals can exercise their freedom although they are equally held

accountable for their actions. The Constitution defines South Africa as a sovereign and democratic state founded on universal adult suffrage, a national common voters roll, regular elections and a multi-party system of government (RSA 1996a). In this, it means that the government is based on the will of the people. In effect, this implies that South Africans are responsible for their destinies since, through the electoral process, they run their country and institutions.

To realise this inalienable right in practice, every citizen should purposefully strive to protect, advance and uphold the values enshrined in the Constitution. In essence, democracy is more than being merely an adult enfranchisement, or an expression of popular sentiment but a society's means of engaging with itself in order to understand the challenges it faces. Squelch (1999:129) notes that, decentralisation and democracy presuppose each other in the sense that they are both based on the principles of representation, equity and participation.

Dieltiens and Enslin (2002:6-8) and Sayed (2002:37-38) distinguish between *representative* and *participatory* democracy as follows:

- *Representative democracy* occurs when people participate through the cycles of elections, which empower those politically with authority to act on their behalf. The classic way in which this is done is that those politically elected work with bureaucracy to implement the desired policy change. This version of democracy is essentially centralised and does not elicit participation besides the act of voting. Dieltiens and Enslin (2002:6) argue that *liberal democracy* is similar to *representative democracy.* They view representative democrats as people who defer political decisions to a select elite and who often (but not always) are more inclined to emphasise liberal rights – even though in a liberal democracy, liberalism and democracy are not always compatible. The assumption that representatives of a particular group would always and necessarily represent their constituencies is simplistic on grounds that often representatives do not articulate the views of their constituencies

– hence they are not always their 'voice' (Sayed 2002:38; Sayed & Carrim 1997:97).

- *Participatory democracy* results when people are able to make decisions about their lives at the level at which it happens. In this version of democracy, central political authority and professional expertise are constrained by more local forms of participation. Dieltiens and Enslin (2002:7) prefer the term *deliberative democracy* to *participatory democracy* because deliberative democrats argue that democracy's justification depends on a neutral process that engages people to participate, talk and reason over political matters until a collective decision is agreed upon. Collective decisions must result from processes of collective deliberation that are conducted rationally and fairly among free and equal individuals.

Representative and participatory democracy are often positioned as two distinct alternatives – or perhaps better described as two different poles on a continuum (Dieltiens & Enslin 2002:13). In reality both versions of participation and democracy can be seen in policy and in practice (Sayed 2002:38), interacting by supplementing and complementing each other. Neither representative nor participatory democracy is perfect but each of these approaches has its own strengths and weaknesses. Depending on the context, each might be relevant and useful to enhance the democratic process.

The implication for SGB's is that they should govern schools with clear consciences by considering inputs of different stakeholders when taking decisions. In other words, structures of school governance are representative of the school community and such representatives or governors are elected according to fair and democratic procedures (Squelch 1999:129). SGB's do not represent themselves but the different constituencies that gave them their mandate through elections. So, their deliberations should be in the best interest of the education of the learners in particular and that of the school in general.

2.3.3 Participation

It can be assumed that participation and democracy presupposes each other (cf. 2.3.2). Participation is the involvement in an activity or a process by stakeholders. Meaningful participation involves energy and good intentions in taking part in the process by those affected by the phenomenon. Mere physical presence of persons in a forum does not necessarily imply participation. According to Looyen (2000:9), participation implies a pursuit of common goals and values, which mitigate for a common, unique culture. Squelch (1999:130) stresses that school governance requires *active participation* of all stakeholders who have a vested interest in the school.

Hence, Heystek and Louw (1999:21) stress that the relationship between parents and schools should change from a *client* type of a relationship to a *partnership* relationship. The reason is that, previously parents were perceived as clients, who did not have any say in the school governance and management. Currently it is expected that parents must be partners, which indicates that parents are part of the decision-making process and its implementation in schools (Heystek & Louw 1999:21). This implies that through participation parents have equal strengths and expertise in their own right to contribute and receive services on an equal footing with professionals. Hence, parents have both a shared responsibility and accountability.

Participation is not a privilege granted to those elected onto the SGB but an integral part of the purpose of what SGB's stand for – democratic governance. Verhoeven (1996:129) emphasises the fact that participation of different groups in school governance (and management) is one of the fundamental *rights* of members (parents, educators/ non-educators and learners in secondary schools) of a democratic society. Thus, successful co-operative school governance should depend greatly on the participation of all role players in a community in order to raise the quality of education. Ironically, according to Squelch (1999:130), the participation of educators, parents, learners and other external groups (for example, business) is frequently

tokenistic and piecemeal. Hence, the illusion of decentralised school governance is created without being realised in practice.

The implication for SGB's is that schools should create a conducive atmosphere enabling optimal participation by all stakeholders with an interest in education. As democratic structures, SGB's should learn to value all contributions of those with an interest in education. SGB's must encourage participation and involvement of all stakeholders with an interest in education.

2.3.4 Accountability and responsibility

Like other principles, accountability is inextricably linked to democracy, participation, decentralisation, empowerment and transparency. There is a little distinction between accountability and responsibility because the two concepts presuppose each other although accountability is more encompassing than responsibility. While one can be held directly responsible for the failure of the performance of the duty assigned, one can also be equally held accountable for the failure of the performance of a duty by someone else who was delegated to perform such a task.

Foster and Smith (2001:3) aver that accountability refers to the process by which a body or person who has been granted authority for some aspect of the education system is obliged to render account to another person or body for some specified object by some pre-determined means. James (2001:17) elucidates that when citizens in a country vote, they give a mandate to those elected to take decisions on their behalf. In return, those who hold power have a duty and responsibility to be accountable to their constituents.

According to Sangor (1996:viii), accountability is defined as, and determined by:

- Knowledge of those principles, theories and factors that underlie appropriate decisions about which procedures should be employed, and knowledge of the procedures themselves.

- A commitment to do what is best for the client, not what is easiest or most expedient.

According to Lello, as quoted by Maile (2002:326) concurs with the above definition but adds that accountability entails being answerable to other stakeholders, both junior and senior to oneself, the broader community and other stakeholders. According to Maile (2002:326), one of the reasons why education is such a hotly debated feature of social policy is that everyone in society holds a stake in it, in one way or the other. Places of learning will only survive – let alone prosper – if communities take responsibility for them. According to James (2001:2), accountability in the education system means institutionalising responsibilities according to codes of conduct and meeting the formal expectations of children and young adults. Thus, according to Fryer and Lovas, as quoted by Maile (2002:326), accounting implies an interdependence of decisions made in different contexts with an obligation that one has to report, explain or justify (voluntarily or compulsorily) the occurrence or non-occurrence of education activities.

Maile (2002:326) regards accountability as one of the essential elements of school governance to strengthen the position of school managers. Principals have to realise that they have to co-operate with SGB's in the running of schools. Failure to share the power will lead to unnecessary tensions (DE 2004:48). Since accountability implies an obligation to give account of one's decisions and actions, it also implies having a conscience or a moral responsibility about what one is doing. According to Burgess (1992:21-80), there are three main forms of accountability, namely:

- *Moral accountability* emerges from the fact that parents are the primary educators of learners, therefore, parents ought to accept responsibility for the development of a child's principles and attitudes.
- *Professional accountability* stems from the school situation whereby educators are responsible and accountable for the education of learners as professionals trained to educate. Professional accountability falls within the spectrum of professional management

under the leadership of the school principal, especially during the day when parents are at work and learners are entrusted to the care of educators.

- *Contractual accountability* refers to being accountable to one's employer. The employment relationship between the employer and the employee places duties and responsibilities upon the two parties that will require them to be accountable to each other.

The challenge for SGB's is to ensure that all schools become legitimate and working institutions of civil society – irrespective of their individual capacities, resources or where they are situated (James 2001:17). Lastly, with regard to accountability, it should be remembered that there is no civic right without accompanying responsibility and obligation (whether as parents, educators, non-educators, administrators or learners).

Since accountability and democracy are intertwined, both are key aspects of endeavours to involve people, especially parents, in the affairs of a school. For parents to be fully accountable to the broader community, they need to have a clear and thorough understanding of their roles, duties and functions. Co-operative governance will presumably hold governors accountable to the community (Looyen 2000:12). SGB's must ensure that their manner of operation is based on principles of good school governance.

2.3.5 Non-racism and non-sexism

The Constitution emphasises the value of non-racialism and non-sexism. All institutions should strive towards practices that treat everybody with respect and as equal (RSA 1996a: section 1(a)). All possible means must be employed towards addressing the imbalances of the past where people were oppressed or devalued because of their race or gender. Discrimination was the root of apartheid policies prior to 1994. The challenge for SGB's is that through co-operative governance, they have to formulate and implement policies that will correct the injustices of the past within the parameters of the

Constitution, SASA, the provincial Acts and regulations. Affirmative action policies flow from such imperatives.

According to Tsotetsi (2002:41), where the criteria of race and sex were used in the past to advantage an individual or a group, it should be considered fair to use the same criteria to correct the injustice created and to level the playing field. Democracy and the enjoyment of benefits by all the inhabitants of the country cannot be realised if its citizens are not on an equal footing. Therefore, SGB's have to create equal opportunities in their schools for stakeholders to practice non-racial and non-sexist values and norms. The relevance of this principle for SGB's (and the departmental officials) is to ensure that the composition of all SGB's should reflect a racial and gender balance.

2.3.6 Equity and social justice

Literally translated equity means 'fairness' or 'justness'. The historical past and its negative consequences cannot be as easily buried or forgotten as envisaged by the Constitution (RSA 1996a: Preamble). Scars – physical, psychological and emotional – after many years of oppression and discrimination still remain with many South Africans. To heal such wounds, equity and social justice must prevail. Without the implementation of social justice and equity to correct the injustices of the past, reconciliation is almost impossible to achieve (Tsotetsi 2002:45).

Mere democracy cannot turn around the events of the past without other concerted efforts by the government of the day in order to bring about social justice and equity. Affirmative action policies can be one such mechanism employed to bring about education reform, social justice and equity in South Africa (Tsotetsi 2002:45). The Constitution alone cannot bring about democracy, equity and social justice. All the South African citizens are required to strive to bring life to all the ideals and values that the Constitution guarantees. Citizens must uphold and cherish the values of the Constitution.

The implication for SGB's is that, they must strive to achieve equity and social justice in their governance role. For instance, when SGB's recommend candidates for appointment, they should consider race, gender and disability to bring about equity and social justice in their schools. According to the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) (2005:141). Social justice requires that people be enabled to confront the injustices of the past caused by inequality and poverty which are suffered by the majority of people living in South Africa. However, it should be noted that social justice is not achievable by handing benefits to a passively grateful population, but is rather striven for by an alert and critical citizenry (HSRC 2005:140).

2.3.7 Equality

Literally translated equality means 'sameness'. The Constitution states that everyone is equal before the law (RSA 1996a: Preamble) – hence no one may be unfairly discriminated against on the basis of race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnicity, social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth (RSA 1996a:section 9(3)). The application of equality clause is one of the greatest challenges for the state and its institutions to make fair laws on one hand and to implement them fairly on the other.

The SASA (RSA 1996b:section 20(1)(a) is unequivocal on the provision of quality education of the same standard or value. The equality principle is taken further in that all learners must receive equality education in terms of gaining access to institutions of learning and their resources without discrimination. This includes the inability to pay school fees by the parents of such learners (RSA 1996b:sections 2, 3, 4 & 39). The implications of what is known as 'Equality Clause' is that all children must obtain equal education and the state must strive towards giving all learners (in suburban schools, township schools or farm schools) the same access to resources and personnel and the same opportunities to realise their fullest potential (Foster & Smith 2001:4; DE 2004:153).

But the 'Equality Clause' does not govern only the state's relationship with its citizens but it governs our relationships with each other. Just as the state may not unfairly discriminate against any citizen, so nobody may discriminate against each other (RSA 1996a:section 9). Understanding the value of equality and the practice of non-discrimination means not only understanding that one has these rights as an educator or a learner, but that others have them as well. It is from the Equality Clause in the Constitution that the values of tolerance and respect for others stem. The same goes for the value given to linguistic diversity as guaranteed by the Constitution of the RSA which stipulates that no one may discriminate against one other on the basis of language (RSA 1996A:section 6).

The implication for SGB's is that, ideally, all South Africans should receive education in their mother tongue as might be preferred. Where reasonably practicable multilingualism should be promoted. Thus, South Africans should learn one another's languages so that they can communicate as equals. No one language should be perceived as the dominant language but all languages should be developed to attain the level of equality. Therefore, when drawing up school policies SGB's must be guided by the national language policy, which is aimed at promoting at promoting South African languages. As a policy-making structure at school level, SGB's have a duty and responsibility to ensure that all official languages are equally developed and catered for as far as practicable.

2.3.8 Respect

According to the Constitution (RSA 1996a:section 100), everyone has an inherent dignity and the right to have their dignity respected and protected. Respect is closely linked to human dignity or *ubuntu*. James (2001:16) notes that *ubuntu* or human dignity requires one to respect others if one is to respect oneself. Decentralised decision-making requires members of SGB's to respect one other because of their diversified nature and composition. Mutual respect should be shown among all SGB members.

The concept of respect – as a value – is not explicitly defined in the Constitution but implied in the way the Bill of Rights governs not only the state's responsibility to citizens but citizens' relationships with one other (RSA 1996a:section 9). Respect has to do with one's way of life. Adults have to lead an exemplary life in order to be respected by learners. Likewise, SGB members and educators at school have to set a good example to be emulated by those they are governing and teaching respectively.

The issue of respect presents far-reaching implications for SGB members as a diverse group of people. Conflicts and different points of view are bound to occur in such a forum. For SGB's to be functional, mutual respect has to reign between and among SGB members – young and old, professionals and laypersons – for SGB's to attain their purposeful goal of effective and efficient co-operative school governance. Respect within the SGB's should permeate other structures within and beyond the school community. Lack of respect can affect effective communication and team spirit among SGB members, and ultimately hamper effective teaching and learning as well as effective school governance in particular and school management in general.

2.3.9 Openness and transparency

An open society is a society that is democratic and free to go about its activities. Issues are handled frankly and honestly with an understanding that communication has to be clear and unambiguous in order to be commonly understood. Deliberations do not leave room for doubt because matters are dealt with in an honest manner and to the satisfaction of all the stakeholders. The Bill of Rights of the Constitution (RSA 1996a:Chapter 2) gives the South African citizens a range of rights as a democratic and open society, namely: the right to freedom of expression, conscience, religion, thought, belief, opinion, press, artistic creativity, assembly, association, scientific research and academic pursuit.

The idea of an open and transparent society does not imply a chaotic state of affairs where individuals act without considering the rule of law which

demands peace and order. In an open society individuals are still expected to operate within the parameters of the law by respecting the rights of others and taking full responsibility for their actions and behaviours. James (2001:17) purports that being a democrat in an open society means being a participant that listens, talks or communicates and assesses all the time. In particular, it means encouraging a culture of dialogue and debate in creating opportunities to interact with information critically and intelligently.

The challenge for SGB's is to encourage inclusivity or unity in diversity. Respect for the rights of others implies an understanding that individuals do not just have rights but have obligations too (Foster & Smith 2001:4). Rights are not absolute or without limits. Maile (2002:326) argues that as individuals enjoy their rights in an open society, so must they be equally accountable and responsible for their actions. Individuals should learn not to infringe on the rights of others but to respect them. As the SGB's deliberate openly about challenges facing them as governors, so must they be responsible and accountable in deciding the fate of their schools (Burgess 1992:33). The actions and decisions of SGB's must be morally defensible and in the best interests of education (Lello 1993:4). Thus, an open society does not tolerate partiality or bias in taking decisions in order 'to serve the interests of the learners at the school' (Potgieter et al 1997:6). This means that SGB's should discourage personal interests and avoid party politics in executing their governance tasks.

2.3.10 Empowerment

Empowerment can mean different things to different people in certain contexts. There is no single and generally accepted definition because of varying attributes of empowered people. However, the core understanding is that of giving power to someone or to a group that needs it to function properly. According to Charlton (1992:33), empowerment refers to competencies and processes required to enable ordinary people to do extraordinary things in the face of adversity and to produce superior performance continuously to the benefit of themselves and the organisation.

Thus, empowerment means giving power and authority to people or structures that never had them before, probably because of lack of skills, knowledge or for political reasons. Empowerment can be likened to motivation whereby each individual has a drive to do more and do it well. Ideally, empowerment should lead to self-empowerment, which is about transcending innate personal traits to influence others positively (Charlton 1992:34). Therefore, decentralisation of powers without empowerment is actually a hollow victory. For this reason, training of SGB's prepares and empower members to discharge their functions expertly and optimally.

Deem, Brehony and Heath (1995:152) argue that empowerment is routinely available to laypeople as part of reflexivity of modernity even though there are often problems about how such empowerment becomes translated into convictions and into actions. These authors continue to argue that empowerment can partially be achieved by bringing in more parents as members of SGB's. The latter may achieve a new vision of education with high academic and moral standards – standards previously repressed by those professionals who have control over the system and who want all learners to be equal rather than some excelling over others (Deem et al 1995:152).

Holt and Murphy (1993:178) develop the empowerment argument further when they say that high levels of good performance are achieved when stakeholders are empowered through effective training programmes to make decisions with regard to their mandates. Empowerment prospers when governors share expertise concerning their duties and responsibilities with the entire school community to benefit the broader community beyond the school terrain.

The implication for SGB's is that prior to 1994 schools were divorced from their external environments and parents frequently merely played the role of an audience in school affairs (Mabasa & Themane 2002:112; Looyen 2000:10; Heystek & Paquette 1999:191). Due to the democratising of society, which has heightened the role of the school in shaping a progressive and

inclusive society – the jurisdiction of the school has expanded to afford a range of stakeholders an opportunity for engagement in school affairs (Looyen 2000:10). Principals are no longer the only knowledgeable persons in school affairs. All the stakeholders should be empowered in a democracy to make a meaningful contribution to the running of their schools. SGB members, who are not able to fulfil their tasks because they have not been trained to do so, will not be empowered.

2.3.11 *Ubuntu* (Human dignity) and tolerance

According to the Constitution (RSA 1996a:section 10), South Africa is founded, upon the values of *ubuntu* or human dignity. According to James (2001:16), *ubuntu* or human dignity is particularly derived from the African saying: "I am human because you are human". Out of the values of *ubuntu* or human dignity flow the practices of compassion, kindness, altruism and respect, which are at the very core of making schools places where the cultures of governance, teaching and learning thrive. Furthermore, *ubuntu* embodies the concept of mutual understanding, respect and appreciation of the value of human difference within a multicultural environment.

The challenge for SGB members is to learn to tolerate and respect one another as distinct and unique beings. Tensions are likely to exist in SGB deliberations and as such members have to tolerate viewpoints that might differ from their own (DE 2004:51; HSRC 2005:107). SGB members have to understand that people will always differ in their opinions but they finally have to embrace the decision of the majority for the sake of effective and efficient school governance, even if they personally hold an opposing point of view (Sallis 2003:4). Conflict of interests must be relegated to the background of deliberations and teamwork must come first – to achieve the best interests of the learners and the school (Potgieter et al 1997:6).

2.3.12 Co-operation

Oldroyd, Elsner and Poster (1996:14) define co-operation as a process in which different individuals, groups or organisations pursue similar purposes harmoniously. Co-operation as a concept refers to working together by a group of individuals towards the achievement of a common goal. Thus, co-operative decision-making is generally seen as an interactive or participatory approach to school governance (Looyen 2000:4). Co-operative school governance affords and empowers stakeholders to be represented on decision-making structures by allowing them to take co-responsibility for such decisions (Dlamini 2001:7).

The implication for SGB's is that, as legal structures responsible for co-operative school governance, they have to ensure that all the stakeholders are represented on the governance body of the school and are encouraged to participate to achieve the school objectives. Their co-operation in school governance matters will ensure the strengthening of a democratic order in the school environment where all the participants will feel valued because of their contributions to school matters.

2.3.13 Multilingualism

The Constitution (RSA 1996a:section 6(1)) stipulates that there are eleven official languages in the Republic of South Africa. South Africa's confounding multiplicity of languages has been and will continue to be the subject of debate, controversy, even contest (James 2001:2). Multilingualism – whether implemented or not – is official government policy and it is a desirable norm in education because it emphasises two elements, namely, the importance of mother tongue education and the fostering of multilingualism. The Constitution (RSA 1996a:section 6(2)(a)) advocates that each province should at least use two of the official languages. According to James (2001:2), the challenge for English and Afrikaans speakers specifically, is to learn an African language.

The potential of SGB's in advocating multilingualism in the new democratic order in South Africa is immense. The aspect of multilingualism is relevant for SGB's as policy-making structures at school level, especially SGB's of

multiracial or racially integrated schools. The challenge for SGB's is to adopt and implement policies that encourage the school community to develop multilingualism. This attitude enables effective communication and integration in its different facets within and beyond the school community for the benefit of all the stakeholders, especially the learners.

The relevance of this aspect for SGB's as policy-making structures is that they should formulate policies that accommodate different language groups. Such policies will be customer friendly because they are sensitive to the needs of all the stakeholders with an interest in education.

2.3.14 The rule of law

In South Africa and elsewhere a constitution is the supreme law in a democratic state. Since nobody is above the law, every citizen has to respect and uphold the constitution of the country. This means that the law regulates and holds everything else together for the society to continue functioning as a democracy. For this reason, the rule of law is guarantor of accountability, social justice, equity, equality, non-racism, non-sexism, democracy, open society and respect for human dignity. A constitution regulates the behaviour and actions of the citizens of a country by promoting socially acceptable behaviour and prohibiting inappropriate conduct.

The SGB is subject to the rule of law and should comply with the legal requirements pertaining to such areas as health and safety of learners, recommendations for employment and dismissal of educators, punishment and care of learners and discipline and control within the school (Marishane 1999:90). A governing body's contravention of the legal requirements laid down by the state legislature may incur its liability to legal proceedings and this will damage the image of the school.

The implication for SGB's is that schools should draw and adopt their own internal rules of laws within the confines of the Constitution, the SASA and the provincial laws. Rules of law like codes of conduct for learners and for other

stakeholders (for example, SGB members) should be used to regulate the relations between and among participants. Such rules of law should be publicised and their purpose of existence should be communicated to all the community members to make them relevant, useful and important. All stakeholders who infringe the codes of conduct should be held accountable according to the rules that govern their conduct. For example, educators who are guilty of misconduct should be judged and held accountable according to the code of conduct for educators as enshrined in the South African Council of Educators Act, Act 31 of 2000 (RSA 2000).

The role of the SGB's is to follow set procedures in applying the rule of law in an even-handed, fair and proportionate manner, when disciplining those who fail to abide by the rule of law as stipulated in the school's codes of good practice. Education authorities as the custodians of the rule of law at learning sites should train SGB's and provide support so that they can discharge their mandated responsibilities in a fair and non-abusive manner (James 2001:18). In other words, the decisions of the SGB's should always be in the best interests of the school since they are in a position of trust towards the school and the community as stipulated in SASA.

2.3.15 Transformation

Since 1994 the South African government has adopted a number of policy documents aimed at democratising education in the country. One of the most important in this regard is the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 0f 1996 (RSA 1996a). Although the Constitution relates to many aspects of the governance of the country and is not specifically directed at education, it provides the basis on which the national and provincial governments can act in the field of education governance (Van Wyk 2002:125; Foster & Smith 2001:17). Thus, section 29 of the Constitution (RSA 1996b) recognises, among others, the transformation and democratisation of the education system.

While the transformation of education in the South African context involves changing for the better, democratisation of education encompasses the idea of partnership in which stakeholders – such as parents, educators, learners (in secondary schools) and other staff members who are not educators drawn from the school community – not only play an active role in school activities and functions, but also jointly constitute a body that represents stakeholders and takes decisions on behalf of the school (Van Wyk 2002:125).

Transformation is synonymous with reform and refers to the process of changing the form and content of something (in this instance, school governance system) with the purpose of totally reconstructing it to make it cost-effective and relevant to the needs of the target group (Tsotetsi 2002:17). Transformation should transcend trivial issues and aim at bringing about fundamental and meaningful changes to the lives of those affected by it. Its intention is to better the way of life by either rationalising or redeploying some of the resources (human, financial and physical) as a cost-cutting exercise and to ensure service delivery depending on different contexts and demands (Tsotetsi 2002:17). This form of transformation can also be regarded as redistribution justice (Looyen 2000:17).

Decentralised school governance is a relatively new phenomenon in South Africa (Looyen 2000:4). Therefore, it has to be nurtured in order to meet the expectations of the democratic order, which has devolved power to the local school communities. Like any other form of change, transformation might bring about unintended results and casualties in the process (Karlsson et al 2002:36). For instance, a reason why the powers of SGB's in public schools might be decreased is because many are unwilling to transform (DE 2004:viii). But the focus of decentralised school governance as part of the transformational process in South Africa is to legitimise school governance as a driving force to ensure the success of decentralised school governance. Transformation as a value should ensure that all South Africans appreciate the new patriotism as a force to heal the deep wounds caused by the unjust system of the past (Mbeki 2000:3). South Africans should be proud to be South Africans, advance the dialogue about their painful past and strive for

peace and justice. Similarly, SGB's are expected to take the lead in transforming their schools in a democratic order.

The implication for SGB's and schools is that they should endorse democracy and patriotism in South Africa. This can be done through the implementation of programmes which celebrate and recognise. The principle of transformation is relevant for SGB's, who should strive to transform their schools to be representative of South African society.

2.3.16 Reconciliation

The Constitution (RSA 1996a:Preamble) guarantees that South Africa belongs to its citizens. Hence, South Africa has been dubbed the rainbow nation because of its different cultures and traditions. For this reason, it is a country typified as a unity in diversity. The Constitution calls upon all South Africans to heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights as contained in the Bill of Rights (RSA 1996a: Chapter 2).

According to James (2001:20), reconciliation values differences and diversity as the basis of unity. This implies that South Africa is made up of people and communities with very different experiences of what it means to be a South African, experiences which have often been marred by violence and conflict.

The implication for SGB's is that their composition should be diversified to reflect the demographics of both the learner population and the educator corps. SGB's have to mobilise school resources for the benefit of all the learners in a bid to transform their schools. To achieve this, SGB's have to review their current policies and align them with the legal trends in the country. For instance, policies with regard to language, religion, admission and finance should be scrutinised to see if they facilitate or hinder the value of reconciliation. Every means has to be exploited to narrow the gab between those SGB's (or schools) that were historically advantaged and those that were historically disadvantaged.

Clearly, there can be no reconciliation without transformation in South Africa. Reality is such that one cannot talk of equality in a fundamentally unequal country. According to Tsotetsi (2002:58), to bring about transformation and reconciliation depends upon whether the government adopts a radical or a progressive approach towards affirmative action programmes in order to bring about social equality. Authentic change will come from the hearts of individuals and not from coercive legislation (Tsotetsi 2002:58). This means that values cannot be enforced or imposed upon people because they will remain rootless and lifeless.

In conclusion, for those who are school governors, educators or administrators of the education system, it is not within their power to alleviate or reverse the poverty that afflicts the majority of South Africans. But by fulfilling their educational mission and by adhering to the constitutional injunctions to equity, equal access and social justice – they can play a vital role in offering South Africans the surest route out of poverty (James 2001:57).

2.4 THEORIES OF SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

There are different models or approaches to school governance, which can either be centralised, decentralised or a blend of the two theories depending on the location of authority regarding school affairs. Winkler (1989:67) points out that in the education of some countries, decision-making is neither fully centralised nor fully decentralised – a country may operate one part of its education system according to a decentralised model while another part is more centralised. The nature of the model used in a country determines the kind of relationship that evolves between the centre of control and its periphery.

2.4.1 A shift from centralisation to decentralisation

Generally speaking, the concept of decentralisation means different things in different contexts. Decentralising power is aimed at reducing centralised bureaucratic control over schools that often prevents them from responding to change and transforming their environments in order to meet the needs of the community that is being serviced (Squelch 1999:129). According to Karlsson et al (2002:141), in a traditionally decentralised education system, as it exists in the United States of America (USA), decentralisation often means the shift of power from the school district to the school. However, in another context, decentralisation may refer to shift in power from a national to a provincial or state government, as it has happened over the past years in China (Karlsson et al 2002:141).

A substantial shift to a regional authority could be understood as part of a process of centralisation while others might view it as decentralisation. In such instances, the key issue is the direction in which power is shifting – towards or away from central authority (Karlsson et al 2002:141).

2.4.1.1 Common motives for decentralisation

Different motives have been established for decentralisation (DE 2004; Karlsson et al 2002; Fleisch 2002; Lauglo 1996; Davies 1990; Winkler 1989). The following are some of the motives underlying the decentralisation approach adopted by some governments:

- Using resources more efficiently;
- Increasing democratic control by allowing community participation in decision-making;
- Reducing hostility to national governments and their policies;
- Undermining one group by promoting another (e.g. the promotion of parent power in order to undermine local authorities under the Thatcher government in Britain);
- Promoting the ideology of markets and consumer choice;
- Reducing the financial burden of central government by sharing it with local authorities or parents;

- Increasing the political legitimacy of the government by giving rights to previously-excluded groups, to participate in the running of their schools;
- Defusing conflict to the local level;
- Increasing the range of options available to students by creating diversity among schools.

Decentralisation is often associated with greater democracy (Sayed 2002:38; Dieltiens & Enslin 2002:7; Sayed & Carrim 1997:97). One reason offered is that it allows decisions to be taken closer to the people; inter alia because power is more diffused (Karlsson et al 2002:143). However, decentralisation of power does not necessarily lead to greater popular participation in decision-making because, even decentralisation to district or school levels, could be exercised by officials in an autocratic manner (DE 2004:24). In addition, ironically the very decentralisation that has led to greater democratisation of schooling has sometimes contributed to perpetuation of inequalities among schools (Karlsson et al 2002:177). For this reason, it is paramount that SGB's should receive training to build capacity for decentralised governance as stipulated by SASA.

2.4.2 A shift from decentralisation to centralisation

In a centralised approach, great power and control over schools are vested in the Secretary, the Minister or State Governor (Marishane 1999:22). Central government or authority provides broad or general policies of governing a country. Karlsson et al (2002:144) argue that a more centralised system of governance provides the possibility of distributing resources more equally. Alternatively, it could also mean spending unequally in order to redress pre-existing inequalities (Karlsson et al 2002: 144; DE 2004:25). This is generally valid because, in countries that cannot provide adequately for all their schools, wealthier or more influential communities have the political muscle to ensure that they gain better access to state resources (Karlsson et al 2002:144). However, it cannot be assumed that because the state is centralised, equity and social equality will happen automatically (Davies

1990:11). Whether such benefits are derived from the nature of the governance system, will depend on the political will and capacity of the central authority (Karlsson et al 2002:144).

Broadfoot (1995:21) notes that strong control should not be equated with a high degree of centralisation because, depending how control is mediated, strong control may well be experienced by educators in a decentralised system, while control may be felt to be rather loose in a very centralised system. Pure forms of centralisation are not easy to discern. Bray (1985:17) contends that, in India for example, there is a fairly high degree of centralisation – often with not much popular participation – even though the central authority gives considerable autonomy to state governments.

2.4.2.1 Common motives for centralisation

Different motives have been established for centralisation as well (Karlsson et al 2002; Fleisch 2002; Lauglo 1996; Davies 1990; Winkler 1989). The following are, according to Lauglo as quoted by Karlsson et al (2002:143) some of the underlying motives for a centralised form of governance:

- Maintaining control when it is being threatened;
- Promoting greater equity in an unequal society;
- Lowering costs and speed up policy implementation;
- Compensating for a shortage of skilled or experienced managers at lower levels;
- Avoiding or monitoring corruption.

In the same way that decentralisation is no guarantee of democracy and equity, neither is a centralised system because it is quite possible to have widespread participation in making centralised decisions (Karlsson et al 2002:144). For an example, the central government in South Africa desires the transformation of schools – which in some cases is not happening

because structures instituted due to a commitment to decentralisation, oppose these transformational strategies.

2.4.3 A centralised – decentralised approach

Power within an education system can be redistributed throughout the system, regardless whether it is centralised or decentralised. This is so because the central government still has ultimate control over national norms and standards (Karlsson et al 2002:142). For example, certain functions (such as administration or finance) are usually decentralised by many governments while others (such as curriculum or certification), are usually controlled by the central authority (Karlsson et al 2002:141).

Karlsson et al (2002:145) argue that, while it is important to examine the concepts of centralisation and decentralisation, such examination alone cannot tell whether a particular system promotes equity, democracy or equality. Each case should be closely looked at, with attention to the specific school system and its particular form of centralisation or decentralisation.

It has been observed that in practice, authority over school affairs and governance is seldom transferred by education authority in *toto* to the local level, but there should be at least a balance of power and authority between state departments and local schools (Squelch 1999:129). This approach will dispel the perception that the state is actually seen as abdicating its responsibility (Karlsson 2002:332) while it is sharing its responsibility with communities in provision and control of education (Marishane 1999:59).

Therefore, no form of governance system can be regarded as purely decentralised or centralised (Winkler 1989:33; Karlsson et al 2002:144). All decisions evidence mixture of the two forms of governance on a continuum. Neither is totally malevolent nor benevolent. It is evident from the discussion above that, decisions with regard to centralisation or decentralisation of the education system are generally dependent on the larger political dispensation

and are thus not necessarily driven by educational motives (Karlsson et al 2002:142).

To this end, a discussion based on the South African and an international experience of co-operative school governance is useful to learn about the dynamics, which informs the education governance.

2.5 THE SOUTH AFRICAN AND INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCES OF CO-OPERATIVE SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

Co-operative school governance is a relatively new phenomenon in South Africa (Looyen 2000:4). As a recently founded democracy South Africa can learn from other countries as to how to govern its education institutions in a unique manner. Two countries, namely the United States of America and Britain, have been chosen for reasons of comparative study to show contrasting co-operative governance approaches. The choice of these countries is based on their federal nature of their states or districts and the ethnic groups represented in their population, which are similar to South Africa. The intention of the research is not to adopt the practice of these countries but to adapt them to the uniquely South African conditions. Moreover, the discussion is not meant to be exhaustive but to provide some guidelines concerning the nature of cooperative governance.

2.5.1 School governance in South Africa: a reflective perspective

The Constitution is the supreme law in the country and all other laws and values are subordinate to and enacted according to it. Partnership in school governance is one of the values enshrined directly or indirectly in a democratic Constitution. Section 29 of the South African Constitution of 1996 (RSA 1996a), recognises the right to education and the transformation of the education system as two of the important values in which the democratic state of the Republic of South Africa is based. While the transformation of education in the South African context involves changing education for the better, democratisation of education encompasses the idea of partnership in

which stakeholders such as parents, educators, learners in secondary schools and members drawn from the school community not only play an active role in school activities and functions, but also jointly constitute a body that represents these stakeholders and takes decisions on behalf of the school (Marishane 1999:20).

Until 1990, the production of education policy in South Africa was a relatively simple matter – the state maintained control in ways that were bureaucratically centralised, racially exclusive and politically authoritarian (Jansen 2001:12). The state's approach to school governance in South Africa has elements of both centralisation and decentralisation (Marishane 1999: 26; DE 2004:30). This stems from the fact that, in terms of the Constitution, the provision of education in the South Africa since 1994 is a matter of partnership between the National Education Department and the nine Provincial Education Departments under the control of the Members of Executive Council (MECs) for education. For this reason and in accordance with the Constitution, each province has established its own Department of Education with the Head of Department as the responsible manager for professional and management matters relating to school – including governance affairs. While the Head of the Department is lawfully responsible for the provisioning of education at the provincial level, the MEC for Education in the province, as the political head is responsible for policy determination at that level.

Provincial governments make provincial policy, within the parameters of national policies, frameworks, norms and standards. The provincial Departments of Education have the responsibility for establishing, managing and supporting schools and other pre-tertiary educational institutions in their provinces (DE 2004: 30). In carrying out their functions, all provincial education departments have established regional or district offices and other levels of education. These structures, however, have no legislative authority of their own, and derive operational authority solely from provincial government (DE 2004: 30).

Unlike the United States of America and Britain (cf. 2.5.2. & 2.5.3.), where power over school governance lies in the hands of school councils and the Secretary of Education respectively, in South Africa there is co-operation and interdependence over the governance of schools between the national, the provincial and the local or district levels. Such co-operation is based on mutual trust and support with the effect that all stakeholders in school governance share the understanding that they have equal responsibility as partners in governing the school.

The SASA creates a basis on which there is a balanced approach to school governance in that it contains aspects of both centralisation and decentralisation. According to Potgieter et al (1997:8), sound cooperative school governance is generally characterised by:

- Mutual trust and respect;
- Shared goals and values;
- Shared decision-making;
- Common vision;
- Open communication;
- Good teamwork;
- Promotion of the interest of the partnership rather than those of the individual;
- Respect for the roles of different partners.

The above list is not meant to be exhaustive but acts as a guideline for purposes of establishing successful co-operative school governance in South Africa.

2.5.2 School governance in the United States of America

According to Van Langen and Dekkers (2001:370), the education system in the United States of America is organised at three tiers, namely the local (15, 000 school districts), state (controlled by state education authorities) and

federal (under the US Department of Education) level. School governance does not feature in any way in the American Constitution – in fact, no mention at all is made of either education or public schools in the federal Constitution adopted in 1788, nor is Congress vested with any power over education. There are at least two reasons for this. The *first* is that at the time the Constitution was drawn, education was mainly the domain of private and parochial institutions and not considered "a substantial function of the government" (Riley 1994:298). Since at the time no state had already made any provisions for the establishment of genuine public school system in its constitution, there seemed to be no need to transfer education to the federal government.

The *second* reason is that the Constitution reserves certain stipulated powers to the states with the effect that the federal government of the United States of America was left with limited powers (Campbell, Cunningham, Nystrand & Usdan 1990:40). Article 1, section 8 clause 1 of the Constitution gives the Congress the authority to provide for the general welfare of the American citizens and Congress uses this provision to provide federal aid to education though this is not intended to be construed as "a means of exercising federal control over education" (Riley 1994:299).

Notwithstanding the limitations imposed by the Constitution on the federal government, two aspects made up for this shortcoming. The *first*, today most states have specific provisions in their constitutions which make education a legal responsibility of states with the results that the statutes of most states stipulate in detail how schools are to be governed and controlled by district boards of education and other bodies to whom control is delegated (Campbell et al 1990:40). This trend is shown in the Congress's passing of the Goals 2000: Educate America Act of 1994 (Miller 1995:2). This Act is intended to provide systematic reform under the partnerships of the state and the local education authority (LEAs). It can therefore be deduced from the preceding discussion that, school governance in the United States of America falls under the jurisdiction of the state and the local education agencies. At the state level, governance is constituted by partnership between the governor (head of

state), the chief state officer, the state board of education and the state education department composed mainly of professionals in education (Campbell et al 1990:89).

The state has plenary power of the control of schools since, in terms of constitutional and statutory provisions, it is held that education is a state rather than a local function. Following this, the state is obliged to provide funds and demand accountability in exchange. The local education agencies, such as school boards who exercise local control of schools, have only delegated power over schools. In essence, they are agents of the state who derive their authority from state. Since decision-making on school governance descends bureaucratically from the central office of the state governor to the schools via the school boards, partnership in school governance is virtually non-existent. This is how centralised school governance is practised in the United States of America.

There is currently growing dissatisfaction with the centralised decision-making prevalent in most American state education systems (Marishane 1999:230). This dissatisfaction is coupled with demands for reform and devolution of power to schools and local people. Two examples illustrate this phenomenon. The *first* involves the establishment of the legislation for the so-called Charter Schools through America 2000 Education Strategy during the times of former President George Bush (senior), which provides for a group of educators, parents or others who share similar educational views and interests to operate a school (Wohlstetter & Anderson 1994:118). A charter is “an agreement between the school and the granting authority setting out the goals, objectives and responsibilities of both parties” (Deem 1994:28).

The charters can be granted to the local communities by federal government, the state or local school district. California, Colorado, Georgia, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Mexico and Winconsin are among the states presently enacting charter school programmes in the USA (Ormston & Shaw 1993:107). In these states, schools are permitted by the granting authority to establish their own SGB’s consisting of such stakeholders as parents,

educators, administrators and community representatives who act as trustees. In other words, schools are financed through charter programmes rather than districts and their personnel are given total discretion over the use of funds and selection of staff. The money used for funding these schools is derived from granting authority and deducted from the budget of the local district. Should charter schools fail to attract enough learners, they close – similar to a business that fails to attract enough customers.

The *second* form of decentralisation is the devolution of school governance responsibilities from the district level to the elected school councils composed of parents, educators, school principals, community representatives and the learner representatives in high school (Deem 1994:29). In these instances, the principal is directly accountable to the school council rather than to school district offices.

From the above discussion, Marishane (1999:23) purports that two points can be noted about school governance in the USA. *Firstly*, there is a significant change in the attitude of the state towards the appreciation of the importance of developing partnerships in school governance at school level. *Secondly*, the education system is changing from centralised to decentralised school governance. It should be stated that in the USA all states (and districts/cities) have their own approach and that the role of stakeholders in schools therefore also differs. The states and districts, which are known to have a fair amount of involvement of stakeholders are: Chicago, Kentucky and Boston (Squelch 1999:129-137; Looyen 2000:12-23).

2.5.3 School governance in Britain

The British Constitution clearly emphasises the principle of separation of powers (Simon & Chitty 1993:81), in terms of which school governance is a matter of partnership between the central government and the local government through the services of local education authorities (LEAs), local management of schools (LMS) and school councils. The separation of powers expresses the value attached by the British Constitution to partnerships in

governing schools, as indeed has been the case in Britain for the best part of the last century (Davis & Anderson 1992:108). To this day, most British parents still believe and understand education to be a matter of partnership between the government and the local councils (Sallis 1995:7).

A common practice in this regard is for the bcal government to levy rates in the form of council tax while the central government augments this tax from general taxation. Another constitutionally motivated partnership becomes evident when the central government passes laws, which govern and regulate the running of schools, which allows them to be organised in different ways by their councils. A notable example in this regard is the Conservative Party's passing of the 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA), which enhanced the powers of school governors (Sallis 1995:8). Due to the decentralisation of school governance in Britain to the local government level (LEAs) a relationship of mutual trust, respect and co-operation between the state and the local education authorities was brought about (Davis & Anderson 1992:110).

It should be mentioned that in England and Wales the Secretary of State for Education has the authority and power to open and close schools (Carr & Hartnett 1996:66). An example of this is the statutory treatment of the 'failing schools' which should be closed down if they are not performing. Secondly, the Secretary for Education bypasses the local education authorities (LEAs) and delegates control of school budgets directly to school governors and principals while he or she has considerable discretion about the level and amount of grants awarded to schools (Carr & Hartnett 1996:66). This also applies to the physical structural alterations of schools where modifications to buildings are subject to the Secretary's approval, despite the school governing body being the owner of the buildings, land and chattels it uses in its provision of education services (Marsh in Green 1993:28).

The other instance to be noted is that, though the school governing bodies are 'empowered' to implement the curriculum at schools, the national curriculum is determined by the central government through the Secretary of State (Carr

& Hartnett 1996:167; Marsh in Green 1993:37). Moreover, the devolution of governance and control through the market(s) mechanism of coupling 'choice' of school with funding – as applied in the so-called grant-maintained schools (GMS) – has the hallmark of centralisation in that the government encourages and regulates the market forces by legally allowing governing bodies to reject children from their oversubscribed and thus well-funded schools (Ball in Cashdan & Harris 1993:103). Lastly, the Secretary of State can veto decisions made by the school governing body (Marsh in Green 1993:33). In Britain, for instance, the Secretary of State on receiving parent's complaint that a school governing body is acting unreasonably in using its powers or is failing to carry its duties properly, is empowered to direct the governing body to "take whatever action it seems to him or her appropriate" (Davis & Anderson 1992:111).

In addition to the great power given to the Secretary of State for Education, a certain measure of power over school governance is given to the market forces. In this case, policy planning and social welfare in education are replaced with the dynamics of supply and demand in which 'demand' is represented by parental choice while 'supply' is represented by the education market, that is, the schools (Ball in Cashdan & Harris 1993:103).

These forces have an influence on how the various partners in school governance relate and operate (Marishane 1999:25). For example, SGB's ensure that their schools compete for the best learners, the best budget allocations and popularity through high output to avoid bankruptcy and going out of business. The result is that partnership between the school and Department assumes a consumer-producer relationship – the relationship of supply and demand. An important point to note is that even in this case, the Secretary of State still has the power to regulate the market forces. For instance, the Secretary of State has statutory power to close a 'failing' school.

From the discussion above it emerges that, unlike in the United States of America, the British government's approach to school governance is shifting

from decentralisation towards centralisation. The literature review into this issue indicates that the approach is gaining momentum.

2.6 CONCLUSION

Walberg and Niemiec (1994:714) argue that local citizens and school personnel know their schools best. Given the chance, they are in the best position to solve most problems experienced by schools. Looyen (2000:4) regards co-operative school governance as the vehicle for promoting effective and efficient schools in most countries. In essence it can be said that co-operative school governance allows school communities to take control of their environments and decide their fate (Levacic 1995:129). It should be noted that decentralisation might mean different things to different people in different contexts. However, the motivation behind the establishment of School Based Management (SBM) in American schools derives from the recognition of the assumption that when decisions are made closer to the people who have to implement them, better decisions will be made and greater satisfaction will ensue (Marishane & Botha 2004:95; Raywind 1990:142). The forfeiture of expertise and specialist skills of the LEA by the school-based management training programmes have to be implemented to assist these governors in dealing with matters such as finance, planning, personnel management and staff appraisal, information management systems and technology.

According to the LMS or SBM model, the SGB acts as a board of directors with the principal as the chief executive officer. According to the model, the SGB sets goals and objectives, determines policy and rules, allocates resources, monitors school performance and holds the professional managers to account (Levacic 1995:129). In practical terms, this means that the SGB determines the policy and rules by which the school is managed by the principal who is employed as the head of the school ‘s management team. In other words, while the principal’s role is to out the management tasks on a day-to-day basis (Potgieter et al 1997:14), the SGB monitors these tasks on behalf of and in the best interests of all stakeholders. Research in grant-

maintained schools (GMS) in England and Wales found that the functions of governors and professional staff become blurred as a result of involvement of governors in these functions (Deem 1994:69).

While the LSM or SBM model may be applied differently in countries such as the USA, the UK (England and Wales) and RSA, there are similarities in the roles of both the SGB and the principal. Chapter 3 will focus on the nature, the role, the functions and capacity building for SGB's in South Africa and elsewhere in the world.

CHAPTER 3

THE NATURE, ROLE, FUNCTIONS AND CAPACITY BUILDING FOR SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with SGB's in the Republic of South Africa (RSA) and two selected countries, namely the United States of America (USA) and Britain (England and Wales) as examples of developed governance systems. The choice of the two countries is based on the nature of their federal states. In addition, the English model of co-operative governance makes provision for representivity of ethnic groups and is geared not only to the school but also the community as a whole (Looyen 2000:56).

School governors have diverse backgrounds and often have little or no experience in managing an organisation such as a school (Marishane 1999:60). Therefore it is of paramount importance that all the SGB members – both lay and professional persons – should strive to balance their interests in a way, which meets the needs of the school. Principals can be of great help to realise this goal (Bush & Gamage 2001:42).

To this effect, school governors need to be trained and supported in their attempt to govern and manage their school information systems, financial control and providing guidance to stakeholders' amongst other matters (Marishane 1999:60). Capacity building will assist SGB's to understand their governance role and be able to discharge their lawful mandate given to them by their constituencies. Building effective SGB's as a forum for community interests is an essential part of the process of forging and enhancing a positive reputation for the school.

3.2 THE NATURE AND ROLE OF SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES: THEORY AND PRACTICE

Two distinct periods can be distinguished in the recent history of school governance in South Africa, namely the period before 1994 and the period thereafter (Van Wyk 2002:124).

3.2.1 Historical background to SGB in South Africa before 1994

Until 1990, the production of education policy in South Africa was a relatively simple matter – the state maintained control in ways that were bureaucratically centralised, racially exclusive and politically authoritarian (Jansen 2001:12). In the period prior to 1994, different education departments existed to serve the needs of various racial groups. This meant, among others, that provision for parental involvement in decision-making at school level also differed (Van Wyk 2002:124).

For an example, in most schools serving the white population, statutory parent bodies (usually called management councils) were established while in schools for the black population only a few members of parent bodies could be elected by parents on the management council (often called school committees) – the majority were government employees (Van Wyk 2002:124). Later on these structures were referred to as school boards (in primary schools) and management councils (in secondary schools) (Dlamini 1993:6; Moate 1997:156).

These structures did not encourage stakeholder participation and were often dominated by principals reporting directly to the government bureaucracy (and sometimes to the politicians) responsible for education (Mabasa & Themane 2002:112). The role of other stakeholders in school governance was merely supportive of principals' initiatives (Heystek & Paquette 1999:191). Consequently, the exclusion of some of the stakeholders (such as learners) created fertile ground for the broader political struggle towards a more inclusive system of governance (Mabasa & Themane 2002:112).

Dlamini (1993:5) argues that the involvement of parents during the apartheid period was ill-founded because it was not based on a genuine belief in the

rights of people to self-determination. The then government's intention was that parent involvement in school governance would deal with crises management in schools – particularly black schools – as well as to share in the financing of education between the government itself and communities (Dlamini 1993:5). As a result of dissatisfaction with the system of the day, the black communities rejected the governance structures that the government instituted as they offered them little say in the running of their schools.

By 1976 parents in urban area had started to establish their own representative committees, precisely because they felt that the school committees and boards were not representing them accordingly (Van Wyk 2002:124). The inclusive structures of important role players in education were known as Parent-Teacher-Student Associations (PTSA), in secondary schools and Parent-Teacher Associations (PTA) in primary schools (Sithole 1995:93).

3.2.2 The legal framework for SGB's after 1994

The nature of a school governing body is legally defined. In accordance with SASA, a school governing body is a statutory body that is elected to govern a school. This means that a SGB is set up by an Act of Parliament – through the enactment of the SASA (Act 84 of 1996) – to give authority to the elected representative members (school governors) to run the affairs of their school and community.

It is necessary to understand what SGB's are and why they exist. Since 1994, SGB's came into being as new form of school governance structures. The enabling legislation promulgated by the National Education Department in the form of SASA (RSA 1996b) had encouraged the formation of legal SGB's in all public schools in South Africa. However, SGB's do not understand their functions, powers and responsibilities. This has the potential of undermining the administration and running of the schools at the level of discipline, relations, the community, educators and the structures of the Education Department (Mongake 2001:68).

3.2.2.1 The Constitution of the RSA (Act 108 of 1996)

Policies regarding school governance are rooted in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA 1996a) as adopted by the Constitutional Assembly on 18 May 1996 and as amended on 11 October 1996. The Constitution determines that school governance procedures shall satisfy fundamental rights of equity, including non-discrimination, equal access and fair administration. The implication for SGB's is to understand that the Constitution sets requirements for the protection of language, cultural and religious rights that will have impact on the functioning of school governance. Even though the Constitution vests the national and provincial governments with general powers to legislate, it also places certain limits on these powers. For instance, these limits can be divided into three broad categories: Limits imposed by the Bill of rights; limits relating to the division of powers between national and provincial governments; and limits set by the transitional provision of the Constitution.

Section 28 of the Constitution (RSA 1996a) states that, a child's best interest is of paramount importance in every matter concerning a child. The challenge for SGB's is that they must at all times bear the interests of learners at the centre of every decision they make. The Bill of Rights as contained in Chapter 2 of the Constitution (RSA 1996a) protects every person's fundamental human right. Therefore, each SGB, in dealing with learners, parents, educators, non-educators and all other stakeholders involved in education, must always respect these rights enshrined in the Constitution (RSA 1996a). Section 29 of the Constitution (RSA 1996a) protects the right to education in that, "everyone has the right to basic education". Section 65 of the Constitution (RSA 1996a) protects the rights of citizens to language and culture and Section 32b protects the right of citizens to information.

The Constitution of the country (RSA 1996a) sets out principles on co-operative governance and this applies to the governance of public schools. According to section 41(1)(h) of the Constitution (RSA 1996a), all spheres of

the government and all organs of the state within each sphere must co-operate with one another in mutual trust and in good faith by:

- Fostering friendly relations;
- Assisting and supporting one another;
- Informing one another of, and consulting one another on matters of common interest;
- Co-ordinating their actions and legislation with one another;
- Adhering to agreed procedures, and avoiding legal procedures against one another.

The above scenarios illustrate the nature and base of cooperation within Government institutions – including public schools under the jurisdiction of SGB's. The Constitution of the country as the supreme law forms the foundation of all the laws, policies and regulation governing institutions. The Constitution (RSA 1996a) therefore provides for SGB's with powers to run the schools by law and responsibility in accordance to the Bill of Rights.

The Bill of Rights entrenched in the Constitution (RSA 1996a) applies to all law and binds the legislature, the executive, the judiciary and all organs of state (Section 8 (1) of the Constitution). It also binds a natural or a juristic person, if and to the extent that it is applicable, taking into account the nature of the right and the nature of any duty imposed by the right (Section 8 (2) of the Constitution).

According to Foster and Smith (2001:22), the Bill of Rights guarantees not only a broad range of, what have been described as first generation rights, but also a range of second-generation rights. First generation rights are represented by the traditional civil and political liberties such as freedom of speech, religion and the like, which do not require the active conferral of benefits (Foster & Smith 2001:22). In other words, the first generation rights are largely negative in nature in that they restrain the state's freedom of action in relation to individuals. They guarantee individuals – within reasonable limits – freedom from the state interference (Foster & Smith 2001:22).

Second generation rights, on the other hand, are perceived to be positive in nature (Foster & Smith 2001:22). They guarantee individuals access to certain benefits or services and in the final analysis, are seen to impose on the state the obligation to provide or, at least, to ensure provision of those benefits or services (Foster & Smith 2001:22).

Thus, the division of legislative powers in the Constitution must be understood in the light of this context, sometimes called "integrative federalism" (Foster & Smith 2001:19). However, a careful reading of the Constitution reveals that the balance of legislative power clearly belongs in the national sphere. Thus, the national government enjoys what is commonly known as "residual powers" – that is, legislative competence over all matters not exclusively assigned to the provinces, including any matters not specifically envisaged by the Constitution (Foster & Smith 2001:19). In other words, provinces only have legislative competence over matters expressly assigned to them by the Constitution.

3.2.2.2 The South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996) and school governance

The SASA (RSA 1996b), in its preamble, acknowledges the principle of co-operative school governance in that it envisages to "… 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…" The representation of stakeholders in the SGB is stipulated under section 23(2) of the SASA. The implication for SGB's is that the central government has decentralised some of its functions as stipulated in section 21 of the SASA to be executed by these structures.

In the post-apartheid South Africa, in line with the letter and spirit of the Constitution, Act 108 of 1996 (RSA 1996a), the SASA, Act 84 of 1996 (RSA 1996b) came into being, with the purpose of giving shape to the principles of access, redress, equity and democratic governance which were outlined in

the first White Paper on Education and Training (DE 1995b; DE 2004:30; Mongake 2001:15). The SASA came into being to reform the education system as the new democratic order aimed to form a new foundation that would eradicate the old structures and frameworks, which produced biased and segregated schooling (DE 2004:30).

The SASA (RSA 1996b) had been preceded by a major commission of enquiry – the Hunter Commission – which was tasked to investigate the Organisation, Governance and Funding of Schools (DE 1995a; DE 2004). One of the major recommendations of the Hunter Commission included the establishment of a single, unified and uniform system of education as well as a call for greater community involvement in the governance of education (DE 1995a).

Another important aspect of the SASA, as reflected in its preamble, is the principle of partnership between all stakeholders, who have an interest in education. These stakeholders are the State, parents, educators, learners (in secondary schools) and other members in the school environment, special education bodies and the private sector (RSA 1996b: Preamble; Mongake 2001:16). The following aspects are covered in the SASA, namely:

- The place of the governing body in the governance of the school;
- The nature and functions of the governing body;
- The funding and other property of the school;
- The admission of learners in the school;
- Language and religious policies of the school; and
- School discipline.

Another important observation in connection with the SASA is the provision of significant decentralisation of power to the institutional or school level whereby SGB's are vested with considerable powers to act as *juristic persons* to enter into contract and to sue and to be sued (DE 2004: 31; Potgieter et al 1997:23). The Ministerial Review Committee on School Governance (DE 2004:31) noted that legislation is used as a constraining mechanism – as

opposed to one of control – to manage the actions of all actors within the governance arena because:

> The process of making the SGB's juristic persons has the effect of redefining the conflicts between the school and the province, from being a political one to essentially a legal one. The struggle between the school and province essentially, as a result, shifts to the judiciary. As witnessed in a number of important legal challenges to the powers of the Minister of Education, the battle between the centre and the sites is now firmly within the legal arena. This has been particularly evident in the growing corpus of litigation between schools and the provincial governments (DE 2004:31).

3.2.2.3 The Free State School Education Act (Act 2 of 2000) and school governance

The Free State School Education Act, Act 2 of 2000 was assented to on the 11th of April 2000 and duly signed by the Premier of the Free State (Provincial Administration 2000). Hence the primary education statute in the Free State is the Free State School Education Act, Act 2 of 2000 (DE 2000). The application of this Act to education in the province is subject only to the Constitution (section 2), which means that the normal rules governing conflict between provincial and national legislation apply (Foster & Smith 2001:31).

It is interesting to note that the Free State School Education Act, Act 2 of 2000 – hereinafter known as FSSEA – was adopted in recognition of the need to provide education in the province "in conformity with … the South African Schools Act … as well as to eliminate limitations and inconsistencies in the present provincial legislation on education" (Preamble), thereby replacing the previous Act, which was repealed in whole (Schools Education Act, Act 1 of 1996), which had been enacted prior to the SASA (RSA 1996b). Given that this statement is merely part of the preamble, it does not change rules governing conflict, however, it does indicate a policy intention on the part of the provincial government to conform to the national policy (Foster & Smith 2001:31).

Like the SASA, the FSSEA is primarily directed at school governance and also provides for a similar distinction between governance – granted to the SGB, and professional management – delegated to the school principal.
The contents of the FSSEA can be outlined as follows:

Chapter 1: Definition and application of this Act
Chapter 2: Objectives of this Act
Chapter 3: Education councils and examination boards
Chapter 4: Public schools
Chapter 5: Independent schools
Chapter 6: Home-based education
Chapter 7: Learners
Chapter 8: Governance and professional management of public schools
Chapter 9: Funding of public schools
Chapter 10: Powers and duties of the Responsible Member (MEC) and Head of Education (HOD)
Chapter 11: Transitional provisions
Chapter 12: General provisions

The focus and relevance for this research is Chapter 8 – though not limited to it – which deals with governance and professional management of public schools (sections 36-53) as set: Governing body of a public school, governance and professional management of public schools, governing body serving two or more public schools, membership of governing body of ordinary public school, membership of governing body of special public school, functions of all governing bodies, allocated functions of governing bodies, withdrawal of functions from governing bodies, enhancement of capacity of governing bodies, constitution of governing bodies, election and appointment of members of a governing body, failure by governing body to perform functions, recusal by members of governing body, reimbursement of members of governing body, office-bearers of governing body, committees of governing body, term of office of members and office bearers of governing bodies and status of minors on governing bodies of public schools.

However, while repeating the SASA distinction between governance and management, the FSSEA adds “the [HOD] may determine guidelines to distinguish between governance and professional management of public schools” (section 37 (4) of FSSEA). The FSSEA repeats the SASA provision regarding the enhancement of the capacity of SGB’s (section 44).

3.2.3 The structure of the SGB’s in public ordinary schools

The SASA of 1996 (RSA 1996b) outlines the form that SGB’s must take in order to be able to discharge functions and responsibilities entrusted upon them on behalf of the school and for the benefit of the school community.

3.2.3.1 Definition of a school governing body

The concept of a ‘governing body’ should be conceived, as the legally required board of lay and professional people elected or appointed to govern a school or a college (Oldroyd et al 1996:27). According to the draft document for discussion of the White Paper 2 on Education (DE 1996) the term ‘governing body’ is used uniformly to describe the structure that is entrusted with the responsibility and authority to formulate and adopt policy for each public school in terms of national and provincial laws and regulations as prescribed within the national norms and standards.

In terms of section 16 of the SASA (RSA 1996b), a school governing body is the lawful structure made up of a group of people responsible and accountable to take and implement decisions on behalf of the school community. The law mandates the establishment of SGB’s in all schools in the country in order to ensure that parents, educators, non-teaching staff and learners (in secondary schools) will actively participate in the governance and management of their schools (Squelch 1999:137). Therefore’ a school governing body is a statutory body of elected persons to govern the public school as set up by an Act of Parliament to represent the school community (Potgieter et al 1997:23).

3.2.3.2 The constitution of the SGB

According to Section 18 (1) of the SASA (RSA 1996b) the SGB of a public school must function in terms of a constitution, which complies with minimum requirements determined by the MEC by notice in the *Provincial Gazette.* Section 18 (2) of the SASA stipulates that the constitution of the SGB must provide for:

- A meeting of the governing body at least once every school term.
- Meetings of the governing body with parents, learners, educators and other staff at the school, respectively – at least once a year.
- Recording and keeping of minutes of governing body meetings.
- Making available such minutes for inspection by the Head of Department.
- Rendering a report on its activities to parents, learners, educators and other staff of the school at least once a year.

Lastly, section 18 (3) of the SASA (RSA 1996b) stipulates that the governing body must submit a copy of its constitution to the Head of Department within 90 days of its election.

3.2.3.3 Term of membership

The term of membership on the SGB is three years, except for learner governors (in secondary schools) who serve for a period of one year only. To avoid a vacuum, it has sometimes happened that elected SGB's served for more than three years until the newly elected SGB's came into being because of legal technicalities. Elections occur in the same year throughout South Africa in accordance with guidelines as published in the *Government Gazette(s).* According to SASA, the term of office for office bearers is restricted to one year. After this period elections should be held and there is no restriction if an office bearer is re-elected into office.

During the three years, if, for whatever reason, SGB members may cease to qualify as governors, they automatically cease to be members of the SGB (DE 2004:77). By-elections can be held within the three-year period to fill the vacancies that might exist. The main reason for members losing their status is that they cease to be members when they no longer have children at the school for whatever reason. However, when a three-year term comes to an end, those governors who still qualify to stand for elections may be re-elected in the following election cycle (DE 2004:78).

However, Karlsson (2002:330) warns that, although interests in elections remains localised to date, the simultaneity of the national process has the potential for elections to be used by lobbyists as platform for broad or single issues of socio-political matters that may involve schooling.

3.2.3.4 The composition of the SGB

In accordance with the SASA (RSA 1996b), the membership of SGB's should comprise elected members, the principal and co-opted members. According to section 24 of the SASA (RSA 1996b), elected SGB's should consist of a member or members from each of the following categories, namely:

- The principal of the school as an *ex officio* member;
- Parents of learners at the school;
- Educators at the school;
- Members of the staff at the school, who are not educators;
- Learners in the eighth grade or higher at the school.

SGB's have the option of co-opting a member or members of the community on the SGB – depending on the expertise of that member or members. Each of the above-mentioned categories of SGB's, including co-opted members will be briefly discussed.

<u>Principal</u>

According to the SASA (RSA 1996b), school principals, unlike other members of the SGB's are not elected, but have *ex officio* status in the SGB structures. Consequently, the principal is expected to serve on the governing body of the school and render all necessary assistance to the governing body in the performance of their functions in terms of the SASA, as well as to co-operate with members of the school staff and the SGB in maintaining an efficient and smooth-running school (DE 2004:93).

The dual nature of the role played by principals is controversial and problematic. On one hand principals are expected to account to SGB's as accounting officers as well as to the education department as the employee on the other hand. In essence, school principals have a remarkable capacity to derail decentralised governance structures by retaining control for themselves or to ensure the success and effectiveness of these structures (Parker & Leithwood 2000:41).

The role played by principals of schools in their SGB's is very pivotal in the sense that they are obliged to liaise with the education department as well as other state departments and agencies regarding all matters pertaining to the well-being of the school (DE 2004:93), in the same way as a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of a company operates. School principals can be in positions to market their schools and SGB's to the outside world for the benefit of the schools.

The Report of the Ministerial Review Committee on School Governance (DE 2004:94) found the following with regard to the role of principals in SGB's:

- Principals were often reluctant to relinquish or even share their power and authority especially in poorer schools.
- Principals, in schools with high-expertise governing bodies, were often reduced to being clerks, having very little say, in professional governance in these governing bodies.

- Principals, between the two extremes mentioned above, it is said, who were trying very hard to democratise school governance, received little support from the Department.
- Some participants suggested that principals should not have anything to do with financial matters, as they did too much or too little, sometimes by abrogating their fiduciary responsibilities entirely. Both these stances created much tension in the SGBs.

It is evident that there are ambiguities around the role of principals within SGB's, resulting in conflicts. Therefore, principals, as with their other SGB counterparts, should be trained and supported in their governance responsibilities (DE 2004:94). Principals have to learn to balance their demanding role as *ex officio* members of the SGB and as representatives of the Head of Department.

Parents

The role played by parents in the education of their children is guaranteed by the Constitution (RSA 1996a). Section 23(9) of the SASA (RSA 1996b) prescribes that, the number of elected parent members should comprise one more than the combined total of other members of a governing body, who have voting rights – regardless of the size of the school. The SASA also stipulates that only a parent, who is not employed at the school, may be appointed chairperson of the SGB.

The fact that parents must be in the majority in the SGB underlies the importance attached to their role. Visser (1997:636) contends that it would in any event be unreasonable to expect parents to make financial contributions to the running of a school without awarding them a reasonable measure of control over how the money is spent (as well as over other aspects of the education of their children).

However, in spite of being in the majority, many parents serving on governing structures in South Africa, are reticent and rely on the principal and educators

for leadership and guidance in decision-making (Karlsson 2002:332). This state of affairs is perpetuated by a capacity deficit among the parent members, which could include but is not limited to a weak understanding of their roles and skills needed to perform governance functions (DE 2004:103).

There is a need for racial/gender balance in SGB's in order to achieve representivity. According to Karlsson (2002:335), the problem lies with the electoral process followed in all schools to establish SGBs (and Representative Councils of Learners in secondary schools), which sustains the structure of school governance because it has not yet achieved significant shifts in representation from South Africa's apartheid power relations in terms of race (at racially mixed schools), class and gender. Hence, a gap is created between policy intentions and practice (Karlsson 2002:335; Sayed 2002:43). Carrim (2002:106) argues that, although a school may have the prescribed number of parent representatives, all could be white, irrespective of the school's demographics. Likewise, representatives on SGB's may be so divorced from their constituencies that they may not speak on their behalf. This is as a result of parental choice concerning the school to be attended by their children.

Educators

Unlike the parent representation, the educator governors represented on the SGB's form a numerical minority. Research has shown that educators have the greatest participation in decision-making after the principal and play a far greater role than members representing non-educator staff, parents and learners (Karlsson 2002:332).

Heystek (2001:93) argues that the inclusion of learners in school governance stems from the frequent disruptions to the educational process during apartheid and emphasises that the provision is consistent with the democratic notion of giving all stakeholders a say in school governance. The exclusion of learners from SGB's would be contrary to the very democratic ethos so many learners fought for so long (Bischoff & Phakoa 2001:1; Heystek 1999:22).

Non-educators

According to section 23 (2)(c) of the SASA (RSA 1996b), elected members of the governing body shall comprise a member or members of staff who are not educators as one of the categories of the SGB in public ordinary schools.

Co-opted members

According to section 23 (6) of the SASA (RSA 1996b), a governing body of a public ordinary school may co-opt a member or members of the community to assist it in discharging its functions while section 23 (10) stipulates that, if the number of parents at any stage is not more than the combined total of other members with voting rights, the SGB must temporarily co-opt parents with voting rights. If the SGB of a public school on private property deems it fit, it can co-opt the owner of the property occupied by the school or the nominated representative of such owner, in terms of section 23 (7) of the SASA (RSA 1996b). Section 23 (8) of the SASA adds that co-opted members do not have voting rights on the SGB.

Learners

In accordance with section 23 (2)(d) of the SASA (RSA 1996b), learners in the eighth grade or higher serve on the SGB. The term of office for learners is one year, which is in contrast with that of other SGB members, which is at least three years. Learners are also in numerical minority when compared to the parent component. Research in South Africa and elsewhere has shown that the role played by learners has been largely directed at fundraising, learner discipline and sporting activities (Heystek & Paquette 1999:188).

Karlsson (2002:333) contends that, since 2001, learner members are becoming more familiar with school governance and appear to be engaging in proceedings more confidently and are less intimidated by the adult members than in the first years of school governance in South Africa.

3.2.4 The role of SGB's in South Africa

The following paragraphs give an exposition of the role of SGB's in terms of tasks and duties entrusted upon them.

3.2.4.1 Governance versus management functions

According to SASA (RSA 1996b:section 16(1)&(2)), the governance of every public school is vested in its governing body – which has to stand in a position of trust towards the school, while the professional management of the public school must be undertaken by the principal under the authority of the Head of Department in the province. In other words the SGB is responsible for determining the policies, rules and regulations at school level while the principal and the staff at the school are responsible for the implementation thereof.

Therefore the relationship between SGB's and professional staff headed by the principal is one of the most significant variables in determining the success of both the governing body and the school (Bush & Heystek 2003:136). This means that the principal, as the head of the school, is charged with the responsibility for the day-to-day management of the teaching and learning activities. The implication for the principal is that of accountability to the Head of the Department as well as to the SGB.

Decentralised school governance is essential for the successful functioning of the school. This means that, all stakeholders, namely parents, educators and learners (in secondary schools) as well as national and provincial legislators, must co-operate and accept responsibility to ensure that the culture of governance, teaching and learning is fostered in every school in the country. According to section 20(1)(a) of SASA (RSA 1996b), it is the responsibility of every SGB to promote the best interests of the school by developing the school and its community to the fullest potential through the provision of quality education.

However, despite the good intentions of the law to differentiate between the governance responsibility of the SGB's and the professional management of school principals, there are grey areas in these matters with a great potential for conflict if not handled properly. According to Davids (1990:74), in practice it is difficult to separate the operations of governance and those of professional management *per se* because of the intertwined relationship and lack of clear-cut boundary between the two concepts. For example, certain matters, which seem to be more of a professional management in nature, like curriculum choice, deciding on school hours and related matters yet classified to be within the jurisdiction of school governance by section 23(6) the SASA (RSA 1996b).

According to the research findings of the Ministerial Review Committee on School Governance (DE 2004:144-167), it was established that due to a blurring of governance and management roles, the following problems were found in all kinds of schools:

- Many educators expressed unease about SGB members 'not knowing their place'. SGB members, on the other hand, made regular comments about either having to deal with arrogant educators, who disrespected them, or educators, who were misbehaving and/or not doing their work and who required disciplining.
- In some schools, SGB chairpersons have been able to assume leadership in the school, at the expense of the principal's professional authority and obligations. This was particularly the case in schools where SGB chairpersons were more educated, or were perceived to be of a higher social standing, than the educators and the principals at the schools.
- By contrast, and in many instances, particularly in poorer schools, principals were driving the agenda of the SGB, including determining how chairpersons should carry out their jobs.

In view of the complex and yet dynamic role that SGB's have to perform in decentralised co-operative governance, it is imperative that sound training has to be provided to all SGB's in order for them to perform their tasks. SGB's can govern successfully if they work cooperatively in making decisions that affect their schools. This means that SGB members should work as a team in the best interest of learners in particular and their school community in general. Dlamini (2001:1) regards this working together of SGB members as "internal co-operative governance" because it takes place among stakeholders within a school or schools.

3.2.4.2 Functions of a governing body

To ensure that SGB members perform duties and responsibilities assigned to them is to assist them to understand their role. The proven method to do this is through training. It should be acknowledged that the governance role of SGB's in South Africa is varied and complex as stipulated by but not limited to, sections 20 and 21 of the SASA (RSA 1996b).

In order to deal with the inherited heterogeneity of the school system – enormous socio-economic inequalities and the great variation in the capacities of school communities – the SASA makes provision for the SGB's of different schools to have different powers and functions (DE 2004:31). However, the differentiation of SGB's in terms of their capabilities against the background of the intentions of the SASA to achieve equity has been criticised as instrumental in perpetuating the gap between rich and poor schools (Davids 1990:24; Karlsson et al 2002:144). All schools are required by law to meet the basic functionality (section 20 functions of the SASA) and some SGB's can apply to the Head of Department to be allocated specific functions depending on their proven capabilities (section 21 functions of the SASA).

a. Compulsory functions

A basic set of functions is stipulated by section 20 of the SASA (RSA 1996b) to be performed by all SGB's of public ordinary schools in the Republic of South Africa. The functions to be discharged by all SGB's are:

To develop and adopt a vision and mission statement for the school

A vision is a picture of the future the SGB wants to create of their school and answers the question: where does the school want to go and what would it look like when it is there (DE 1997:45). In other words a vision is an envisaged destination or end point of where the SGB would like to take their school. Therefore, a vision statement is a realistic written document, which shows or tells others about an ideal school that the SGB and school community long for. In essence it gives direction to the shared vision of the school community and its broader community (DE 1997:45).

As soon as the school community knows where it is going, it must then respond to the question of how to arrive there – meaning, the mission to accomplish the envisaged destination. Usually a mission statement describes the character of the school in terms of the values a school thinks are important, the purpose of the existence of the school and the identity of the school (DE 1997:45). The school's mission statement should be a written statement or document displayed in public places, which explains why the school exists and clarifies what the community can expect from the school in its quest to guide policy decisions at the school (DE 1997:45).

It is the duty of every SGB to determine the school's vision and mission and to explain it to all the people affected by it (DE 1997:45). Training of SGB's is therefore crucial for them to achieve this task. According to Marishane (1999:4), it is also the responsibility of the school governors to ensure that this policy is so clear, consistent and reasonable that it can be implemented and that all staff members can comply with it in the performance of their duties. Therefore, SGB's should be able to involve the whole school community in some way in the development of both the mission and vision of the school for the outside world to know about the culture, values and the direction in which

the school wants to move. The importance of a school's vision and mission statements is to keep schools focused even if principals and SGB members change over time or leave the school for whatever reason.

Setting goals and objectives of the SGB constitution

One of the main functions of the governing body, apart from determining the school's vision and mission, is to set goals and objectives for the school (Van Wyk 2002:130). These goals and aims/objectives are concerned with the type of educational experiences the school desires to give its learners. According to Van Wyk (2002:130), there are general aims, which are fixed by law and common to all schools and specific aims, which are applied to individual schools and give each school a distinct character. Specific aims fall within the jurisdiction of the SGB and aim to further the interests, well-being and education of the learners, Furthermore, specific aims are intended to foster co-operation and sound relationship with the stakeholders within and outside the school community (DE 1997:56; Van Wyk 2002:130).

In South Africa, SGB's are advised to link the goals and objectives of their schools to a school development plan, which clearly sets out what should be done, how it should be done, by whom, by what date and how the success thereof will be monitored (Van Wyk 2002:130-131; DE 1997:51). School development is about change for the better – improvement in the performance of the school towards the achievement of its vision. This is often a formidable task for governors unfamiliar with a contemporary schooling and governance system (Van Wyk 2002:131), hence the dire need for SGB members to be trained in order to prepare them for their governance function.

To adopt a constitution

In terms of the SASA (RSA 1996section 20(1)(b)), all SGB's must adopt a constitution. The constitution of an SGB can be regarded as a set of rules and regulations, but it also includes the values and principles of an organisation (DE 1997:35). It should also be emphasised that a constitution of an SGB

should be viewed as the foundation for the existence and operation of this juristic person. Without an adopted constitution, an SGB cannot direct the school, and can be regarded as unfounded and illegal.

To determine the admission policy of the school, subject to certain limitations

According to SASA (RSA 1996b:section 5), it is the duty and responsibility of SGB's to determine the admission policy of their schools. This policy is determined by the SGB in partnership with parents, educators, the Department of Education (through relevant legislation) and community members with an interest in the school (Van Wyk 2002:134). The SASA (RSA 1996b) stipulates that, no public school can refuse admission to a child because his/her parents cannot pay school fees or do not subscribe to the school's mission, nor can the school administer any form of admission test or cause the principal to do so on its behalf. In line with the Constitution (RSA 1996a), admission of learners must comply with such principles as fairness, equal access and non-discrimination. The implication is that no unfair discrimination may take place against anyone on grounds of race, gender, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, sexual orientation, age, religion or language (Potgieter et al 1997:53). These are the limits put by law on unfair and discriminatory admission policy.

To recommend to the Head of Education, the appointment of educators and non-educator staff

According the SASA (RSA 1996b:section 20(1)(i) & (j)), SGB's recommend to the Head of Education the appointment of educators at school subject the Employment of Educators Act, 1998 (Act No.76 of 1998), and non-educator staff at school, subject to Public Service Act, 1994 (Proclamation No.103 of 1994), and the Labour Relations Act, 1995 (Act No.66 of 1995). The participation of employee organisation during the recruitment process illustrates a matter of partnership between the SGB and the observers of the employee organisation (and at the end, with the Department of Education). The participation of these parties is aimed at affirming both transparency and

democratisation of the selection/interviewing process and at ensuring that the applicants for the post are accorded fair, just and equitable treatment (Van Wyk 2002:131). It is therefore necessary for SGB members to be trained on laws and regulations governing fair labour practices when exercising their right to recommend appointments within the legal prescripts. Without training it will be impossible for SGB members to discharge their function. Training will assist SGB's to be familiar with national and provincial legislations about staff appointments so that they know that posts should be advertised and that they should be relevant and consistent in asking questions during interviews by judging candidates against the same criteria regardless of race, gender or age (DE 1997:56).

To promote the best interest of the school

According to the SASA (RSA 1996b:section 16), the SGB stands in a position of trust towards the school and its actions should always be directed at serving the best interests of learners (Potgieter et al (1997:14). This means that the SGB should act in good faith, not to disclose confidential information that might harm the school, not to be engaged in any unlawful conduct, be loyal and carry out duties and functions in the best interest of the school and not to compete with the school's interests and activities (Squelch 1999:138). It means that the decisions and actions of the SGB's should not be influenced by anything else, which is outside the scope of the SGB functions.

To develop a budget for the school, which could include school fees, for approval at a meeting of parents

It is the duty and responsibility of SGB's to draw a budget and present it to the general parents' meeting for approval and to ensure its implementation after approval by the majority of the parents present and voting at the meeting (RSA 1996b: section 36). It is the role of the SGB to oversee the financial management of the school fees and any other money, which may be paid into the school account. Hence' the SGB has to open and maintain a bank account (RSA 1996b:section 37) and to fulfil other functions like compiling

financial records and statements, which have to be audited annually. To supplement funds donated by the state, the SGB's is at liberty to charge school fees but has to ensure equitable procedures of how to exempt parents who are unable to pay all or part of the fees (Van Wyk 2002:135). Since financial matters are so complex that many governors may find them difficult to understand, SGB's generally organise subcommittees – with co-opted members – with a sound knowledge of finance and budgeting to participate actively in these matters (Van Wyk 2002:135). However, according to the Report of the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC)), it was found that in poor, rural and deprived communities, this proved difficult to achieve (HSRC 2005:119; Van Wyk 2002:135).

To adopt a code of conduct for learners as well as the code of good conduct for SGB members themselves

The SASA (RSA 1996bsection 20(1)(d)) stipulates that the SGB must adopt a code of conduct for learners, hence a legal requirement. A code of conduct is a written statement of rules and principles concerning discipline and it states what kind of behaviour is expected from all learners and the standards of behaviour a school seeks to maintain (DE 1999:8; Van Wyk 2002:133). The code of conduct must be aimed at establishing a disciplined and purposeful school environment, which is dedicated to the improvement and maintenance of the quality of the learning process (DE 1999:8; RSA 1996b). Although each SGB will have its own ideas about what type of behaviour should be accepted or prohibited in their schools, some aspects like school rules (standards of behaviour that set out what may or may not be done), sanctions (what actions will be taken if learners disobey school rules or rewards to be given if they obey) and disciplinary proceedings (due processes to be followed during investigations and hearings), should be included in a code of conduct (DE 1999:10; Potgieter et al 1997:60).

Like in the case of the code of conduct for learners, SASA stipulates the SGB members should also adopt a code of conduct of governing body (RSA 1996b:section 18A). Its aim is to establish a disciplined and purposeful school

environment dedicated to the improvement and maintenance of a quality governance structure at a public school (RSA 1996b:section 18A(2). What is important is that the code of conduct for SGB members should contain due processes that will safeguard their interests during the disciplinary proceedings so as to inform the decision of the Head of Department to suspend or terminate the membership of a governing body for a breach of the code of conduct (RSA 1996b:section 18A).

To support the principal, educators, and other staff members in performing their functions

Section 20(1)(e) of the SASA (RSA 1996b) stipulates that the SGB must support the principal, educators and other staff of the school in the performance of their professional function. Supporting the staff includes staff development, which involves the identification and satisfaction of the professional needs of individual staff members for pursuing their careers. It can also mean that the SGB should take decisions that are in the best interest of the education of their learners. For example, funds at the school should be primarily expended towards the teaching and learning activities of the learners or supportive material and resources that will aid the education of the learners at a school (RSA 1996b;section 37(6)(a)). Providing support to the principal and staff implies that the SGB cannot operate against the good intentions of the staff to provide quality education for learners as envisaged by SASA (RSA 1996:section 20(1)(a). There should be co-operation between the SGB members and the staff at a school in order to achieve the shared vision of the community.

At the request of the Head of Department (HOD) and under fair conditions, allow the school facilities to be used for educational programmes not offered by the school

The SGB may allow the reasonable use of the facilities of the school for community, social and school fund-raising purposes, subject to such reasonable and equitable conditions as the SGB may determine, which may

include the charging of a fee or tariff which accrues to the school (RSA 1996b:section 20(2)). This means that that it is the duty of the SGB to ensure that the school buildings and grounds are properly looked after and managed by the school principal and management team, so that the objectives and goals of the school are met (Van Wyk 2002:135). This will create a sense of ownership of the school and prevent incidents of vandalism of school buildings and property. To this effect, SGB must draw up policies that will assist them to manage these functions well. With proper training, SGB's will be able to build capacity to cope with such a demanding responsibility.

To encourage parents, learners, educators and other staff at the school to offer voluntary services to the school

It is the duty and responsibility of the SGB to encourage, parents, educators and other staff at the school to render voluntary services to the school (RSA 1996b:section 20(1)). The notion of encouraging members of the community was a result of democracy after 1994 in order to instil a positive attitude towards schools as community property. This would also work against vandalism at schools, common during the apartheid era. In public schools in South Africa, the State generally builds and maintains schools, pays educators' salaries and buys most of the teaching materials needed (Potgieter et al 1997:37). However, it is unrealistic to expect the State alone to shoulder the provision of education without the assistance and partnership of the community and private sector. The State cannot be expected to have unlimited resources. According to Marishane (1999:48), the state in partnership with community members restructured the governance system of schools by decentralising some of the duties to SGB's, which should encourage community participation in the affairs of their schools.

To administer and manage the schools' property, buildings and grounds including hostels

The law in terms of section 20(1)(g) of SASA (RSA 1996b) expects SGB's to administer and manage the school's property, buildings and grounds occupied

by the school, including hostels, if applicable. SGB's must formulate their own policies as to how they have to administer and manage the school property, buildings, grounds and hostels (where they exist). To perform this complex but important task, SGB's need to be trained. Without training SGB members will not have capacity to realise the powers bestowed upon them by legislation.

The governing body may join a voluntary association representing governing bodies of public schools

The SASA (RSA 1996b:section 20(3) makes provision for SGB to join an association of their choice, if they so wish. In South Africa there are three nationally recognised organisations, namely: the National Association of School Governing Bodies (NASGB), the Federation of Associations of Governing Bodies of South African Schools (FEDSAS) and the Governing Bodies Foundation (GBF), which is a relatively young organisation (DE 2004:187; Karlsson et al 2002:47-52). Despite their distinct characters based on their historical and/or sectional identities, SGB associations can be helpful for school governors – especially parents – to speak with one voice in matters of common interests (DE 2004:187). For instance, some of the activities may include: training of their members by giving them knowledge and skills, representing their members in the courts of law concerning the rights of parents in school governance matters, mobilising communities to participate in the election of SGB's and co-operating with the Department of Education and other stakeholders in the interests of parents and learners (DE 2004:187-192).

To carry out all the other functions given to governing bodies by the South African Schools Act

According to SASA (RSA 1996b:section 20(1)(l)), SGB's have a duty and responsibility to carry out other functions imposed upon them by or under this

Act. This means that SGB's will be expected to perform other functions contained in this Act (and its amendments) as if necessary.

To carry out functions that are set out by the Member of the Executive Council (MEC) in the Provincial Gazette

The SASA (RSA 1996b:section 20(1)(m) stipulates that SGB's must discharge other functions consistent with this Act as determined by the Minister by notice in the Government Gazette, or by the Member of the Executive Council (MEC) by notice in the Provincial Gazette. This means that SASA provides broad parameter for all SGB's as common national legal prescripts but also makes room for provinces to legislate for their particular needs according to their situations. What is important is that provinces should not make laws that are in conflict with the national prescripts but their promulgations should be consistent with SASA (RSA 1996).

To sum up, SGB members should realise that all SGB's should function within the parameters of the law and policy to ensure success of decentralised school governance. Members of SGB's should be clear that, as *juristic persons* (DE 2004: 31; Potgieter et al 1997:23), operations of SGB's should be guided by principles of fairness, justice and accountability. With an understanding that SGB's can sue, they should be equally aware that they could be sued as well as a unified body, if they act in bad faith. SGB's will be unable to perform the above-mentioned functions if they are not trained to do likewise.

The above list illustrates the important responsibilities of SGB's and the indispensable link it forms between the school and the community. However, in disadvantaged communities, many parents have had no prior experience of school governance and will initially need help and training (Marishane 1999:49).

b. Allocated functions

In addition to the basic and compulsory functions of all SGB's, a school governing body may apply to the provincial education department under section 21 of the SASA (RSA 1996b) to be allocated additional functions consistent with the SASA and the provincial laws. These could include but are not limited to the following:

To maintain and improve the school's property, buildings and grounds

On application to the Head of Department in writing, SGB's may be allocated special/extra functions provided the Head of Department is convinced that they have capacity to discharge the responsibility of maintaining and improving the school property, buildings and grounds occupied by the school – including hostels, in terms of section 21(1)(a) of SASA (RSA 1996b). Unlike the requirement for all SGB's to administer and control the school's proper, and buildings and ground (including hostels, where applicable), SGB's with an allocated section 21(1)(a) must maintain and *improve* (my own italics for emphasis) such assets. In other word emphasis falls on the SGB's ability to improve the specified assets as it might deem it necessary. To carry out such a responsible task, the SGB must be fully trained. Failure to perform such functions might cause the Head of Department to withdraw the function on reasonable grounds after following the correctly prescribed procedures (RSA 1996b:section 22).

To determine the extra-curriculum of the school and the choice of subjects according to the provincial curriculum policy

SGB's are entitled to determine the extra-mural curriculum of their schools and the choice of subject options in terms of provincial curriculum policy (RSA 1996b:section 21(1)(b). To discharge this specialised function, SGB's have to be highly competent. Without proper training, SGB's will not be able to execute this function. According to the findings of the Ministerial Review, it was found that the legislative and policy framework does not give clear direction on the roles to be played by SGB's regarding this important aspect of

learners' lives, despite the fact that Section 21 schools have the power to determine their own policies in this regard (DE 2004:135). For example, in some schools it was compulsory for learners to pay a so-called sports/extra-mural activity fee, regardless whether the sporting code preferably some learners is offered or not, and whether some learners choose to participate or not (DE 2004:133).

To purchase textbooks, educational materials or equipment for the school

The SASA (RSA 1996b:section 21(1)(c) entitles SGB's to purchase textbooks, educational materials or equipment for the school. However, the Ministerial Review Committee found that many schools with Section 21 functions were struggling to fulfil *all* (own italics) of the requirements of allocated functions (DE 2004:113). Many did not have capacity for bookkeeping or to maintain their property properly, because they were not equipped for the responsibility, and experiencing difficulties in dealing with the process of ordering books, while other schools, especially the former Model C schools, make photocopies of the Learning and Teaching Support Material (LTSM) instead of buying such, but continue to charge parents the so-called book fees (DE 2004:114).

To pay for services to the school

In terms of the SASA (RSA 1996b:section 21(1)(d) SGB's are entitled to pay for services to the school. SGB's should be trained in drawing the school budget and managing it in terms of section 36(1) of the SASA (RSA 1996b) so as to budget for all the items that the school has to pay for – including services to the school – in terms of sound financial management principles.

Other functions consistent with this Act and any applicable law

SGB's can apply to the Head of Education for other functions not specified under section 21 of SASA (RSA 1996b) for consideration. For instance, following the SASA amendments new function might be added to SGB's, like

the insertion of section 21(1)(dA), which allows SGB's to provide an adult basic education and training class or centre subject to any applicable law.

In conclusion, the above-discussed allocated functions are meant for SGB's with capacity to govern their schools. On application for these functions, the SGB should illustrate to the provincial HOD that they are capable of running their school. This function cannot be realised if SGB's have not been trained to discharge their responsibilities. Capacity building programmes for SGB's are therefore necessary, and the state determines that these are to be provided out of funds appropriated for this by provincial legislature on terms of SASA (RSA 1996b: section 19).

c. Reimbursement of members of governing body

In accordance with Section 27(1) and (2) the SASA (RSA 1996b), no member of the SGB may be remunerated in any way for performance of his or her duties but may be reimbursed for necessary expenses incurred in the performance of his or her duties. The participation of SGB members should be viewed as a part of their voluntary functions as required by section 20(1)(h) of the SASA (RSA 1996b).

d. Recusal by members of governing body

In accordance with Section 26 of the SASA (RSA 1996b), any member of the SGB must withdraw from a meeting of a governing body for the duration of the discussion or decision-making on any issue in which the member has a personal interest. However, it is not clear what the consequences of non-withdrawal will be and whether the decision thus taken will be void or voidable (Visser 1997:635). One can only assume that recusal of a member of the SGB might allow free engagement with the matter under discussion by other members without fear or prejudice.

e. Withdrawal of functions from SGB's

In accordance with Section 22(1)(2) of the SASA (RSA 1996b), the Head of Department may, on reasonably grounds, withdraw a function or functions of a governing body by informing the SGB of his or her intentions and reasons thereof. The Head of Department should grant the SGB a reasonable opportunity to make representations to him or her relating to such intentions and should give due considerations to such representations received.

Depending on the urgency of the matter, the Head of Department can take a decision without prior communication with the SGB but should furnish the SGB with reasons for his or her action in accordance with section 22 (3) of the SASA (RSA 1996b). Having given the SGB reasonable opportunity to make its representation relating to such actions and duly considering such, the Head of Department may, for sufficient reasons, reverse or suspend his or her actions.

f. Failure by the SGB to perform its functions

If the Head of Education determines on reasonable grounds that the SGB fails to perform one or more of either the compulsory or the allocated function or functions, he or she may decide to do the following in terms of Section 25 of the SASA (RSA 1996b):

- Appoint sufficient persons to perform all such functions or one or more of such functions, as the case may be, for a period not exceeding three months. These persons must build the necessary capacity within the period of their appointment to ensure that the SGB performs its functions.
- May extend the period referred to above, by further periods not exceeding three months each, but the total period may not exceed one year.
- Ensure that a governing body is elected within a year after the appointment of persons contemplated to execute the functions of the SGB that has ceased to perform its functions.

f. Appeal to Member of Executive Council (MEC)

However, if any person feels aggrieved by the decision of the Head of Department to withdraw the function or functions of the SGB in terms of Section 22(1) and (2), may appeal against the decision to the MEC in terms of Section 22(5) of the SASA.

Since school governance is a relatively new phenomenon in South Africa, it calls upon the state and the community in partnership to entrench the idea of decentralised decision-making in order to legitimise all the events in a school set-up. Without intensive training, it is not possible for SGB's to realise their governance responsibilities. Training will provide SGB members with knowledge and skills of running their schools.

3.2.5 The nature of SGB's in the selected countries

It can be stated that the nature and scope of school governance is very broad and complex. This is the case because school governance deals with several issues covering a wide spectrum. Like the nature of SGB's in South Africa, the USA and the British situations are no exceptions.

3.2.5.1 The United States of America

a. Historical background

The school governance system in the USA evolved over more than 200 years and the first school board was established in 1837 (Danzberger 1994:367). The common school concept emerged when the USA was still an agrarian state and its school governance existed at the ward level only (Taylor 1992:175). The schools were further consolidated with the establishment of the city school districts. The control over rural schools was centralised resulting into laypersons losing much of their direct control over schools (Taylor 1992:176).

At the beginning, the Americans had little knowledge about education except for colonial experience. Laypersons involved in school matters started to pioneer new bureaucratic patterns of educational control with an intention of freeing education from politics because of their valued expertise (Taylor 1992:176). Lay school boards were expected to act like buffers between citizens and possible excess of the professional educators – hence the Americans were fond of keeping school boards independent from government influence (Danzberger 1994:368). This approach led to principles of liberty, fraternity and equality. However, the school governance was weak since society was represented by the state.

It should be noted that, the education system of the United States of American was once viewed as the best internationally in promoting literacy and creating the great 'melting pot' thinking with regard to governance and administration (Goens 1994:3). But after the Second World War the American education was pressurised to change, especially its governance strategy (Goens 1994:3). In the 1960s and the 1970s Civil Rights Movements as epitomised by the Vietnam protests, demanded amongst others, freedom of speech, debate on social issues and education standards (Goens 1994:4).

According to Taylor (1992:176), the results were that civil rights suits followed. Federal courts wanted to correct the inequalities among the communities. Litigation was noticeably followed by state and federal legislation. Local decisions about the nature and distribution of educational services were constrained by national and state guidelines. The state increased its participation in financing school operations, school buildings and transportation (Taylor 1992:177).

In 1994, there were about 15 000 school boards with 97 000 board members in the USA (Kirst 1994:378). The last major change in the roles and operations of the school boards was in 1900 and 1920. It was in 1920 when it was decided that the school boards as governance structures were to be small in size in order to effective and efficient (Kirst 1994:378).

b. Composition of school boards

The school board members are elected in such a way that the whole community is represented. School boards are created by the state in terms of laws governing legal structures (Danzberger 1994:371). There are no school boards at school level but only at district level (Swanson 1992:117; Campbell 1994:392). At school level there are subcommittees who see to the daily running of the school, but the major body in charge of school governance is the school board (Kirst 1994:380). The state is further to define how many members should be in the governing body and it has to define their responsibilities. The board members should be elected such that all the stakeholders are represented in the school governing body. According to Danzberger (1994:375), in the USA, the National School Boards Association (NSBA) is a group of school board members elected by districts and wards, and serve on the board.

The Civil Rights Movements increased its pressure on the state to have minorities represented on the school governing structure through wards elections, though some are elected at large areas rather than by wards only (Kirst 1994:379; Danzberger 1994:373). School governing bodies are believed to be the driving force behind order and control in the school setting (Mitchell 1994:123).

It can be concluded that the development trend of school governance in South Africa follows that of the USA. Even though the governance system in the USA has existed for many years, both governance systems shifted from centralisation to decentralisation. Like the USA, which experienced law suits following the Civil Rights Movement, so did South Africa follow a similar pattern following the 1976 Soweto uprisings, which led to the SASA following the democratic government after 1994. There are tensions between SGB's and the Department of Education concerning the interpretation of the SASA with regard to their rights in governing schools.

3.2.5.2 Britain

a. Historical background

Deduced from the preceding discussion, it can be said that, like in the USA, Britain (England and Wales) encountered similar challenges concerning school governance administration. School governance shifted from local authorities to the central government due to radical changes, which were at times not clear (Bennet 1992:1). Such changes required new skills to implement, manage and create a changed institutional environment within which schools can prosper and develop. It is necessary to mention that socio-political and socio-cultural changes had a negative impact on school governance (Bennet 1992:2).

In the 1987 general elections, all major political parties advocated a national curriculum for schools (Thomas 1992:178). The Education Reform Act of 1988 provided for a nationally mandated core curriculum containing study guides for each core subject, which define minimum content and competencies (Thomas 1992:178; Gann 1998:75). However, while the Education Reform Act of 1988 expands the national government's authority over curriculum, it leaves the school with complete discretion over the implementation of the curriculum (Thomas 1992:179; Gann 1998:75). In other areas, through a board of governors, schools are granted the powers of control over admissions, budget allocations, appointments and dismissals of both teaching and non-teaching staff (Thomas 1992:179; Kirst 1994:13).

The principal weakness from which governing bodies suffered before 1986 was the failure of the 1944 Education Act to leave it with any area of responsibility it could properly call its own (Gann 1998:19). The central event for school governing bodies in the 1970s was the report of the Taylor Committee, which identified five reasons for the increasing demands for involvement in school governance (Gann 1998:19). These included the reorganisation of the local government in 1974 in order to bring a demand for greater involvement in decision-making at school level; bringing together authorities interested in giving a meaningful role to governing bodies with

those who were not; supporting the advent of corporate management, which was aimed at taking some independence away from LEA by raising the profile of SGB's as a voice of education; encouraging the growth of comprehensive schools, which was aimed at awakening public interest in the structures of education; and strengthening voluntary organisations such as PTAs for example, to exert pressure for change (Gann 1998:19).

The report recommended representation on SGB's in four equal parts of: the local education authority; the teaching and non-teaching staff; and individuals from the local community (Gann 1998:20). According to Gann (1998:20), the 1988 Education Reform Act brought about further changes in the area of school governance, which were contained in six major elements. These included a National Curriculum, giving central government control over 90 per cent or more of teaching content; National standardisation of assessment and testing of all children at the ages of 7, 11 and 14; open enrolment to schools; the introduction of grant-maintained status (schools), allowing schools to become independent of their local education authority; establishment of City Technology Colleges, also funded independently of the LEA, with an emphasis on technology and science; and, the delegation of the school budget from the LEA to the governing body (Gann 1998:20).

b. Composition

The Education Act of 1944, permitted schools to be grouped together for purpose of governance (Bullivant 1994:4). Following the recommendation of the Taylor Commission, the Education Act of 1986 removed the built-in majority of local authority appointments on SGB's and made provision for the establishment of governing bodies in each school (Bullivant 1994:2; Gann 1998:22). Teachers are now included in school boards or governing bodies as governors except for anyone under 18 years (Bullivant 1994:2). Views of learners are heeded in the light of their age and understanding (Sallis 2003:63). Technically, the Act removes learner governors from the schools where they were in place because by the time the learner governors turn 18 years of age, most of them have finished schooling.

School governors are to see to it that local business communities are adequately represented on the board (Bullivant 1994:2). The principal could be a governor or attend meetings as an *ex-officio* member depending on his or her choice. In England and Wales, the Education Act 2002 makes provision for governors to determine numbers of members in each category within general principles, for example, at least one third of parents (not necessarily elected) and at most one third of staff (Sallis 2003:63). All school governors have the same rights and responsibilities by virtue of membership to the board (Kogan 1994:29). According to The Education Act 2002, the Secretary of State has a range of new powers, which, among others, include the power to appoint additional governors to schools causing concerns, to appoint as many extra governors as s/he wishes to schools with serious weaknesses or special measures, to appoint a chair, to dismiss all the existing governors and replace them with an Interim Board (Sallis 2003:63).

According to Sallis (2003:62), the Education Act 2002 allows SGB's to be more flexible in determining their own composition and sizes, provided they are within the prescribed range of sizes for governing bodies and laid down proportions of members representing different groups. It must be emphasised that the head in county and aided schools can choose to be a full member of the governing body with equal rights with other governors, except the right to be elected chair or vice chair of governors or of a committee (Gann 1998:44). If the head decides not to be a full member of the SGB, he or she renounces the right to participate in decision-making except for making introductory statements only, when outlining the professional advice to the SGB.

The chairperson is referred to as the school manager. The principal or head-teacher acts as the secretary of the board of governors and one member of the teaching staff – nominated by the staff annually (Moorad 1992:46) to participate in the activities of the SGB. Both the chairperson and the secretary are the non-voting members (Moorad 1992:47). School governors are volunteers and most of them are parents (Thomas 1992:327). The new term of office for SGB's is four years except for grant-maintained schools, where

the term of office is usually seven years – resulting into a concern that the existing governing body is self-perpetuating because it appoints its own successors – with meetings held at least twice per term (Gann 1998:20).

According to Sallis (2003:62-63), The Education Act 2002, SGB's can allow a governor who has broken confidentiality or damaged the reputation of the SGB to be suspended for six months. Furthermore, the conduct of a grant-maintained school shall be under the direction of the governing body, which has to promote high standards of educational achievement (Sallis 2003:63). The Act gives powers to SGB's to participate in companies carrying out local authority functions for the development of their schools..

3.2.6 The role of SGB's in the selected countries

The roles of school governors in South Africa and elsewhere do not differ so radically. The experience of co-operative governance is illustrated when the elected governors are in agreement as to their shared roles and responsibilities. Training of SGB's is the cornerstone in affirming governors in the execution of their roles and responsibilities.

3.2.6.1 The United States of America

a. The governance scope of the school boards

It should be mentioned once more that, in the USA all states (and districts/cities) have their own approach and that the role of stakeholders therefore also differs. Governance of public schools in the USA is rather complex. It incorporates multiple players and decision-makers (Danzberger 1994:367). Even at the local level, the school boards are not the only local institutions whose decisions determine what will or will not occur in schools. Citizens can continue to exercise control because controlled school boards are the key cornerstones of local school governance (Danzberger 1994:368). Moreover, unions are very influential in the elections of school governors (Shannon 1994:380).

The responsibilities of governing bodies are considerable. These imply ultimate accountability for some general policies and actions rests with the governing body or school council (Anderson 1992:25). For this reason, the instruments of government should contain provisions of how to enhance the national objectives and how local people and communities can make a contribution towards school governance (Anderson 1992:10).

Principals play a critical role in the success or failure of school governing structures. Historically, principals have been viewed as “lords in their own education fiefdoms” (Holt & Murphy 1993:175). With changing times, such perceptions of principals have changed. Principals have to adapt to their new roles of being equals amongst their fellow SGB members (Davids 1990:73). Their role and duty is to give guidance and support to SGB members. Therefore, it is of utmost importance for principals not to abuse their position and power with regard to their duties and responsibilities.

b. Key functions of school boards

The functions and responsibilities of school boards are varied and complex. According to Danzberger (1994), the key functions of school boards can be summarised as follows:

- The establishment of long-term vision for the school system;
- The establishment and maintenance of basic organisational structure for the school system, adoption of budget, adoption of governance policies and creation of a climate that promote excellence;
- The establishment of a system and processes to ensure accountability to the community, fiscal accountability, accountability for programmes and student outcome;
- Advocacy on behalf of children for public education at community level.

The other important role of the school board is the appointment of the superintendent (Underwood 1993:23). The superintendent is a pivotal part of

the governance team and the link in the chain connecting the board to the programme. The board should hold the superintendent accountable for achieving goals and objectives of the institution (Underwood 1993:24). The superintendent should make sure that there are sufficient school places available and he or she employs teachers accordingly in order to achieve the aims and objectives of the school board.

Conran (1999:58) summarises the duties of the superintendent as keeping others informed, praising others when they deserve it, giving positive feedback, willing to take time to listen to others, understanding the effect of good leadership, resolving tensions or grievances among board members, maintaining emotional control even when angry, having an appropriate technical knowledge of work, maintaining consistent standard of performance, gain the trust of other people and striving for the best interest of the group.

The role of the superintendent, as the visionary leader directly accountable to the school board, is to develop a comprehensive plan to anticipate and shape the future. This is particularly important in a federal country like the USA, which does not have a common national system (Wraggs & Partington 1995:9).

3.2.6.2 Britain

It should be noted that the discussion focuses on England and Wales because they have one governance system while Scotland has another. According to Angela (1994:22), the British government has given the SGB's extensive powers and responsibilities. The implication for this is that the British government expects them to be efficient and effective in their governance.

a. The strategic governance role of SGB's

The strategic governance role of SGB's refers to the responsibilities, roles, rights and means of achieving the aims of the schools as embodied in the

Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (PME) model (Gann 1998:36). According to Gann (1998:46), the three elements of the strategic governance role of SGB's are explained as follows:

- Planning refers to the setting of aims, objectives, principles and targets of the school, and devising means to oversee policies and procedures – in other words it addresses the question of where the school wants to go.
- Monitoring is all about seeing to it that what is planned is implemented – in other words, it addresses the question of what the school is doing towards its vision.
- Evaluation is about seeing to it that what is implemented produces the desired results – in other words, it addresses the question of how is the school doing toward the realisation of its vision.

Therefore, policies express what the SGB wants the school to achieve, while the staff decide how to achieve it – taking into account any constraints the SGB want to make as the legal structure that is in charge. The SGB has few powers over its own membership because it is a public body accountable to the government, to the local authority, to its community and to itself (Gann 1998:44).

It is not surprising to note that the power that SGB's has is regarded with a high degree of ambivalence because of the tension between professional governors and lay governors (Deem 1990:41). To this effect (Gann 1998:38) argues that, it is almost as if the real nature of the relationship between SGB's and SMTs should remain unstated, in case, spoken aloud, someone might be upset.

b. Functions, rights and duties of governors

The 1986 Education (No. 2) Act changed the composition of governing bodies, allowing more parent governors and co-opted governors, and it gave governors many new responsibilities, which included holding annual meeting

for parents, ensuring that schools avoided political bias in the curriculum, drawing up a curriculum policy for their school, deciding on whether a school should offer sex education, and being involved in head-teacher appointments (Deem et al 1995:16; Gann 1998:20).

The 1988 Education Reform Act gave governing bodies in schools delegated powers and responsibilities – often referred to as Local Management of Schools (LMS) – for budgets, staff appointments, head-teacher and discretionary teacher pay, overseeing the teaching of the newly National Curriculum, and the operation of the newly established National Assessment system, operating open enrolment and the right to embark upon the road to grant-maintained status (Deem et al 1995:16; Gann 1998:20).

The powers and duties of the school governors are almost similar to those of the USA. In accordance with Bullivant (1994:9) and Gann (1998:22-23), for the first time in their history, SGB's had a range of duties set down for them by the Department of Education and Science (DES), which includes the appointment and dismissal of teachers and non-teaching staff, admission of learners, fundraising, care and upkeep of premises, curriculum development, maintenance and repairs of buildings and grounds, day to day management of school funds, school furnishing, annual parents meetings, discipline in general, special education needs, training of new members, development of sex education among youth and promotion of health and security services.

It should be noted that all the governors – with a few minor exceptions – have the same powers and rights (Gann 1998:75). However, individual governors have no powers as such, only the governing body as a whole has such powers – some of which it can delegate to individuals or committee (Gann 1998:75).

The Education (School Government) Regulations of 1989 allowed governing bodies to delegate some of their powers to sub-committees, and the 1991 (School Government) Regulations reduced the number of governing body members from four to two, on which an individual governor could serve – a

recognition of the greatly increased role and workload of governors since the 1980 Act (Deem et al 1995:16). Governors thus now have considerable responsibility for shaping and monitoring the overall policy parameters of those LEA schools operating under site-based management or SBM (Deem et al 1995:16).

However, the 1993 Education Act reduced the powers of governors over sex education in secondary schools, obliged governing bodies of LEA-maintained schools to consider grant-maintained status every year, and offered incorporation to reduce legal liability, although the 1988 and 1922 Charities Act protect governors if they act in good faith (Deem et al 1995:17).

The 1986 Education (No. 2) Act was supposed to reduce the power and numerical superiority of LEA governors, widely regarded as having producer status in the educational world, replacing them with parents and co-opted governors – including those from ranks of business people (Deem et al 1995:37).

In the SGB studied by Deem et al (1995:37), it was found that governing bodies were not particularly accountable, nor were governors easily able to represent interests beyond their own schools and immediate circle because their meetings were not open to the public as of right and even school staff and parents attended only by invitation. Furthermore, it was found that LEA governors still wielded considerable power and influence, despite being outnumbered by parents and co-opted governors (Deem et al 1995:38). Even if a shift in power and influence has occurred in some governing bodies, there is still the question about whose interests parents and business people represent and what chains of accountability are, which tie them to their constituencies or nominating groups (Deem et al 1995:38).

3.3 CAPACITY BUILDING FOR SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES

In order to perform their duties and carry out their responsibilities in an efficient way, SGB should have the necessary capabilities to do so (Looyen

2000:4). Among other things, capacity building includes training, financing and monitoring or inspection (Marishane 1999:60). Training of SGB's is necessary because school governors have diverse backgrounds and for this reason have little or no experience in managing an organisation such as a school (Marishane 1999:60). According to the SASA (RSA 1996b: Preamble), it is the responsibility of the state in partnership with other stakeholders to build and develop capacity for SGB's. The process of decentralisation and co-operative school governance requires intensive training and re-training in the way schools need to operate (Looyen 2000:131).

3.3.1 The South African perspective

In South Africa the National Department of Education in partnership with the Interuniversity Centre for Education Law and Education Policy (CELP), Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) and other bodies publishes manuals for school governors (Marishane 1999:60). In addition to the publications, workshops are held throughout the nine provinces by Provincial Education Departments and contracted non-governmental organisations (NGOs) on issues like conducting valid meetings, roles and duties of SGB members, the SASA and related legislation, and other issues affecting school governance directly or indirectly. In a study conducted by Looyen (2000:132) in the Gauteng Province, it was found that training was largely conducted by the Electoral Institute of South Africa, who adopted the 'train the trainer' approach. The general perception from the participants in this study was that the Education Department trained governors and that the training was poor (Looyen 2000:132).

In the study conducted by Greenstein (1997:12) it was reported that, Afrikaans-speaking schools generally boycotted governing body training as they were of the opinion that they did not need training as they had experience in governing schools as a result of their former Model C status. It was also argued that Afrikaans-speaking schools were not politically ready to participate in the training process at that stage (Looyen 2000:116; Greenstein 1997:12), since it was during the early years of democracy after the demise of

apartheid. It was reported that, the problems encountered by the trainers stemmed from poor preparation of the political ground (Greenstein 1997:12; Looyen 2000:116). The process required a complete transformation of mindsets.

Greenstein (1997:18-19) maintains that the availability and accessibility of training material in local languages was and still is problematic and that primary documents used for training were only published in English. It is argued that Afrikaans schools generally did not attend training due to the stated reasons as the language has a heavy symbolic value and it would appear that Afrikaans schools made more out of the issue than it was intended (Greenstein 1997:19; Looyen 2000:116).

Training of SGB members was also designed to form constructive partnership to facilitate the transfer of skills from advantaged to disadvantaged schools. However, English double medium and parallel medium schools did participate in the training of governors. Hence it can be concluded that, double medium schools and parallel medium schools which use English as one of the two languages of teaching and learning generally participated in governance training (Looyen 2000:117; Greenstein 1997:20). Furthermore, Greenstein (1997:18) noted that the training was compounded with numerous problems relating to materials, logistics, poor preparation of trainers, lack of transport and unrealistic cut-off dates imposed by National Department of Education for provinces to complete trainings.

It can be added that, Black trainers predominantly conducted the training and governing bodies may have been of the opinion that these officials could not teach them anything (Looyen 2000:116). The racial implication of the finding reflects on the vestiges of the apartheid education pertinent to the South African context. Training should permeate racial boundaries and assist SGB members to understand that South Africa is for all who live in it – Black and white. It is a challenge for all SGB's to ensure multiracialism in their composition to match the racial composition of their staff and school population.

Sithole (1995:93) argues that, democratic school governance emphasises that decisions must be made on the basis of consultation, collaboration, co-operation, partnership, mutual trust and participation of all affected parties in the school community – including learners – since the essence of democracy is the principle of equality. The author asserts that parties that constitute democratic school governance have equal status and participate on an equal footing because they have the same right to deliberate on any policy issue affecting the school, without conditionality or restriction (Sithole 1995:107). To foster the understanding of SGB roles in a democratic relationship, Sithole (1995:112) advances that the following aspects can form part of the training program for school governors:

- *Simulation games* designed to develop collaborative skills in tasks such as goal setting, school development plan, school budget, and so forth.
- *Practical exercises* such as preparing agendas, chairing meetings, minute taking, meeting procedures, and so forth.
- *Case studies* of collaborative experiences in order to examine what was achieved or not achieved and why?
- Ways in which school-community relations could be enhanced.
- Simplification of education legislation dealing with school governance.

In the same vein, Karlsson, Pampallis and Sithole (1996:122) argue that, since many groups in a society do not have experience in school governance prior to elections, it may be necessary to have a campaign to demystify SGB's, their powers and functions, practices and procedures in order to build capacity. Karlsson et al (1996:123) aver that training programmes will be necessary to inform all stakeholder representatives of their own powers and functions to ensure that school officials do not restrict or inhibit others from exercising their powers and functions. In terms of section 19 of the SASA (RSA 1996b), the responsibility for the implementation of and success of the government's policy on democratic school governing bodies and developing their capacity to govern rests squarely on the shoulders of the education department. To this end, Karlsson et al (1996:123) advocate that the

provincial education departments need to establish a division for school governance, staffed with school governance support officers whose responsibilities will be the following:

- To obtain the training material obtainable from national, provincial or district/regional level, depending on the level of appointment;
- To co-ordinate the delivery of capacity building programmes;
- To ensure the establishment of SGB's at schools;
- To provide information and advice to SGBs;
- To assist SGB's in the use of media for reporting back to constituencies;
- To act as liaison between the SGB's and the department
- To ensure that accountability to stakeholders and the department (where relevant) is structured and regular;
- To act in consultation with the office of the Head of Department and in accordance with departmental regulations in the event of SGB failure.

Unless there are positive attitudes and values among all the stakeholders who make up the SGB's, they will not be committed to democratic governance and neither will they be effective in performing their functions. Training alone cannot guarantee the success of democratic school governance.

3.3.2 Training of SGB's in the Free State

The approach to train SGB's in the Free State does not differ radically to the approaches used by other provinces in South Africa. The provincial government has to allocate funds for the training of SGB's as appropriated for it in terms of section 19 of SASA (RSA 1996b) and in terms of section 44 of the Free State Schools Education Act (FSSEA), Act 2 of 2001. However, funds allocated for the training of SGB's that were elected in 2003 could not be accessed from the province, particularly in the Thabo Mofutsanyana District, where the research took place due to unknown reasons. One of the reasons could be lack of resources emanating from abject poverty faced by

many provinces (Looyen 2000:54). Thabo Mofutsanyana is one of the nodal areas declared by President Thabo Mbeki to be the poorest of the poor.

The first training of SGB's conducted for the first democratically elected SGB's which came into operation in May 1997 were conducted by non governmental organisations (NGOs), such as the Research Institute for Educational Planning, attached to the then University of the Free State and contracted by the Free State Education Department. All the Departmental officials, including the School Management Developers who were in the system by then had received training. But SMDs who were appointed afterwards never received trained and had to rely on their experience as former school principals or to be assisted by their fellow colleagues as a form of induction. Their training approach was largely trial and error in nature. It can be argued that the quality of such patchy trainings is of a poor standard standard.

Training in the Free State is done by officials (SMDs) of the Department of Education as per their individual plans in clusters (also known as sub-districts) of schools allocated to them. Such trainings were not coordinated and therefore not systematic. These kinds of trainings were often labelled as information sessions by some SMDs. The duration of these training sessions lasted for a day to two days (depending of the nature of the content treated), whereby members of SGB's will be taken through the Free State Training Manual for School Governing Bodies (Department of Education Free State Province 1998).

The main problem experienced was that many Training Manuals for SGB's were unaccounted for by principals. Some principals were new and did not know what had happened to manuals, if they had been distributed. Principals who had been at their schools since May 1997 confirmed that SGB members took the manuals for use but failed to return them. Moreover, some principals never kept the record of such loans.

It is important to note that the important task of the training of SGB's should be thoroughly planned and executed for the success of school governance.

Proper funding and management of resources are of great importance to ensure that sound planning, preparation and execution takes place.

3.3.3 The international perspective

Britain (England and Wales) and the USA have programmes for the training of school governors. Professional knowledge is indispensable to the functioning of schools and forms the basis of the teacher's professional autonomy. If laypersons on SGB's are to fulfil the tasks with which they are charged, they need to acquire some professional knowledge themselves, otherwise the bureaucratic professionals will not only retain their power, but also extend it (Deem et al 1995:73). This is important, for although most governors work hard to extend their knowledge of relevant educational issues, they do not constitute an expert body on what are often delicate and technical matters (Deem et al 1995:73). Many governments recognise this and provide additional training for school governors. For example, in Britain, a certain amount of money is allocated for the training of school governors (Kogan 1994:24).

3.3.3.1 The American experience

Like in any country, the state cannot effectively provide support, just as it cannot govern schools alone (Schaeffer 1992:55). The involvement of other stakeholders with an interest in education matters is very important and necessary. According to Steffy (1993:78-80), various training and support programmes have been put into operation in the Kentucky to assist governors.

It should be noted that the training of governors in the United States of America does not radically differ from that of Britain. According to Lindle (1990:24), at the initial stages of co-operative school governance in some states (and districts/council/cities) in the USA training left governors insecure and governors often delegated the decision-making powers back to principals.

In a way, the functions afforded to governors often drove them away in fear that the training they received was not adequate for the decisions they had to make (Lindle 1990:24). But as time went on, as it was the case in the state of Kentucky, more stakeholders were involved in school governance than any other state (Lindle 1990:24).

In the first instance, the Kentucky Department of Education in partnership with private consultants and associations like the School Board Association and the State School Association are engaged in aspects such as the roles and responsibilities of the school councils (Steffy 1993:79). These Associations also inform educators of the legal implications of their new forms and use of regional network of field officers to conduct training. Likewise, the Kentucky Teacher Association provides a videotape and training material for educators to assist them in school council formation (Steffy 1993:79; Schaeffer 1992:54).

Secondly, the State Department in partnership with Gheens Academy (the professional development centre) provides guidelines and awareness sessions for local boards on the Education Bill and assisted them in designing local district policy and developing a training programme for council members (Steffy 1993:80). The State Department provides council members with skills training in consensus decision-making, team planning, drawing up an agenda and running effective meetings (Steffy 1993:80; Schaeffer 1992:50).

The National School Board Association (NSBA), as indicated earlier in this research, is a body of school boards in charge of the development of its members. Apart from developing a training programme for SGB members, the NSBA is responsible for advocating new vision for education in each local community (Danzberger 1994:371). The training of the school boards is a necessity to establish benchmarks or operational standards for various functions of SGB's, since every decision made by the board is important (Campbell 1994:392).

3.3.3.2 The British experience

The shift to co-operative governance in England and Wales (but not in Scotland) compelled the education authority to embark on extensive training programmes for governors, but the training received by governors was not adequate (Gann 1998:34). According to Mahoney (1998:205-209), governors were sold short with regard to training because most of them could not govern their school optimally by taking decisions as envisaged by the government of the day. However, despite the extensive training programmes conducted in England, the avalanche of new legislation on education reform made it difficult for trainers and governors to implement legislation (Mahoney 1998:207).

In Britain (England and Wales), a certain amount of money is allocated for the training of school governors (Kogan 1994:24). But still, most school governors are volunteers, who are essentially placed in the position of the employer as they determine teachers' pay and recommend their employment (Angela 1994:61). In essence they carry out the policies of the government of the day (Angela 1994:58).

In Britain, Local Education Authorities (LEAs), business enterprises, non-governmental organisations and the state are engaged in training programmes (Wraggs & Partington 1995:70). The LEAs run workshops on courses for school governors of a region or specifically for one or two school governing bodies lasting from one day's session to a series of sessions spread over a long period (Wraggs & Partington 1995:70). Some foresighted business have taken the initiative to "give extra annual leave to school governors" (Sallis in Esp & Saron 1995:21).

According to Gann (1998:23) and Deem et al (1995:39), it is the responsibility of the LEA – but by no means the only one – to provide training to SGB's in order to empower them to discharge functions of school governance. This led to a flurry of activities by the SGB's, the voluntary organisations concerned with education, and other training agencies like the Open University, for example, which produced a course on governing schools in response to the interest aroused by the Taylor Report (Gann 1998:23; Bullivant 1994:33). In

addition, the National Association of Governors and Managers (NAGM) developed materials like training videos while the organisation like the Action for Governor Information and Training (AGIT) employed its first full-time worker in 1998 as a management consultant to provide advice to SGB's (Gann 1998:23).

In 1989, the Department of Education and Science (DES) provided just under 5 million pounds to be spend on governor training (with 30 percent to be provided by the LEAs), and by that that governor training had become a discrete area of education management, with full-time officers in most authorities (Kogan 1994:24; Gann 1998:23). In the Schoolteacher's Pay Review (SPR) of 1997, a request was made for more funding specifically for governor training because the allocation from the school funding was not enough. A body known as the Grants for Education Support and Training (GEST) provided money for training governors, but there is no longer a category solely devoted to governing bodies (Gann 1998:99). The GEST allocation is part of the school fund and it is the responsibility of the SGB to make decisions about its spending.

However, there were problems and still are concerning the training of SGB's. According to Deem et al (1995:39), although governor training is, by statute, available to all governors, many do not take advantage of it, nor does training necessarily enable self or external criticism of particular governing bodies, though training did seem to provide a grounding in principles of school finance and personnel. This is so because some governors found the training useful, while the majority did not, because in times of rapid change, governors were forced to confront problems arising from site-based management that no governor trainer had experienced simply because of their novelty (Deem et al 1995:80). Training is said to be patchy because some governors are too busy while some object to what is sometimes perceived to be punitive venues – draughty school halls and wooden chairs – as compared to what they, as business people, might be used to (Gann 1998:23; Brigley 1992:2)).

Furthermore, a few head-teachers discouraged their governors from attending training or did not actively encourage them to attend because they believed that, the less they (governors) knew, perhaps the less damage they would do (Gann 1998:23; Brigley 1992:2). On the other hand, some long established governors claimed that they did not need training because they have been governors for ten or more years (Gann 1998:23; Bullivant 1994:35), while others were simply not committed to implement the newly acquired knowledge (Brigley 1992:3).

Gann (1998:75) found that, parent governors were the most frequent governors attending at training sessions – suggesting that they may take the job more seriously than most (rather than suggesting that the other governors do not need training). Their only inbuilt weakness is that they are likely to serve only a single term of office, as their children then move on. But, increasingly, parent governors are held on to by good SGB's, who co-opt them or invite the LEA to appoint them (Gann 1998:75).

Training of school governors can be viewed as an affirmation of the important role that governors can play in co-operative governance and development of quality learning within their learning institutions. This is what Deem et al (1995:207) regard as 'active citizenship' in that it reflects the extent to which the governor involvement in schools strives to achieve the ideals of democracy and accountability.

The induction and mentoring of new governors is part of the training provided to SGB's. According to Gann (1998:78-92), the following are joint areas of responsibility of the training officer and the governor responsible for the induction of new governors. Their duties include collecting and distributing information about training, developing opportunities for training on legal responsibilities of governors, working with the head and the chair to plan in-school training sessions, linking with the local authority's governor support section and other training providers, directing governors to staff in-service training where appropriate, arranging for the recruitment of new governors and talking to prospective governors, meeting the new governors before their

first formal meeting of the SGB, accompanying new governors to their first formal meeting and clearing up any problems (Gann 1998:92).

Success of SGB training in Britain stems from the concept of whole school governing body sessions, where the needs have been identified by the governors themselves and this seems to be the most effective approach (Arnold 1996:740; Gann 1998:99)). The advent of National Governors Council (NGC) and its local associations has given a powerful voice to the 300, 000 or so school governors, and many authorities welcome this influence and service their local associations (Gann 1998:92; Arnold 1996:740). It should be noted that, while LEAs provide variable quantities and qualities of governor training, the grant-maintained schools do not buy into their local authorities – albeit being the cheapest and sometimes of the best quality – in comparison to services provided by Action for Governor Information and Training (AGIT), The Institute of School and College Governors (SCG), universities and private consultants (Gann 1998:99; Angela 1994:37).

3.4 CONCLUSION

The study by Kogan (1994: 144-167) suggests four models of governing bodies. Firstly the author identified the accountable SGB which concentrates on the efficient and smooth running of the school within the parameters of the LEA. Secondly, an advisory governing body which aims to ensure that the school does not capitulate into professional malfunctioning. Thirdly is the supportive SGB, which energises and support the head of the school. Fourthly, the mediating SGB, which expresses the interests of various parties and promotes consensus. Kogan (1994:165) maintains that while these models may represent ideal types, no single model or a combination of models can be prescribed to a single SGB because the role of the SGB should be seen against the background of fluid and flexible relationship with the school community. Hence SGB's should identify what is of value, in any particular model and apply various features that can be of benefit to their school.

Verhoeven (1996:130-131) suggests that co-operative governance contributes to the development of a democratic society. In such a society, the relationship between the principal and the chair of the SGB often mirrors the relationship between personnel at the school and other governors, as well as between the school and the community (Creese & Bradley 1997:106; Looyen 2000:136). It is for this reason and others, that training of SGB's is so crucial for all the role players to be capacited in order to understand their task properly.

It should be concluded that simply transferring power to the school site is not enough to bring about desirable improvements, but more supportive efforts particularly on the side of the state are needed (Marishane & Botha 2004:96). People who are closer to the school (SGB's), who are better informed about the problems inherent in, and the needs of their schools – than the state – still require state support to ensure that decisions made match the resources to the goals they set (Marishane & Botha 2004:96). Thus, policy makers should take into account the local circumstances in order to realise the objectives of decentralised school governance.

Democratising school governance means that participants in school governance should first be given the power and the capacity to decide on matters affecting them before they can be held responsible for the consequences of the decisions made (Marishane 1999:15). It cannot be emphasised enough that stakeholders represented on the structures should be trained so that they can fulfil their roles with competence. Nevertheless, governor training can potentially increase any governor's knowledge and ideas about education, but cannot of its own accord transform ideas or knowledge especially with teaching and learning activities, since this is the terrain of professionals (Deem et al 1995:86). Therefore, experience should be regarded as the basis for effective school governance, supplementing the training received by SGB members.

Chapter 4 will present the research design and methodology used in this investigation.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

According to Schurink (1998:252), a qualitative research design differs inherently from the quantitative design in that it usually does not provide the researcher with a step-by-step plan to follow. In quantitative research the design determines the researcher's choices and actions while in qualitative research, the researcher's choices and actions will determine the design. Put differently, qualitative researchers will, during the research process, create the research design best suited to their project (Schurink 1998:253). In other words, the perception that qualitative research does not have a design is unfounded because of some flexibility in the research questions and design that are likely to change during the research process (Marshall & Rossman 1999:230).

In this chapter focus is on the qualitative research approach used in this inquiry. This method is regarded as the most suitable approach because it allows the researcher to observe participants in their natural setting (McMillan & Schumacher 1993:374). As introduced in chapter 1 (cf. 1.8), the principal aim of the qualitative research approach is to explore and describe events (Bogdan & Biklen 1998:146) as understood by participants from their own frame of reference. Denzin and Lincoln (1994:1) note that qualitative research is a complex, interconnected family of terms, concepts and assumptions, which crosscuts disciplines, fields and subject matter. The results of qualitative research approach are not arrived at through statistical procedures (Strauss & Corbin 1990:17) but are descriptive findings of the phenomenological process under investigation.

4.2 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The term qualitative research can mean different things to different people (Strauss & Corbin 1990:17). According to Mouton and Marais (1990:155), the concept qualitative research, probably the most general, encompassing and widely accepted term, denotes that this approach concentrates on qualities of human behaviour – that is, the qualitative aspects as opposed to the quantitatively measurable aspects of human behaviour. The common aspect of qualitative research is that it interprets or reconstructs the lived experience of the subjects (Marshall & Rossman 1999:68).

Leedy (1990:88) contends that "…the research methodology to be adopted for a particular problem must always recognise the nature of data that will be amassed in the resolution of a problem". Thus, the qualitative research method was considered to be suitable for this research project. The literal deductive meaning from *qualitative* research is that of quality enquiry and not quantity, in as far as the investigation is concerned. The exploratory nature of qualitative research will, according to Mouton and Marais (1990:43), help the researcher to gain new insights into the phenomenon under study. It is the *richness* in the data collection that interests the researcher and can enable the researcher to *understand* events of the phenomenon as they unfold (Bogdan & Biklen 1998:2). The focus on one phenomenon allows the researcher to be 'immersed' in the situation that is being studied (McMillan & Schumacher 1993:374). This 'immersion' is possible when "…the researcher enters the world of the people he or she plans to study, gets to be known and trusted by them" (Bogdan & Biklen 1998:3).

A qualitative research method is broadly regarded as the research instrument aimed at the contextual understanding of the phenomenon (McMillan & Schumacher 1993:15). Yin (1994:5) argues that, since qualitative research approach studies human behaviour, its data is mainly verbal in nature. De Vos (1998:240) supports this view by saying that qualitative research helps the researcher to concentrate on the qualities of human behaviour. In accordance with McMillan and Schumacher (1993:14), "qualitative research presents facts in a narration with words". The verbal word can be regarded as the core of qualitative research approach (Yin 1994:5). Thus, qualitative research can be

regarded as pragmatic, interpretive and grounded in the lived experiences of people (Marshall & Rossman 1999:16; Denzin & Lincoln 1994:2).

As indicated earlier, the term qualitative research means different things to different people (Strauss & Corbin 1990:17) because it encompasses several approaches. Leedy and Ormrod (2001:147) contend that qualitative researchers rarely try to simplify what they observe, instead, they recognise that the issue they are studying has many dimensions and layers – hence they try to portray the issue in its multifaceted form. Mouton and Marais (1990:156) concur with the above-mentioned authors by saying that qualitative research approaches are those approaches in which the procedures are not strictly formalised, while the scope is more likely to be undefined and a more philosophical mode of operation is adopted.

It becomes clear that it may be difficult to define qualitative research in a way that satisfies everybody. Many qualitative researchers believe that there is not necessarily a single, ultimate 'truth' to be discovered (Leedy & Ormrod 2001:147). Instead, there may be multiple perspectives held by different individuals, with each of these perspectives having equal validity or truth (Leedy & Ormrod 2001:147). For the purpose of this study, qualitative research is defined as a multi-perspective approach to social interaction, aimed at describing, making sense of, interpreting or reconstructing the interaction in terms of the meaning that the subjects attach to it (Denzin & Lincoln 1994:2).

De Vos (1998:45-46), states that there are assumptions underlying the qualitative mode of inquiry. Ary, Jacobs and Razavieh (1996:476), refers to qualitative research as a mode of inquiry that seeks to understand human and social behaviour or problem from the 'insider's perspective', that is, as lived by the participants in a particular social setting.

Table 4.1 shows the assumptions of qualitative research paradigm. These assumptions are based on the ontological, epistemological, rhetorical and methodical approaches. It might be necessary to explain what the above-

mentioned concepts mean in the context of the research. Literally translated the ontological assumption refers to specific thoughts about the nature or reality of the world; the epistemological assumption refers to a study that focuses on typical words used to describe the relationship between the researcher and reality or world as perceived; the methodical assumption refers to the manner of process of gathering information about the reality of the world as it presents itself to the observer and lastly, the rhetorical assumption refers to words or language that one uses to derive meaning from the reality or world observed (De Vos 1998:45-46).

These assumptions are relevant and important because they give direction to the research. The qualitative research approach is a unique method attempting to understand reality from a specific point of view. In doing so, it uses particular language and methods to describe the reality or the world and how people relate to their world of existence.

Table 4.1: Assumptions of the qualitative research paradigm

Assumption	Question	Qualitative research paradigm
Ontological assumption	What is the researcher's perceptions regarding the nature of reality or world?	Reality is subjective. It is constructed by individuals who are involved in the research situation.
Epistemological assumption	Where does the researcher stand in relation with reality or world?	Research is subjective. The researcher interacts with the researched.
Methodical assumption	How can the researcher find about the reality or world (process of research)?	An inductive logic prevails.
Rhetorical assumption.	What is the language of research?	Personal and informal

Source: De Vos (1998:45-46).

4.3 THE ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Qualitative researchers believe that the researcher's ability to interpret and make sense of what he or she sees is critical for an understanding of any social phenomenon (Leedy & Ormrod 2001:147). Thus, the researcher is an instrument in much the same way that a sociogram, rating scale, or intelligence test is an instrument (Leedy & Ormrod 2001:147). Qualitative scholars believe in the importance of data collected by a skilled and prepared person in contrast to an instrument (Strauss & Corbin 1990:17). Hence, qualitative inquiry is marked by "disciplined subjectivity", self-examination and criticism of the quality of data obtained (McMillan & Schumacher 1993:375). During the investigation the researcher as the research instrument will collect, record, analyse and ultimately interpret the data obtained from the real world of the participants with the sole purpose of trying to understand their behaviour from their frame of reference.

The term, researcher's role, refers to the relationship acquired by and ascribed to the researcher in interactive data collection (McMillan & Schumacher 1993:415). In qualitative studies, the researcher is the instrument because of his or her involvement in the lives of the participants invited to be part of the study, which is fundamental to the paradigm (Marshall & Rossman 1999:79). Leedy and Ormrod (2001:102) support this view by stating that qualitative researchers are often described as research instruments because the bulk of their data collection is dependent on their personal involvement (e.g., interviews and observations) in the setting. The researcher's role in this investigation is that of an observer-participant. According to Neuman (2000:357), the approach of 'observer as participant' refers to a situation where the researcher is known from the beginning but has limited contact and allows participants to relate to each other naturally. Emphasis falls primarily on observing rather than participating. In this research, the researcher occasionally participates in the study by giving advice and guidelines in terms of the policies of the employer – in this instance, the Free State Education Department.

Shaffir and Stebbins (1991:22) feel that in order to understand the interactive process, qualitative researchers need to undergo a learning process whereby they acquire an understanding of the interactive processes that shape human behaviour. During the research process the researcher assumed an interactive social role through the recording of observations and personal reflections on the setting. Thus' the researcher acknowledges the immersion in the situation and the phenomenon that is being studied (McMillan & Schumacher 1993:374; Marshall & Rossman 1999:3).

The role of the researcher as the research instrument also involves 'posturing' or taking a stance by the researcher (Wolcott 1995:14-15). This 'posturing' happens through active listening and focusing on the problem under investigation (Woods 1992:72). The researcher enters the world of the people he or she plans to study, gets to be known and trusted by them (Bogdan & Biklen 1998:3). The researcher should also reciprocate the same behaviour of trust towards the participants. This will establish and maintain rapport between the researcher and the participants. The likelihood of both the researcher and the participants mutually sharing their life-world experiences will be increased. This kind of involvement could have both advantages and disadvantages. It is, however, necessary to acknowledge that, although the researcher attempts to work with scientific appraisal and objectivity, he or she is nevertheless a person with values, beliefs, interpreting what is seen and heard, being neither too involved nor too distant, yet never manipulating truth in order to serve the quest of authenticity (Woods 1992:73-74). Therefore, the researcher – as the research instrument, should be subjected to "disciplined subjectivity", self-examination and criticism of the data obtained (McMillan & Schumacher 1993:375).

As an official in the Free State Education Department, the researcher holds a special position towards schools – including the selected schools for the research project. Thus, the researcher ensured that participants were not forced to take part in the research, thus avoiding any abuse of power or authority over the participants. Participants volunteered to be part of the

research project. Moreover, the researcher revealed his intention to conduct research to the participants. In doing so, the researcher acknowledged that people should be respected and their participation should not be taken for granted because of senior position and status as School Management Developer (hereafter SMD). The researcher is aware and acknowledges that external validity of the findings may be limited by "observer-setting interaction effects" (McMillan & Schumacher 1993:415). Since the researcher is responsible for the training of SGB's, this might prejudice the results of the research. Hence it is important to disclose this fact, which will be taken into consideration when analysing results.

4.4 DATA COLLECTION METHODS IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

A variety of data collection techniques can be used in qualitative research. Qualitative research covers a wide spectrum of techniques. The most commonly used are observation and focus group interviews (De Vos 2002:339). Therefore, both observation and focus group interviews will be discussed in the following paragraphs as data collection techniques relevant to this study.

4.4.1 Participant observation

In accordance with McMillan and Schumacher (1993:43), ethnographic observation has the distinctive feature of observing phenomena in naturally occurring situations over an extended period and the writing of extensive field notes to describe what happened. The researcher does not collect data to answer a specific hypothesis, rather explanations are inductively derived from the notes. Since the context of the observation is important, in this study the observer has been careful to document his role in the situation and to determine what effect it may have on the findings. Observation entails the systematic noting and recording of events, behaviours and artefacts in the social setting chosen for study (Marshall & Rossman 1999:107). Hence, this method is regarded as both an overall approach to qualitative inquiry and on data-gathering instrument (Adler & Adler 1994:61).

In support of the above assertion, Strydom (2002:280) views participant observation as a typical data collection technique in qualitative approach because data cannot be reduced to figures. Instead, the development of a comprehensive and holistic view of a particular group can take time – anything from a few months to years (Schurink 1998:279).

Observations can range from highly structured and detailed notation of behaviour guided by checklists to more holistic description of events and behaviours (Marshall & Rossman 1999:107). While observing, the researcher can assume different field roles that can be arranged on a continuum. At one extreme are roles of a detached outsider while at the other extreme are roles of an intimately involved insider (Neuman 2000:357). The range is from *complete observer* – where a researcher is behind a one-way mirror or taking on an 'invisible role' such as an eavesdropping janitor, to *observer as participant* – where a researcher is known from the beginning but has limited contact, to *participant as observer* – where a researcher is overt and is an intimate friend of participants, and finally to *complete participant* (Neuman 2000:357). It should, however, be noted, that, none of the observer roles are perfect. Each has its advantages and disadvantages.

For the purpose of this investigation the researcher assumed the role of an observer as a participant in order to gather information. This means that the dominant role played by the researcher was to observe while occasionally participating in the sense of providing advice and guidelines during training sessions and meetings of SGB's. This role is seen as being compatible with the duties and responsibilities of the researcher who, among others is to ensure sound school governance and management. According to Neuman (2000:358), "…the researcher does not participate in the lives of subjects to observe them, rather observe them while participating fully in their lives…". Observations alone cannot encompass every research terrain but need to be complemented by other techniques. Focus group interviewing is one such technique.

4.4.2 Focus group interviews

Utilisation of focus group as data collection method can be classified as a form of interviewing, but in view of its distinctiveness some authors prefer to classify it as a separate method though in essence it is an open group discussion between specifically selected persons under the leadership of a group leader who is preferably trained in handling group dynamics (Fouché & De Vos 1998:90). Marshall and Rossman (1999:114) assert that the method of interviewing participants in focus groups comes largely from marketing research but has been widely adapted to the social sciences and applied research.

Strydom (2002:431) gives the following description of a focus group:

> A focus is used when a small selected group of eight to twelve members is drawn together to apply their knowledge, experience and expertise to a specific problem. The group should be homogenous and should focus on the area of concern. In-depth probing should take place and quality solutions must be gained. Structured participation in the process is of major importance. More than one focus group might be used to enhance the quality of results.

Krueger and Casey (2000:133) define the focus group as a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive and non-threatening environment. Morgan (1997:6) describes the focus group as “a group interaction on a topic determined by the researcher”. Typical of focus group interviews, an opportunity is created for the researcher to understand how people feel or think about an issue, product or service (Strydom 2002:305; Krueger 1994:11). Participants are selected because they have certain characteristics in common that relate to the topic of the focus group – which is focussed in that it involves some kind of collective activity where a researcher creates a tolerant environment that encourages participants to share perceptions, viewpoints, experiences, wishes and concerns without being pressurised (Strydom 2002:305).

4.4.3 Rationale for using focus group interviews

According to Krueger (1994:21), focus groups can be used to provide information to decision-makers about opportunities at three different times: before, during or after the program or service provided. For the purpose of this study the use of focus group interviews was relevant since it provided a learning experience for participants and ensured evaluation of the training sessions provided to SGB's in the Free State Province.

Morgan (1997:2) advances three basic uses of focus groups: First, they are used as a self-contained method in studies where they serve as the principal source of data. Second, they are used as supplementary source of data in studies that rely on some other primary method, such as a survey. Third, they are used in multi-method studies that combine two or more means of gathering data.

Like all qualitative research methods, focus groups draw on three of the fundamental strengths (Strydom 2002:307), namely, exploratory and discovery, context, and depth interpretation. This means that the research method allows the researcher and participants to explore reality and to discover what reality means for the participants from their own frame of reference. By seeing the world through the eyes of the participants, the researcher is able to understand the context or the world of existence from the perspective of the participants and can actually use the words or terminology as used by the participants themselves in their interaction with their world of existence.

4.4.4 Characteristics of focus group interviews

The following are some of the distinctive features of focus group interviews.

4.4.4.1 A small group of people

Focus group interviews should be small enough for all the participants to have the opportunity to share insights and large enough to provide diversity of perceptions. Focus groups are typically composed of six to ten people, but the size can range from as few as four to as many as twelve. Too big a group is likely to be fragmented because there is just not sufficient pause in the conversation (Schurink, Schurink & Poggenpoel 1998:314-316; Krueger 1994:16-20). Participants are reasonably homogenous but not too familiar members.

To counteract observation effects and to maximise the validity of findings generated by focus group interviews, the researcher selects people who are similar. However, the researcher should be careful not to recruit close friends, family members, relatives or colleagues for focus groups because this kind of familiarity presents special difficulties during interviews (Schurink et al 1998:314-316). For an example, familiarity tends to inhibit disclosure – a related and yet an important issue especially between the interviewer and the participant. Sometimes input may be unrelated to the topic under discussion. Traditionally focus groups have been composed of people who do not know each other – more recently the researchers are questioning the necessity and practicability of this guideline, especially in community-based studies (Krueger 1994:16-20). However, care should be taken that the moderator of the group interview is neutral and does not readily associate with any specific interest group or controversial community group.

4.4.4.2 Conducted in series

Focus group interviews are conducted in series. This will help to control various observation effects or nuisance variables that can threaten the validity of research findings reached by employing focus group interviews (Schurink et al 1998:314-316). To this effect, multiple groups with similar participants are needed to detect patterns and trends across groups. Solo focus groups are risky because, occasionally moderators will encounter ‘cold’ groups – groups in which participants are quiet and seemingly reluctant to participate. Focus groups may be influenced by internal or external factors that may

cause one of the groups to yield extraordinary results (Krueger 1994:16-20). Other typical observation effects include a dominant, demanding participant who may unduly sway or inhibit other participants; a community occurrence or emergency, which may divert attention from the topic of discussion or an incendiary comment from a group member, which might provoke disruption (Krueger 1994:16-20).

4.4.4.3 A data collection procedure

Focus groups produce data of interest to researchers. The purpose of focus groups differs from other groups' interactions – focus group interviews generate data concerning the perception of people and consumers regarding phenomena, products and services (Krueger 1994:16-20). Thus, focus groups are not intended to develop consensus, to arrive at an agreeable plan or to make decisions about which course of action to take.

4.4.4.4 Qualitative data

Focus groups generate qualitative data in the form of words, categories, themes and expressions that are used by the participants themselves (Bogdan & Biklen 1998:96). The emic data are to a greater or lesser extent used together with the etic data – scientific concepts used by the researcher to gain insight into the world of the group members (Schurink et al 1998:316). Focus groups produce quality data that provide insights into the attitudes, perceptions and opinions of participants. These research findings are solicited through an unstructured method, namely open-ended questions – a procedure whereby respondents are able to choose the manner in which they respond freely in a group discussion. Focus groups present a more natural environment than that of an individual interview because participants are influencing and are being influenced by others – just like they are in a real life situation (Schurink et al 1998:314-316). In the focus group set-up, the researcher serves several roles or functions like moderating or facilitating, listening, observing and eventually analysing (Krueger 1994:17). During the analysis process the researcher uses the inductive approach – which derives

understanding based on the discussion with participants as opposed to testing or confirming a preconceived hypothesis or theory.

4.4.4.5 A focussed discussion

Focus group interviews are design to do exactly what the name implies – focus. Unlike conversations among members of any group, which might wander over many issues, discussions of focus groups have focuses and clear agendas (Krueger 1994:16). Topics of discussions in a focus group are carefully predetermined and sequenced in an understandable and logical manner based on analyses of the situation. The analyses include an in-depth study of event, experience or topic in order to describe the context of the experience and the components of the experience (Krueger 1994:19). Typical of the questions of focus group interviews is that they appear spontaneous while they are actually carefully developed after considerable reflection (Schurink et al 1998:314-316). Needless to emphasise – participants in focus group interviews need not reach consensus. Instead, emphasis is placed on finding out as much as possible about the experiences and feelings of the participants concerning a specific aspect of social reality, such as an event, product or service.

4.4.5 Advantages of focus group interviews

The following are some of the advantages of focus group interviews.

- Focus group interviews are socially oriented

Focus group interviews are socially oriented research procedures (Schurink et al 1998:324-325; Krueger 1994:34-36). This means that focus groups are special kinds of groups in that people are acknowledged as social beings influencing each other in their natural interactions.

- Focus group interviews allow probing by the facilitator

Focus group discussions allow the moderator to probe the participants (Schurink et al 1998:324-325; Krueger 1994:34-36). This flexibility to explore unanticipated issues is not possible within the more structured questioning sequences typical of mailed-out surveys.

- Focus group interviews save time and money

Focus group interviews can be conducted at a relatively modest cost and in a relatively brief time (Schurink et al 1998:314-316). It should be noted here that the key word is relative since a series of focus group discussions might not be of low cost as such (Krueger 1994:16-20).

- Focus group interviews have high face validity

Focus group interviews have high face validity. This mean that the technique is easily understood and results seem believable to those using the information (Krueger 1994:16-20). Results are not presented in complicated statistical charts but rather in lay terminology embedded with quotations from group participants (Krueger 1994:17).

- Focus group interviews can provide speedy results

Focus group discussions can provide speedy results – in emergency situations, skilled facilitators have been able to conduct three to four discussions, analyse the results and prepare a report in less than a week (Schurink et al 1998:317; Krueger 1994:18).

- Focus group discussions enable the researcher to increase the sample size of qualitative studies

Qualitative studies typically have limited sample sizes because of the time and cost constraints of individual interviewing. Focus groups enable the researcher to increase the sample size without dramatic increases in the time required of the interviewer. Focus groups also add to the understanding and

interpretation of a specific phenomenon and can be a source of validation for data gained by means of other qualitative research methods.

Even though focus groups are so important and appropriate in certain contexts as data-gathering technique, they are not inherently superior to any other method (Krueger & Casey 2000:51). It cannot be overemphasised that each method has its own flaws. The next section gives a brief exposition of some weaknesses of focus group interviews.

4.4.6 Disadvantages of focus group interviews

This section does not aim to set out all the disadvantages of focus group interviews but only to highlight the disadvantages relevant to this research project.

Data generated by focus group interviews might be relatively difficult to analyse because of the comments of participants, which must be interpreted within a constructed social setting (Krueger 1994:18). This kind of a situation might lead to focus group interviews being criticised as biased and subjective. It should also be noted that information acquired by using focus group interviews cannot be generalised to other groups who were not part of the project (Krueger 1994:20). This is so because focus groups are composed of a small sample of people, hence the data does not produce typical information applicable to the whole universe under study.

Focus group interviews may require moderators who are trained to understand group dynamics and how to conduct interviews (Morgan 1997:2). Strategies and techniques necessary for conducting such interviews are not readily available (Krueger 1994:20). It should be stated that focus groups vary considerably. Each focus group tends to have unique characteristics because of inherent differences in people. In order to balance the idiosyncrasies of different focus groups, proponents of focus group interviews recommend that enough groups be included in the research project (Krueger 1994:20).

It is important to mention that focus group interviews must be ideally conducted in a natural setting. This implies that interviews must be as far as possible be conducted in an environment which optimally facilitates conversation (Krueger 1994:17). This set-up more often than not presents logistical problems.

Like observations, the use of focus group interviews cannot give conclusive results. When combined with participant observation, focus groups are especially useful for gaining access, focussing site selection sampling and even for checking tentative conclusions (Morgan 1997:25). All the data collection techniques are complementary and supplementary in nature.

To conclude the above statements, it is necessary to emphasize that all interviews are taped and then transcribed. These transcripts with notes taken during observation form the data, which is analysed.

4.5 DATA ANALYSIS

There are many different styles of qualitative research hence there are a variety of ways of handling and analysing data (De Vos 2002: 17; Bogdan & Biklen 1998:158). Qualitative research approach analyses data by extracting themes (Schurink 1998:242; McMillan & Schumacher 1993:375). According to Bogdan and Biklen (1998:157), analysis involves working with data, organising them, breaking them into manageable units, synthesizing them, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others. Thus data analysis is the process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, field notes and other materials that one has accumulated to increase one's own understanding of them and to enable one to present what one has discovered to others. Marshall and Rossman (1999:147-148) assert that the researcher should demonstrate that techniques for recording observations, interactions and interviews will not intrude excessively in the ongoing flow of daily events.

In qualitative research data are analysed inductively. The researcher does not assume that enough is known before undertaking the study (Bogdan & Biklen 1998:31). Leedy and Ormrod (2001) describe inductive reasoning as an approach whereby researchers make specific observations and then draw inferences about larger and more general phenomena. In support of the above-mentioned authors, Bogdan and Biklen (1998:5) view inductive analysis as a qualitative research approach whereby concepts, insights and understanding are developed from data patterns rather than collecting data to assess preconceived models, hypotheses or theories. In accordance with McMillan and Schumacher (1993:373), qualitative research uses an inductive form of reasoning – in that it develops concepts, insights and understanding from patterns in the data.

Since there is nothing trivial in qualitative data collection and analysis, the researcher approaches the life-world of participants in a nit-picking way (Bogdan & Biklen 1998:30). For this reason Marshall and Rossman (1999:150), view data analysis as a messy, ambiguous, time-consuming yet creative and fascinating process because it does not proceed in a linear fashion. Everything said and done by the participants, including their setting or surrounding is important for understanding individuals. Hence in qualitative research there are no fixed steps that must be followed and it cannot be exactly replicated (Schurink 1998:242).

According to Patton (1990:40), the detailed thick descriptions, using direct quotations to capture people's personal perspectives and experiences are used in qualitative research method when analysing and interpreting data. Leedy and Ormrod (2001:102) view the work of qualitative researchers as exploratory in nature because they use their observation to build theory from the ground up. For this reason, qualitative researchers seek a better understanding of complex situations. In this research the interactive form of the research design – observation and focus group interviews – lends itself to inductive reasoning. Qualitative researchers are concerned with making sure that they capture perspectives accurately and are interested in the ways different people make sense out of their lives (Bogdan & Biklen 1998:32). This

implies that meaning attributed by participants is of major importance during data analysis, which may even include the assumptions people make about their lives and what they take for granted.

In this study, qualitative data consists of field notes and transcripts of focus group interviews. The analysis procedure involves the reading and re-reading of the field notes and interview transcripts (Maykut & Morehouse 1994:123). Thereafter significant words, sentences and paragraphs of phrases were underlined and grouped under suitable headings. As the data emerges, relevant extracts of the text were then grouped under themes, which were subsequently clustered into categories to provide systematic meaning (Hatch 2002:148). Extracts from the raw data were selected and either paraphrased or quoted to illustrate the patterns. Findings of the analysis are set out in Chapter 5.

From the above exposition it is clear that data analysis in qualitative research is an ongoing process. It demands of the researcher to be skilful, analytical, creative and understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

4.6 DESIGN OF THE PRESENT STUDY

Marshall and Rossman (1999:55) regard the 'how' of the study as the research design. It is in this section where the researcher explains the manner in which data would be shaped until it depicts the bigger picture of the research project. Design decisions are made throughout the study – at the beginning as well at the end. Although the most intensive period of data analysis usually occurs near the end, data analysis is an ongoing part of the research (Bogdan & Biklen 1998:50).

Research design refers to the researcher's plan of how to proceed to execute the research – in qualitative research the plan resembles a loose schedule (Bogdan & Biklen 1998:49; Marshall & Rossman 1999:55). This means that the qualitative researchers proceed as if they know very little about the people and places they will visit. They attempt to loosen themselves from their

perspectives or preconceptions of what they will find – what the people would be like and what will go on in the setting (Bogdan & Biklen 1998:49). In the ensuing representation, the rationale behind the choice of qualitative research inquiry and procedures implemented in this study show the relevance of the choice of this approach.

4.6.1 The choice of qualitative research approach

Some of the characteristics of qualitative research make the choice of this inquiry the most suitable. Only those characteristics relevant to this investigation will be briefly highlighted.

According to McMillan and Schumacher (1993:372), qualitative research is premised more on what is a "naturalistic-phenomenological philosophy" – which believes that multiple realities are socially constructed through individual and collective definitions of the situation. In support of this view Leedy and Ormrod (2001:103) state that qualitative research occurs within natural contexts and so, in this respect, it is more "true to life". The setting or context is to be bound in that the information or theories emerging from data help to explain the specific phenomenon under study.

In qualitative research, there is a great flexibility in both the methods and the research process. Typically, the qualitative researcher uses an emergent design – that is making decisions about the data collection strategies during the study (McMillan & Schumacher 1993:374). The emergent research design allows flexibility in the sense that concepts, insights and understanding are developed from patterns of data, which seemed vague in the beginning of the research. According to Bogdan and Biklen (1998:30), nothing is taken as mundane since everything said and done by participants has the potential of being the clue to understanding human behaviour.

Since qualitative research focuses on the process rather than the outcome, the qualitative researcher becomes immersed in the situation – past or present, and in the phenomenon being studied. In accordance with McMillan

and Schumacher (1993:372), ethnographers assume interactive social roles whereby they record observations and interviews with participants in a range of contexts. The qualitative research process is more holistic and emergent with specific focus design, measurement instrument (e.g., interviews) and interpretations developing and possibly changing along the way of investigation (Leedy & Ormrod 2001:102). For this reason the researcher enters the field with an open mind and acknowledges that the picture will be constructed as data are collected and examined.

Qualitative research was chosen as a relevant research instrument for this study, as it enabled the researcher to explore and describe the observed phenomenon as understood by the participants from their own frame of reference (Bogdan & Biklen 1998:146). Qualitative research approach investigates typical human phenomenon (Yin 1994:5) and tries to understand such human behaviour against their natural contexts (McMillan & Schumacher 1993:374).

The most appropriate way to understand why individuals behave in a specific manner is to be closely involved in their social interaction. Qualitative research approach permits this to happen because the researcher is able to reconstruct the lived experience of the subjects (Marshall & Rossman 1999:68). Such results are not arrived at through statistical procedures (Strauss & Corbin 1990:17) but through the understanding of quality human behaviour (Mouton & Marais 1990:155; De Vos 1998:240). In accordance with Leedy (1990:88), "…the research methodology to be adopted for a particular problem must always recognise the nature of the data that will be amassed in the resolution of the problem". This means that the nature of the problem is the determinant of the research method to be employed, and not the other way round.

Heckroodt (2002:134-135) asserts that the choice of research audience, time limitations and several other factors determine the research method. However, the problem and purpose of the intended research are the main determinants when selecting the most suitable method for constructing

knowledge. For the purpose of this research – which aims to determine the perceptions and experiences of SGB members regarding the training received, qualitative research was deemed appropriate since it allowed for the exploration, description and explanation of the observed process (Strydom 2002:307).

4.6.2 Statement of subjectivity

In this investigation the researcher is the SMD (formerly known as an inspector of schools) responsible for a cluster of about 25 schools forming a sub-district (also known as a circuit). This task places the researcher in the privileged position of knowing the participants and therefore accessing schools frequently. Healthy relations of mutual trust and respect exist between the researcher and the researched schools, hence the problem of gaining entry or co-operation was not experienced. The fact that the researcher knew the school principals and some of the re-elected SGB members positively enhanced the interaction with the participants in an unobtrusive and non-threatening manner. As an employee of the Free State Education Department, the researcher is also tasked with the duty of training SGB's which allowed the researcher to assess the training process and impact as experienced by the participants throughout a period of 15 months.

4.6.3 Choice of schools

The concepts of, *access* and *entry* into the research field seems to have different meanings for researchers. In this study both concepts are used interchangeably.

According to Shaffir and Stebbins (1991:25), access involves gaining permission to conduct research in a particular setting and is not a straightforward procedure because it involves negotiation and renegotiation throughout the whole process. Likewise, in accordance with Burgess (1991:45), gaining access to a research site is not a one-off event but a continuous social process that has to be maintained constantly. As observed

by Bogdan and Biklen (1998:75), gaining written permission to conduct the study involves more than getting an official blessing – it also involves laying the groundwork for good rapport with those with whom the researcher will be spending time. According to Neuman (2000:354), the best guide is to respect both oneself and those being studied.

In this investigation, the researcher did not experience a problem with regard to physical entry to the field of research – namely the **three selected schools** because of the researcher's position as SMD responsible for those schools. As an employee of the Free State Education Department it was not a problem for the researcher to obtain permission from the Director of the Thabo Mofutsanyana Education District.

In July 2003 all schools in the Free State Province elected new SGB's, which have to serve for a three years' term of office – hence the motivation for this study. At the beginning of their term of office, SGB members had to be trained for their governing task. The researcher was involved in the training of 25 schools – including the selected schools, which form a sub-district. The researcher purposefully selected the three schools, which fall within the sub-district because they were conveniently situated and willing to be part of the research. Although not 'typical' of all schools in the area, they can, however, be said to be similar to other schools within the district (and the province). This description is in accordance with Wolcott's view that an area or group needs to be identified, which is in "…some important way like many" (Wolcott 1995:174).

This approach of choosing subjects of the research because they depict traits of the research project is known as purposeful sampling (McMillan & Schumacher 1993:381; Patton 1990:169). Thus, the researcher theoretically judged that newly elected SGB's displayed the attributes to be investigated. According to McMillan and Schumacher (1993:380), theoretical judgment refers to sampling being done by the researcher of "information-rich situations known to be attempting to implement the concept" – in this instance, the training of SGB members in the Free State Province.

Table 4.2 summarises significant information concerning the selected schools. Of these schools one was a primary school, another an intermediate school and the third a secondary school. The primary school includes learners from grade R-6; the intermediate school includes learners from grade 7-9, and the secondary school caters for learners from grade 10-12.

Table 4.2: Characteristics of the selected schools

School	Learners	SGB's	Educators	Feeder area	Physical description
A= Primary school.	1253	11	30	The community and farm schools.	Brick and mortar building. Galvanised iron roofing. Wire-mesh fencing. Water-borne sceptic tank. Has 31 classrooms.
B= Intermediate school.	694	13	20	The local primary and farm schools.	Does not have own building. Uses top floor of a double storey secondary school. Wire-mesh fencing. Water-borne sceptic tank. Uses 17 classrooms.
C=	533	13	21	The local	Shares

Secondary school.				intermediate school.	facilities with the intermediate school. School is fenced. Has water-borne sceptic tank. Uses 15 classrooms.

All the three selected schools, namely the primary (A), the intermediate (B) and the secondary (C) are located in a semi-urban/rural geographical township. Most of the community members are unemployed and those who are employed earn low wages. Although all the schools enjoy the use of water-borne sceptic tanks, there is no sewerage sanitation system in the area. School A is the only primary school in the area catering for predominantly Black learners from the township and learners from neighbouring farms. As a result the school is overcrowded with 1 253 learners. Although the school uses English Second Language (ESL) as a medium of instruction, it also uses IsiZulu and Sesotho for native speakers in the lower grades.

School B is the only intermediate school in the area and shares all the facilities with the only secondary school in the township. School A feeds learners to school B while some of the learners come from the neighbouring schools, which do not offer grade 8 and beyond. These learners walk long distances to school while others lodge in the community households until weekends. School B uses the ablution block of the upper floor and 17 classrooms of the double storey building of the host school (School C). School B has 694 predominantly Black learners and is the feeder school to School C. School B uses ESL as a medium of instruction.

School C is the only secondary school in the township with 533 learners who are predominantly Black and are taught in ESL. As stated earlier, School B is

the feeder school for School C and they share the same building and facilities. Most learners who are from the neighbouring farms walk to school while some ride bicycles. Only a relatively small number of learners have lodging rooms in the township and only need to walk a short distance to school.

4.6.4 Choice of participants

Participants were carefully and deliberately selected to provide information-rich cases for an in-depth study (McMillan & Schumacher 1993:374). This approach is referred to as purposeful sampling (Patton 1990:169; McMillan & Schumacher 1993:378). Table 4.3 shows the composition of the SGB's of the three selected schools.

Table 4.3: The composition of the SGB's of the three selected schools

School	**Number and category of the SGB**					**Total**
	Principal	Educators	Parents	Learners	Non-educators	
A=Primary	1	3	6	0	1	11
B=Intermediate	1	2	7	2	1	13
C=Secondary	1	2	7	2	1	13
Total	3	7	20	4	3	37

The focus groups included all members of the SGB's of the three schools, namely: the principals (3), educators (7), parents (20), learners in the intermediate and secondary schools (4), and non-educators (3). In total there were **37 participants** included in the SGB's of the three selected schools. More details on these participants will be given in Chapter 5.

For this research the researcher ensured that possible participants were informed about the research project. Late in August 2003, a meeting was held

with principals of schools as key informants and the purpose of the research was explained to them. They were requested to arrange SGB meetings with their schools and invite the researcher to explain the purpose and the benefits of the research. These meetings took place during mid September 2003. It was stressed that participation would be voluntary and, should anybody later decide not to continue participating, such persons would be unconditionally allowed to withdraw. Towards the end of September 2003, a questionnaire needing biographical data of the possible participants was distributed and collected. The response was good because all of the 37 possible participants volunteered to be involved. The participants were guaranteed confidentiality. To this effect, Neuman (2000:376) maintains that, since researchers are privileged to access intimate information from subjects, they therefore have a moral obligation to uphold confidential information – which may include disguising members' names or their places in the field notes.

In this study the researcher informed the participants about the purpose of the research – which was to determine the experiences of SGB members regarding the training they received and the extent to which it benefited them. The summary of the training sessions concerning the perceptions and experiences of the participants were made available to the participants while their identities were withheld, even though the participants indicated that they would not have any reservations about their names or those of their schools if publicised. The researcher was transparent and open with the participants as seen in the overt manner of tape-recording the deliberations of the research process.

4.6.5 Problems experienced

In school A an educator representative in the SGB was dismissed on 21 May 2004 after having lost an appeal for assaulting a fellow colleague. By-elections were held for a democratically selected educator onto the SGB. This new SGB member only attended the third training session. This new member experienced great difficulty in adjusting to the way the SGB was conducting its governance business. Additional training for this new SGB member was then

imperative. In both school B and school C learner representatives in the SGB only served for a year as stipulated by the SASA (RSA 1996b:section 11). Representative Council of Learners (RCL) of the two schools (schools B and C, with grade 8 and beyond) held their elections by the end of September 2004 before the final examinations of the year. This allowed time for the induction of the new RCL delegates onto their SGB's. However, it was noted that the timing of the election of the RCL did not make provision for prospective learners who would have liked to exercise their democratic right to participate in their school governance.

4.6.6 Data gathering

A **questionnaire** (Appendix A) was used to gather the biographical details of the participants and to determine their prior knowledge about their tasks as school governors. This information was used to determine the topics discussed during the training of the SGB's. However, the main forms of data collections were observation of the SGB meetings and focus group interviews with school governors of the three schools included in the research. The biographical details of the participants are included in Chapter 5.

Participants were **observed** during meetings of the SGB's. For the purpose of this study, the researcher observed a meeting of each of the three SGB's before any training commenced with the purpose of noting how the SGB members performed their tasks and how they interacted in their setting. At the end of all the training sessions, the researcher again observed the SGB members during a scheduled meeting. The purpose of this observation was to see how the SGB's functioned after having received the training when compared to their functioning before the training. In other words six (2x3=6) SGB meetings were observed – one for each SGB **before** receiving any training and another at the end – **after** all the training session were provided to the governors of the three selected SGB's. The last observation took place ten months after the researcher had observed the three SGB's for the first time. The researcher also observed the commitment, responses and interactions of SGB members during the training sessions for SGB members.

Focus group interviews were conducted with the participants. The purpose of the focus group interviews was to determine the experiences and perceptions of SGB members of the training sessions and the extent to which the training equipped them to understand and fulfil their school governance tasks. **Three focus group interviews** were conducted – one per SGB, approximately 2-3 weeks after the 'general training session'. Another focus group interview with each of the SGB's of the three schools took place following the first of the 'specific training sessions' (another three interviews). A third round of interviews was conducted with each of the SGB's of the three schools following the second round of 'specific training sessions' (another three interviews). In other words **a total of nine focus group interviews** were planned and executed. After all the training sessions one meeting of each SGB was observed. The aim of the observation was to see how the SGB's performed their functions when compared to prior receiving the training. The three training sessions took place at about three to four month intervals. The whole training programme took 15 months to complete – starting from September 2003 until December 2004.

To recapitulate, one should state that the SGB focus group interviews were planned as follows: After the 'initial general training' and then following the first and second 'specific training sessions' respectively. The general training took place according to guidelines included in the Training Manual used by the Free State Province (cf. 3.2.2.3). (Thus, three focus group interviews with each of the three SGB's – a total of nine focus group interviews). In all the three instances of training, no SGB requested additional training. After the completion of all the training sessions, one meeting of each the three selected SGB's was observed. Provision was made to interview any SGB, which might have specifically needed or asked for the third 'specific training session' – to find out to what extent they would then feel able to cope with their functions.

Since interviews are dynamic in nature, participants may talk at length and end up by giving a lot of details about their interest. To this effect, as advised by McMillan and Schumacher (1993:43), the researcher obtained permission

from the participants to record the interviews on tape. These were transcribed and later analysed for common themes or results.

Most researchers use the concepts of interview schedule and interview guide interchangeably. Patton (1990:121-129) distinguishes between an interview guide and an interview schedule. An interview schedule consists of a detailed set of questions and probes organised into a useful sequence while an interview guide consists of an organised series of broad topics or open-ended interview questions which the researcher is free to explore and probe (Patton 1990:128). In other words an interview schedule is comprised of many carefully constructed questions, follow-up questions or probes, and possibly other relevant information for the interviewer.

It is important to emphasise that the interview schedule (Appendix B) was used to assist the researcher in covering a number of important issues with each of the focus group interviews. However, the schedule was to guide the focus group interviews rather than to restrict the discussions of the participants. Participants were free to raise issues or discuss aspects they considered important.

4.6.7 Analysis of the data

Data analysis is the process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, field notes and other materials that the researcher accumulates during data collection in order to increase his or her understanding of the phenomenon and ultimately to be able to present what have been discovered to others (Bogdan & Biklen 1998:150). As discussed earlier (cf. 4.6.1), the process of data collection is not an end in itself (Heckroodt 2002:142). Hence the culminating activities of qualitative inquiry are analysis, interpretation and presentation of the findings (Patton 1990:371).

As advised by Maykut and Morehouse (1994:47), analysis began when the researcher had accumulated a subset of the data – providing an opportunity for the salient aspects of the phenomenon under study began to emerge. In

other words, there was a broadening and narrowing of the focus of inquiry, as the data suggested – not what the researcher had predetermined to be important. Even though there are a variety of ways of handling data analysis (Bogdan & Biklen 1998:158), the approach adopted in this study was that of ongoing and rigorous data analysis. This helped the researcher to avoid the pitfall identified by Hatch (2002:56) who maintained that there is a risk for researchers who wait until they are removed from the research context to do any analysis because these researchers may not know if they have sufficient data to support their findings.

In analysing the data the researcher formulated potential explanations and searched for potential patterns through close reading and rereading of data throughout the analysis process. Constant comparisons were made to determine if those potential theories were grounded in the data (Hatch 2002:55). According to Marshall and Rossman (1999:147), data analysis is actually about how data are recovered, managed and organised to ensure orderliness and to facilitate easy retrieval. Direct quotations from participants were used to provide the richness of the descriptive data (Bogdan & Biklen 1998:49). Strauss and Corbin (1990:59) argue that data collection and data analysis are tightly interwoven processes, and must occur alternatively because the analysis directs the sampling of data.

Hatch (2002:56-57) refined and listed the following steps of data analysis in the form of guidelines to enable the researcher to make sense of what kind of information should be included in the data analysis section:

- Identify topic areas to be analysed.
- Read the data, marking entries related to topics.
- Read entries by topic, recording main ideas in entries on a summary sheet.
- Look for patterns, categories and relationships within topic areas.
- Read data, coding entries according to patterns identified – keep record of what entries matched with what elements in the data patterns.

- Search for non-examples of the data patterns – deciding if the patterns were supported by the data.
- Look for relationships among the patterns identified.
- Write patterns as one-sentence generalisations.
- Selected data excerpts to support generalisation made.

As indicated earlier (cf. 4.5), data analysis was done according to the broad steps of Maykut and Morehouse (1994:134-145), namely: unitising data, identifying provisional categories, matching unitised data cards to a category and refining categories. A brief overview of qualitative data analysis using the steps of the constant comparative method as used in this study is hereby presented:

- Unitising the data

The researcher identified units of meaning by carefully reading through the transcript and notes made on the field (Maykut & Morehouse 1994:129; De Vos 1998:339). The units were then cut and pasted on separate cards.

- Identifying provisional categories

Provisional categories were identified from words or phrases on the discovery sheet developed from recurring themes and concepts gathered from field notes (Maykut & Morehouse 1994:135).

- Matching unitised data to a category

Through the examination of data that fitted to other categories, the unitised data were then matched to categories (Maykut & Morehouse 1994:135). Those that did not fit formed new categories.

- Refining categories

The researcher carefully re-reads the data to reduce the number of categories to manageable categories (Maykut & Morehouse 1994:135).

To recapitulate, data analysis should be regarded as the process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, field notes and other relevant material that the researcher accumulates to understand reality from the perspective of the researched. The findings of the research are reported on in Chapter 5.

4.7 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

According to Neuman (2000:170), most qualitative researchers accept the principles of reliability and validity but use the terms infrequently because of their close association with quantitative measurements. Besides, qualitative researchers apply the principles differently in practice (Neuman 2000:170), probably because qualitative research design differs inherently from quantitative design in that it usually does not provide a step-by-step plan to follow.

4.7.1 Reliability

In accordance with Heckroodt (2002:126), reliability addresses the question: Will two researchers independently studying the same setting or subjects come up with the same findings? In qualitative studies researchers are concerned with the accuracy and comprehensiveness of their data. Qualitative researchers tend to view reliability as a fit between what they record and what actually happens in the setting under study, rather than the literal consistency across different observations (Bogdan & Biklen 1998:48).

Reliability means dependability or consistency (Neuman 2000:170). In qualitative research reliability refers to the consistency of the researcher's interactive style, data analysis, and interpretation of participant's meanings from data (McMillan & Schumacher 1993:385). Reliability is difficult to attain for researchers interested in naturalistic event or a unique phenomenon.

Since qualitative research process is personal, no investigator observes and interviews exactly like another. A range of techniques may be used in any single study to corroborate findings for reliability. Sufficient design specificity also created reliability (McMillan & Schumacher 1993:386) for this research.

Reliability in this study was enhanced by the design of the research, by the explicit description of the researcher's role, participants and site selection and social contexts, data collection and analytical strategies. A combination of data collection strategies employed, reduced threats to reliability. In this study, for an example, use was made of observation and mechanically recorded focus group interviews. The questionnaire relating to biographical details and information on prior knowledge on school governance assisted in validating data from the interviews.

One difficulty was that qualitative researchers study processes that are not stable over time, but emphasise the value of a changing or developing interaction between the researcher and the subjects being studied (Neuman 2000:170). Typical of qualitative research is the conviction that the relationship between the researcher and the data should be a dynamic, growing or evolving process – hence an emergent design for data collection (McMillan & Schumacher 1993:374). The problem of reliability revolves around the replication of observations since it rests upon the question of whether another researcher with similar methodological training, understanding of the field setting and rapport with subjects can make similar observations (Shaffir & Stebbins 1991:13).

In accordance with Neuman (2000:170), the guiding principle for reliability measures in qualitative research is that most qualitative researchers should resist the quantitative research approach to reliability, which is seen as cold or fixed mechanical instrument that one repeatedly injects into or applies to some static, lifeless object. Qualitative researchers consider a range of data sources and employ multiple measurement methods which some researchers refer to it as triangulation of information (Bogdan & Biklen 1998:149; De Vos 1998:241).

Qualitative researchers question the quantitative-positivistic ideas of replication, equivalence and subpopulation reliability (Neuman 2000:170). Qualitative researchers accept that different researchers or researchers using alternative measures will obtain distinctive results. This is because they see data collection as an interactive process in which particular researchers operate in an evolving setting and the setting's context dictates using a unique mix of measures that cannot be exactly repeated (Marshall & Rossman 1999:147). The diverse measures and interactions with different researchers are beneficial because they illuminate different facets or dimensions of a subject matter. Many qualitative researchers question the quantitative researcher's quest for standard, fixed measures because such measures ignore benefits of having a variety of researchers with many approaches and may neglect key aspects of diversity that exist in the social world (Neuman 2000:170).

No matter how objective a researcher tries to be, personal subjectivity will filter into findings because of values and experiences. It should be noted that qualitative research is marked by "disciplined subjectivity", self-examination and criticism of the data obtained (McMillan & Schumacher 1993:374). In field research reliability also includes what is not said or done but is expected or anticipated (Neuman 2000:368). Reliability in field research does not only depend on a researcher's insight, awareness, suspicions and questions but also depends on what members tell researchers – which makes the credibility of members and their statements part of reliability (Neuman 2000:368). Closely linked to reliability is the question of validity.

4.7.2 Validity

McMillan and Schumacher (1993:157) regard validity as "…explanations about observed phenomena approximate to what reality or truth is and the degree to which the explanations are accurate". Neuman (2000:369), views validity as a bridge between a construct and the data because confidence is placed in a researcher's analysis of data as accurately representing the social

world in the field. However, according to Neuman (2000:369), replication of phenomena is not a criterion in qualitative research because field research is virtually impossible to replicate – essential aspects of the field change like the social events or context change, members are different or, the individual researcher differs. According to Shaffir and Stebbins (1991:13), the problem of validity in field research concerns the difficulty of gaining an accurate or true impression of the phenomenon.

Qualitative researchers are more interested in authenticity than validity. According to Neuman (2000:171), authenticity means giving a fair, honest and balanced account of social life from the viewpoint of someone who lives it everyday. Qualitative researchers are less concerned with trying to match abstract concepts to empirical data but are more concerned with giving a candid portrayal of social life that is "…true to the experiences of people being studied" (Grinnel 1993:60). Most qualitative researchers concentrate on ways to capture an inside view and provide a detailed account of how those being studied feel about and understand events (Leedy & Ormrod 2001:101). Qualitative researchers adhere to the core principle of validity – to be truthful, by avoiding false or distorted accounts (Neuman 2000:366). Thus, qualitative researchers try to create a tight fit between their understanding, ideas and statements about the social world and what is actually occurring in it.

All research is subject to the problem of reliability and validity. Although these concepts are more common to the experiment and the survey, they also are found in fieldwork (Shaffir & Stebbins 1991:15). Thus, it should be noted and accepted that, problems of reliability and validity are inherent limitations on the observer's ability to witness all that is relevant to the study. The following paragraph presents ethical considerations for this study.

4.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA 1996a) provides the base for human rights and ethical values. Research should be guided by such ethical values and principles of a democratic society. According to McMillan

and Schumacher (1993:182), “ethics generally are considered to deal with beliefs about what is wrong, proper, good or bad”. In accordance with Strydom (2002:63), ethics are defined as follows:

> Ethics is a set of moral principles that are suggested by an individual or group, which are subsequently widely accepted, and offer rules and behavioural expectations about the most correct conduct towards experimental subjects and respondents, employers, sponsors, other researchers, assistants and students.

Some of the following basic principles of ethical considerations in social research (McMillan & Schumacher 1993:314-317), which are relevant to this study, have been taken into account by the investigator. Firstly, informed consent was obtained from the participants by the researcher. Secondly, the researcher guaranteed the privacy, confidentiality and anonymity of the participants. Thirdly, the researcher never coerced subjects to participate in the research but they volunteered to take part.

From the above exposition, it can be deduced that ethics can be a contested terrain by its advocates and by those affected by it. As McMillan and Schumacher (1993:182) note that “naturally, there is some degree of disagreement about how to define what is ethically correct in research”. But still, regardless of complete agreement about what is ethically right or wrong in undertaking research, it is important to consider some of the ethical issues mentioned earlier in this section. The next section presents an overview of the limitations of the investigation.

4.9 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

There is no study that is perfect or flawless. This study like other studies had limitations. According to Marshall and Rossman (1999:42), a discussion about limitations of any study demonstrate a researcher’s understanding that reality is such that findings of one study cannot be conclusive or generalised to other settings but can in the least be transferable.

Since the nature of the study is qualitative – bounded and situated in a specific context, the results cannot be generalised to other settings that were not even sampled for the investigation (McMillan & Schumacher 1993:48; Leedy & Ormrod 2001:102). Since qualitative research design is emergent and flexible (Bogdan & Biklen 1998:48), it is possible that some of the trivial yet important information might have been omitted during the research process. However, using direct observation and focus group interviews was considered adequate for this study. Moreover, the length of the research and the number of participants used ensured that the data were saturated by the end of the period under discussion.

The fact that the research was done at selected schools within the researcher's cluster of schools might have resulted in some form of subjectivity. Nevertheless, strategies to deal with biased information and circumvent anticipated problems were employed in this study. Adequate funding was necessary for a successful training program for SGB members in the Free State Province. Unfortunately funding was not adequate for the whole training project. Demographics and inherent personal factors among most of the SGB members, such as poverty and the level of literacy, were limitations and they posed a challenge to deal with in this research. Although the time to undertake the study project was sufficient – three years of the term of office for newly elected SGB's – this might be looked upon as a limitation if wishes to track the performance of participants over a lengthy period.

The above exposition gave some of the limitations as they pertain to this investigation and no claim can be made that the discussion was exhaustive. Besides, limitations should not create the impression that the value of the study might be underscored. Instead, the acknowledgment of the limitations strengthened the overall design of the study. Findings are explicated in Chapter 5 while a summary of this chapter is given in the following section.

4.10 SUMMARY

In this chapter focus was on the research methodology and research design. The reader was introduced to the qualitative research approach as the relevant tool for this study. The choice of the qualitative research approach, which embodied the rationale and some relevant characteristics, was discussed. Different data collection methods, which included observations and focus group interviews, were explained in detail.

Advantages as well as some of the relevant disadvantages of focus group interviews as a data gathering method were identified. The aspects of reliability and validity in the qualitative research were explained thoroughly. Ethical considerations and the researcher's role as a research instrument were clearly set out. Limitations of the study were highlighted and the chapter was concluded with a summary of the main aspects covered in the discussion.

Chapter 5 is devoted to a report concerning the findings of the research.

CHAPTER 5

REPORT ON FINDINGS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

There has been a major shift to self-governance for schools in many countries throughout the world, including South Africa (Bush & Heystek 2003:127). Therefore the training of newly elected SGB members, based on the needs of its members (Sibuyi 1997:59) is a prerequisite for effective co-operative school governance (Looyen 2000:4). Capacity building is particularly important for developing countries and there is ample evidence that this is a major requirement for South African SGB's (Potgieter, Visser, Van der Bank, Mothata & Squelch 1997:13). Thus, training is important in ensuring that SGB members have a sound understanding and knowledge of co-operative governance. Moreover, appropriate training (Holt & Murphy 1993:187) and a commitment to the principles of co-operative governance of which shared decision-making (Looyen 2000:8) and accountability (Maile 2002:326; Burgess 1992:16) are pivotal, will enable SGB members to discharge their responsibilities successfully. This chapter deals with findings of the investigation.

5.2 CHOICE OF SCHOOLS

Table 5.1: The township schools

Descriptor	**Type of school**		
	A = Primary (Grade R-6)	**B** = Intermediate (Grade 7-9)	**C** = Secondary (Grade 10-12)
General appearance	Does not share buildings but has a shortage of classroom furniture due to	Shares two blocks of classrooms with school C. Broken classroom	Shares two blocks of classrooms with school B. Broken and un-repaired

	overcrowding, no broken windows.	windows, shortage of classrooms and overcrowding.	windows. Overcrowded classes.
Functionality	Management (e.g. SMT, Unions, school-based committees) and governance structures (SGB) are in place and operational	Management (e.g. SMT, RCL, Unions, school-based committees) and governance structures are in place and operational	Management (e.g. SMT, Unions, school-based committees) and governance structures are in place and operational
School yard	Not paved	Paved parking	Paved parking
Security fencing	Fenced	Fenced	Fenced
Electricity	Electrified	Electrified	Electrified
Water on premises	Available on site	Available on site	Available on site
Toilet facilities	Uses sceptic tank	Uses sceptic tank	Uses sceptic tank
Learner numbers	1 253	694	533
Staff complement	33	23	21
School fund per learner per year	R 40	R 60	R 60
Number of classrooms	27	16	14
Status of the school in terms of SASA	No section 21 functions	No section 21 functions	Section 21 functions

Table 5.1 show the characteristics of the schools selected for the research. The discussion compares each school against a specific descriptor.

5.3 THE PARTICIPANTS

This section discusses the characteristics of the participants and the contextual factors pertinent to the research. Since people with different backgrounds are represented on SGB's, training should assist SGB members to respect the opinions of others and to make decisions in the interests of the school (DE 1997:7). The information is derived from the questionnaires participants completed prior to the training (Annexure A).

5.3.1 Principals serving on SGB's

Table 5.2: Principals serving on the SGB's

Characteristics of the principals serving on the SGB's	Type of school		
	A = Primary (Grade R-6)	**B** = Intermediate (Grade 7-9)	**C** = Secondary (Grade 10-12)
Age	59	40	48
Gender	Male	Male	Male
Marital status	Divorced	Unmarried	Married
Level of education/schooling	Matric + 3 year qualification	Matric + 3 year qualification	Matric + 4 year qualification
Teaching experience	35 years	18 years	23 years
Management qualification	None	Diploma	Diploma
Position held just before being appointed as the principal	Deputy principal	Post level 1 educator	Deputy principal
Previous training on school governance	Trained on roles and responsibilities of SGB's, conflict	Trained on roles and responsibilities of SGB's, conflict	Trained on roles and responsibilities of SGB's, conflict

	resolution and negotiation skills, team building and financial management	resolution and negotiation skills, team building and financial management	resolution and negotiation skills, team building and financial management
Experience of serving on the SGB	Third term, since 1994	Third term, since 1994	Third term, since 1994

A total of three principals participated in the research and were part of the training programme. This viewpoint is based on the assumption that trained and experienced principals can provide necessary support to SGB's in their *ex officio* capacities. Knowledgeable principals can add value to the training and building of capacity of SGB's so that they can execute their duties effectively.

5.3.2 Parents serving on SGB's

Table 5.3: Parents at school A serving on SGB (A primary school)

There are six parents serving on the SGB of School A. The chairperson of the SGB is male. The following table depicts characteristics of the parents.

	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
Gender	Male	Male	Male	Female	Female	Female
Age	43	36	52	27	31	41
Highest qualification	Matric	Grade 7	Grade 7	Grade 7	Grade 7	Grade 7
Employment	Temporary job	Not working	Not working	Not working	Not working	Not working
Years of	None	None	One	None	None	None

experience as school governor			term (3 years)			
Previous training on school governance	None	None	Trained on functions of SGB's	None	None	None

All seven parents were elected as members of the SGB in 2003.

Table 5.4: Parents at school B serving on SGB (An intermediate school)

There are seven parents serving on the SGB School B. The chairperson is female. The following table depicts relevant characteristics of the parents

Parent	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**
Gender	Male	Female	Male	Male	Female	Female	Female
Age	40	36	48	29	39	34	45
Highest qualification	Grade 7	Grade 12	Grade 7	Grade 7	Grade 7	Grade 7	Grade 7
Employment	Not working	Domestic work	Not working	Domestic work	Domestic work	Not working	Not working
Years of experience as school governor	None	None	None	None	None	None	None
Previous training on governance	None	None	None	None	None	None	None

All seven parents were elected as members of the SGB in 2003.

Table 5.5: Parents at school C serving on SGB (A secondary school)

There are seven parents on the SGB of School C. The chairperson of the SGB is male. The following table depicts relevant characteristics of the parents.

Parent	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**
Gender	Female	Female	Female	Male	Male	Male	Male
Age	51	38	37	40	39	45	42
Employment	Does not work	Domestic work	Does not work	Domestic work	Does not work	Does not work	Does not work
Years of experience as school governor	3 years	3 years	None	None	None	None	None
Previous training on school governance	Trained on the functions the of SGB's	Trained on the functions of the SGB's	None	None	None	None	None

All seven parents were elected as members of the SGB in 2003.

Twenty parents from the three selected schools were included in the research. Based on the lack of education and training it is likely that these parents would probably experience difficulties in fulfilling their tasks and would need training.

5.3.3 Educators serving on SGB's

Table 5.6: Educators at school A serving on SGB

There are three educators at school A who serve on the SGB.

Educator	1	2	3
Gender	Male	Female	Female
Age	35	44	29
Highest qualification	Matric + Diploma	Matric + Diploma	Matric + Diploma

Employment	7 years of teaching experience	15 years of teaching experience	4 years of teaching experience
Years of experience as school governor	None, first term on SGB	None, first term on SGB	None, first term on SGB
Previous training on school governance	None	None	None

All three educators were elected members of the SGB in 2003.

Table 5.7: Educators at school B serving on SGB

There are two educators at school B who serve on the SGB.

Educator	1	2
Gender	Male	Female
Age	31	37
Highest qualification	Matric + Degree	Matric + Diploma
Employment	6 years	11 years
Years of experience as school governor	None, first term on the SGB	None, first term on the SGB
Previous training	None	None

The two educators of school B were elected to the SGB.

Table 5.8: Educators at school C serving on SGB

There are two educators at the school who serve on SGB.

Educator	1	2
Gender	Male	Female
Age	48	40
Highest qualification	Matric + Diploma	Matric + Diploma
Employment	18 years of teaching	12 years of teaching

	experience	experience
Years of experience as school governor	None, first term on SGB	3 years, second term on SGB
Previous training	None	Trained on the duties and responsibilities of SGB members, minute-taking skills, fundraising skills and meeting protocol.

The two educators were elected to the SGB in 2003.

Seven educators were included in the research. Based on the lack of training of the majority of educators (except one educator in School C) it is likely that these educators would find it difficult to fulfil their tasks and would require training.

During the course of the research an educator member in School A was dismissed (21 May 2004) for assault on her fellow colleague and was replaced by another female colleague through by-elections. This replacement was done according to the official guidelines set out in policy documents for the elections of SGB's.

5.3.4 Non-educators serving on SGB's

Table 5.9: Non-educators serving on the SGB's

Type of School	**A** = Primary	**B** = Intermediate	**C** = Secondary
Numbers	1	1	1
Gender	Male	Male	Female

Level of education/schooling	Primary education (grade 7)	Grade 12 and tertiary qualification	Grade 12 and a tertiary qualification
Experience of serving on the SGB	None	None	None
Previous training on school governance	None	None	None
Job description	Grounds man	Clerk	Clerk

A total of three non-teaching staff members participated in the research. Based on the lack of experience of serving on the SGB, it was likely that these non-educators might experience problems in fulfilling their tasks and therefore would require training.

5.3.5 Learners serving on SGB's

Only two learners from school B and two from school C were included in the research. School A is a primary school and does not qualify for a learner representation on the SGB. A total of four learners participated in the research.

A female learner representing School C withdrew during the course of 2004 due to pregnancy and the Representative Council of Learners (RCL) replaced her according to democratically based procedures following the Departmental guidelines for the elections of learner representation on the SGB.

Based on the lack of training and governing experience of these learner governors, it was likely that these learners would probably experience difficulties in fulfilling their tasks and will require training.

To conclude: A total of 37 participants formed part of the research. This total comprised of three principals; seven educators; twenty parents; three non-teaching staff and four learners.

Discussion

Since the establishment of governing bodies, one of the key problems confronting provincial departments has been building the capacity of SGB members, especially among previously disadvantaged school communities (Karlsson, McPherson & Pampallis 2002:168). Experience throughout the world and in South Africa to a great extent shows that governors are likely to require substantial support from the principals in carrying out their responsibilities (Bush & Gamage 2001:51; Bush & Heystek 2003:136). It is for this reason that principals were part of the training program for this research. Given the lack of experience of school-level democracy, research shows that most governing bodies in the Gauteng province and elsewhere were not fulfilling their policy-making role but were relying on the principals to do so (Bush & Heystek 2003:136; Karlsson et al 2002:168).

Moreover, despite the inclusion of learners in the SGB's of public secondary schools, some are still deemed to be minors in terms of their age, which restricts their participation in SGB matters owing to their legal status in accordance with SASA (RSA 1996b). According to Bischoff and Phakoa (1999:89), it was found that under-aged learners may perceive their restricted participation negatively, which may, in turn, cause them to participate half-heartedly in the governing process of public secondary schools, thus hampering not only the overall successful implementation of the SASA but also the smooth running of all governing bodies of public secondary schools.

Without training of SGB members, decentralised school governance is likely to fail. Karlsson et al (2002:169) assert that, ignorance about and the incapacity to perform certain functions can lead SGB's to function only as crisis committees – a situation that is not intended but which is possible.

Therefore, training will both inform and empower SGB members to understand their roles and responsibilities.

5.4 CONTEXTUAL ISSUES IMPACTING ON SCHOOLS

The context in which schools are situated and therefore the context within which SGB's work is important. In research conducted by Van Wyk (2001:198) external factors outside the school are generally blamed for behavioural problems of learners. It is believed that the immediate environment of the school influences school governance system. According to Lewis, Sugai and Colvin (1998:446), it is often true that parents and communities may contribute to the development of problem behaviour by failing to provide requisite social skills and support by modelling inappropriate behaviour.

5.4.1 Accommodation structures and life in the township

The schools are situated in a rural township in the Free State province. The township is characterised by poverty and the majority of the people are unemployed. It is situated approximately 3 km on the eastern side of the National Road (N3) between Johannesburg and Durban. This situation exposes the township inhabitants to the dangers of ill-health and related problems due to the activities of sex workers attracted by truckers passing through the area.

The housing structure is characterised by four and two-roomed buildings and a few attractive subsidised houses for middle-income wage earners. Adjacent to them are shacks which are developing into a squatter camp and the so-called Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP) houses for those who earn low wages or sometimes nothing at all because of poverty and unemployment. In the backyards of some of these houses are shacks, which have been erected either to store items or to provide additional accommodation, especially to lodgers who include learners.

There is one primary school. Next to it street vendors sell food and soft drinks to learners and educators since there is no tuck shop on the school grounds. Approximately 3 km away from the primary school is the secondary school, which shares buildings with the only intermediate school in the area. Similar to the primary school situation, street vendors sell food to learners and educators at the school gates during breaks since there is no tuck shop on the school grounds.

There are no amenities for entertainment and relaxation for the township schools and their community. As a result, the youth and young adults are at risk of experimenting with drugs during hours of idleness. Most of the time they are seen loitering around the shops talking, smoking cigarettes (and possibly dagga) while some play cards or gamble. Some are seen drinking heavily in the notorious tavern nearby and they sometimes dance to the loud music that has become the trademark of this tavern. Often incidents of fighting, drug pushing, alcohol abuse, sexual abuse and murder have been reported to the police who battle to contain the situation due to insufficient staff to contain the level of crimes and violence in the area.

DISCUSSION

The issues of crime, drugs and violence have relevance for SGB's which are entrusted with policy formulation for their schools. Problems of crime and violence are closely linked to drug and substance abuse and misuse (RSA 2004:362). Training assists the SGB's to formulate clear policies on both prevention and intervention, underpinned by a supportive orientation for all learning institutions.

Realising that the role played by drug abuse in learning institutions is seriously undermining the safety and discipline of learning environment, the Education Department published *The National Policy on the Management of Drug Abuse by Learners in Public and Independent Schools and Further Education and Training*, with the purpose of protecting and helping vulnerable learners and combating the development of countercultures to quality

education such as violence, sexual violence, gangsterism and theft (DE 2002a:95-99). Codes of conduct adopted for learners at school, which should be availed to parents, should include adequate provision regarding an institution's policy and procedure on drug use, misuse and dependency. These should be formulated in accordance with *Guidelines for the Consideration of Governing Bodies in Adopting a Code of Conduct for learners* (DE 1998:96). Although the state has effective plans to combat the problem of substance abuse, it should be noted with concern that South Africa is experiencing an unacceptable increase in substance abuse and its associated problems (RSA 2004:513).

5.4.2 Poverty and unemployment

Many SGB members who participated in this research are poor and unemployed (cf. Tables 5.3; 5.4 and 5.5). Unemployed and poverty-stricken people might indulge in undesirable activities that might cause hardships later in their lives. An educator participant in School C commented:

> *You see… we have a social problem that has become bigger than the mountain to climb. The level of poverty has taught people to care less about life. If you can drive past the truck rest area especially on weekends, you will be shocked. You will see people that you never thought might be selling their bodies. Nobody thinks about AIDS because they don't regard their bodies as the Temple of God. These people seem to care less whether they die tomorrow or not.*

Poverty and unemployment result in other serious problems, which are not easy to solve as highlighted by a learner, also in School C:

> *The other problem faced by the majority of learners is that they do not have school uniform. Regardless of the fact that they cannot be barred from attending due to school uniform, they feel bad and it's like they do not belong to our school. For this reason many have decided to go and*

> *seek for employment in the Gauteng Province because their parents are unemployed.*

However, a parent in School A had a different view about people who resort to unacceptable behaviour.

> *Life is what you make it. You must choose between life and death. But there are people who want easy things in life. These are people who are just lazy to work or do a demanding job and want to spare their bodies. That is why they will do such disgraceful things like selling their body for money.*

Discussion

The problems of poverty and unemployment are not unique to the schools and the township investigated but are prevalent throughout South Africa and elsewhere. According to the report in the *South Africa Yearbook 2004/5*, the unemployment rate in March 2004 was 27,8% as compared with 28,4% on September 2003 (RSA 2004:188). The report argues that the decrease is not statistically significant but indicates that the employment rate is stabilising rather than stating that employment opportunities are being lost (RSA 2004:188).

Different experts have different interpretations of the unemployment rate in South Africa. For instance, Motala and Mungadi (1999:106) purport that unemployment rate in the country stands at 33%. According to the National Deputy Finance Minister, Mr Jabulane Moleketi, in a television interview with Mr Xolani Gwala on SABC 1, on the 16 January 2005, on the program entitled *Asikhulume/ Let's talk*, stated that the "… current rate of unemployment in South Africa stands at 40% with 15% of the people living below the poverty line". In 1999 it was estimated that 18 million (45.7%) of the total population lived in poverty (Hartshorne 1999:106).

The implication for parents and SGB members, who are struggling to survive and have almost no energy left for the obligations of the school is that they find it difficult to be involved in and committed to the governance affairs of their schools (Van Wyk 2001:196; DE 2004:46).

According to Bush and Heystek (2003:133), in an investigation conducted to determine the fee levels and income in Gauteng schools, it was found that a township school was able to collect only 50% of its potential income because of high unemployment in the schools' catchments area. In addition, McPherson and Naicker (2002:53) found that issues such as socio-economic environment of the school and attendant financial implications have a profound impact on effective school governance. SGB's find themselves struggling to govern their schools without the needed financial muscle.

In conclusion, the discussion about contextual factors impacting on schools is necessary to bring about an understanding of the difficulty SGB members experience in governing their schools under such conditions. Since schools are embedded in the broader community where they exist, they cannot be divorced from the influences of the community and vice versa. In most instances, the adverse conditions in the township impact negatively on the governance of schools. For this reason it is important for the school community and the broader community to work in partnership to solve communal problems. Typical of township life, school children are part of social problems in the community and this becomes an added challenge not only for the SGB's but also for the Education Department and the community at large.

5.5 THE IMPACT OF CONTEXTUAL ISSUES AND SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE

The environment in which the school is situated has a profound impact on the school itself. The school is not an island on its own but affects and is also being affected by its surrounding. The three selected schools researched are situated in a poverty-stricken rural township, which is an area that lacks physical resources (cf. Tables 5.1; 5.3; 5.4 & 5.5). The difference in terms of

the status of schools (Section 21 versus non-Section 21 functions) has implications for accessing and using resources for effective teaching and learning (DE 2004:112).

SGB's have a duty to see to it that schools look after their property and that they procure the learning and teaching materials according to SASA (RSA 1996b). It was observed that the ability of schools to access their funds depended either on their common or allocated functions (as assigned by the Head of the Education in the province). It was found that School C as a section 21 school was better able to procure items it needed because it could access its funds and give account at the end of each term of its use of money allocated to the SGB.

The sharing of school buildings causes internal tensions and conflicts over resources between different stakeholders. For example, in an interview with the researcher, the principal of School C complained:

> *The Department does not assist us with huge amounts of water and electricity bills that we have to pay the local council because learners of School B waste the resources and we battle to make ends meet as we pay everything for ourselves.*

It was observed that SGB's often find themselves compelled by policy in accordance with Departmental guidelines to share the scarce resources at their disposal where the state is slow or unable to deliver services like enough classrooms or buildings. A parent in School B said:

> *I am really frustrated and tired of waiting for our own school building. Every time educators and learners have problems with full classrooms, we must go the SGB of School C to beg for classrooms that I know for a fact that they don't have any. We end up fighting and hating each other. This is what makes other people like myself to feel like resigning. But it doesn't help because I have learners in both schools.*

The researcher witnessed agreements concerning duties and responsibilities between School B and School C about the sharing of buildings. It established during the interviews that the main problem area was with the need for major and costly renovations. In such situations SGB's had to wait for the Education Department to deliver according to its plans and resources available. Such situations called upon SGB's to find ways to augment their insufficient funds and it was discovered that the three selected SGB's experienced difficulties in raising enough funds to assist the state as partners in the provisioning of education for their children. For example, a parent of School C complained:

> *The Department, through SASA, expect SGB's to raise funds in order o supplement the school fund. For us it is difficult because we only get small amounts from the parents who can afford to pay. The majority are not working.*

This state of affairs is ironic in the sense that it could easily lead to increasing inequity since poorer communities are less able to provide for themselves than relatively well-endowed ones. The low levels of education or schooling proved to be a disadvantage for SGB members who had to govern their schools responsibly. The differentiation in terms of level of governance (Section 21 versus non-Section 21 status), which is often discriminatory, impacts on the ability of SGB's to discharge their functions and responsibilities optimally (DE 2004:112). Thus, training of SGB members is critical to the realisation of their governance objectives.

5.6 SELECTION OF SGB MEMBERS

It is necessary to know the members of the SGB and whether they were chosen or co-opted before training starts as this has implications for the training they are to receive. Separate meetings for each category (parents, educators, non-educators and learners in secondary schools) of the SGB members is advisable in accordance with Departmental guidelines regulating the elections of governing bodies in public ordinary schools. The elections of

the categories of the participants of the following categories: educators, non-educators and learners, at secondary schools were relatively without problems as compared to those of the parent component. However, one educator member of the SGB of School A raised a concern about the restriction that only the constituents of a specific SGB category can nominate and elect their representatives. This parent also wants to nominate and select educators.

> *I want to put forth a recommendation that the guidelines for SGB's should be reviewed to allow all the school community to at least nominate SGB members in all the categories or components. We must do away with the discriminatory restriction that only educators can nominate and vote for their representatives. In my understanding democracy must allow every citizen to vote for whoever one feels confident to represent one well.*

Approximately 500 parents on average attended the general parents' meetings for the three selected schools at different times and venues to elect the SGB's of their respective schools. The meetings were held between July and August, 2003. The first meetings of School A and School B were well attended. However, at School C a quorum could not be formed and the first meeting had to be re-scheduled. The reason for this was explained thus by a parent who said: "*I purposefully stayed away when hearing that SGB members for the secondary were to be elected because secondary school learners are problematic. We are sometimes afraid of those big and bully learners".*

Some parents said that they avoided the secondary school meeting to elect the SGB members because of a lack of motivation or interest. One parent who is an SGB member said: "*Many of us were not interested to stand for election. We know that sometimes educators and principals do not take parents seriously. So, we think we should not worry ourselves to work with people who can do without us".*

Nevertheless after persuasion by some influential parents, many parents attended the second meeting, which was a success. The majority of SGB members currently serving on the SGB stood for nominations and were elected by the parents who voted for them according to the Departmental guidelines for the election of SGB's. Some of the parents volunteered to stand for the SGB elections; others had to be persuaded to stand for the elections as indicated earlier. In addition to the varied reasons advanced by parents as areas of contention, one parent felt that parents are discriminated against by the state: *"The government discourages discrimination. But it is surprising why parents without learners are not allowed to participate in the election of the people they trust to govern their schools".*

Despite the explanation of the electoral officer, some parents were still not satisfied that guardians could be elected in cases where the learners did not have their biological parents in attendance as they were employed elsewhere. A parent serving on the SGB remarked:

> *I think it does not make sense to disallow parents that we know can represent us well on the SGB the opportunity to participate simply because the do not have children at the school. Ironically guardians are allowed to stand for elections. What difference does it make? This is really unfair.*

The other issue raised by parents was the involvement of learners in the governance affairs of the school. Mixed feelings prevailed on this matter. Many parents were unhappy that learners in secondary schools (Grade 8 upwards) could stand for the SGB elections. However, a few supported the involvement of learners in the governance of schools. A parent said:

> *I don't say it is a wrong thing to allow learners to be on the SGB in the big schools. Our learners are not like us who were oppressed. They are better enlightened and therefore can serve on the SGB. This will show them that we love them and trust that they can be responsible.*

However, the majority of parents differed. They felt that learners are still children and not yet adults. Therefore, they should be given an opportunity to concentrate on their studies and not be involved in matters more suitable for parents. A parent raised a concern, by saying:

> *Children are at school to learn and pass at the end of the year. They cannot serve two kings at the same time. Their purpose to be at school is to learn and get results as their reward. Now if they can fail because of their concentration on governance matters, what reward is there for them? I don't think any sensible parent will be happy about such a situation. Learners must be given a chance to be learners. Their time will come to be adults and we should therefore not rush them.*

Many parents made a plea to have educated parents on the SGB. They felt that educated SGB members can govern their schools better because they will not be "cheated" by anybody. A parent commented: *"I request that we should elect educated parents because they can read and understand English. It will not help to elect a 'blind' person like myself to lead the educated ones".*

Another parent added:

> *School finances need someone who has special knowledge about financial management or at least one who knows accounting procedures. Working with public funds is not an easy thing. Parents always complain about school funds being mismanaged. When you ask if they have gone through the financial records, nobody can read and write. Then you start wondering how they happen to know. The only way to know is through hearsay, which is dangerous.*

The majority of parents felt that educated SGB members would represent them best as parent representatives. A parent pointed: "*There are some educated parents in the community here who can represent us in the SGB.*

We believe that with their acquired formal education they can serve our schools better unlike some of us who are not learned".

This view was shared by the majority of the parents despite an allegation by some few parents that educated parents connived with each other in the SGB's. A parent alleged: *"Learned people tend to act in cahoots with school authorities as time goes on and become corrupt as well".*

Some of the educated parents raised a concern that they might not have enough time for all school activities due to work commitments. For example, a working parent commented: *"Even if we want to serve on the SGB our main problem is that of time. We leave our homes early in the morning and come back very late. When we arrive at home, we are also so tired and we can virtually do nothing".*

The other issue observed was that it seemed that the parent governors were elected mainly because of their status in the community rather that their skills. The same observation held for some of the educators and learner governors who were elected because they were argumentative and difficult to work with and not because they had the best interest of the school at heart.

5.7 THE SEQUENCE OF THE TRAINING PROGRAMME

A total of 37 SGB members from the three selected schools volunteered and made a commitment to participate in the training offered to SGB's. Elected SGB members pointed out the need for training to empower them to discharge their governance tasks. SGB members were observed in their meetings and interviews were also held with them after each session. The outcome of these encounters influenced what was done in the next session.

Section A: Before the training sessions

The researcher attended one meeting of each of the three selected SGB's. Thus a total of three meetings were observed for each of the three selected

SGB's respectively. The researcher observed the SGB members of the three schools in practice and only asked questions for the purpose of clarification where necessary. The observation took place over a period of four months (August – November 2003). Field notes of the observations were kept.

Section B: Training session 1

The first general training dealt with general issues and tasks of SGB's. Its main aim was to induct SGB members into their governance functions. The first phase of the general training was for all the 25 schools (including the three selected schools) in the sub-district 27 (alias circuit) of the researcher' area of demarcation. The general training was divided into two sessions and took place on Saturday 23 January and Sunday 24 January 2004. Immediately after the completion of the general training (approximately after two weeks) the *first focus group interviews* were conducted to establish the perceptions and experiences of the participants of the training. Many participants perceived the training in a positive light. An educator participant from School A commented: *"Training has come at the right time when we needed it the most. Without training we can fumble. It has opened our eyes and now we can see".* Similarly, a parent participant in school C agreed with the perception of this educator saying: "*I feel confident about myself, and what is expected of me after this training session".*

Interviews with the participants after completion of the general training showed that they appreciated having two-day workshop in order to be able to absorb the vast amount of knowledge. One participant remarked: *"The two days allowed us to have time to understand issues better rather than cramming everything into our heads for the sake of getting done with it".* In general, they indicated that they would appreciate more training and would leave its planning in the hands of the trainer as he had the appropriate knowledge and experience to decide on the topics for the next session.

Section C: Training session 2

After an interval of four months the second training for the three selected SGB's took place. Training session 2 was conducted on Sunday, 14 June 2004 and was the first special specific training that dealt with the drawing up of a *constitution* of a school governing body. The choice of this topic was influenced by the fact that SGB members were not aware of the importance of a constitution for the SGB. Participants appreciated the information they received as one remarked: *"I must admit that we were just running our schools without a SGB constitution. I can see that this was wrong."* This was a joint training session for all three SGB's. Soon after the training (approximately after two weeks) the researcher conducted the *second focus group interviews* with each of the three SGB's respectively.

Section D: Training session 3

After an interval of four months (3 November 2004) the researcher provided the third special training session for the three selected SGB's about their *financial management* functions. The constant allegations of financial mismanagement influenced the choice of this topic for training. One participant requested the training saying: "*We appeal that we must be trained on the management of school finances because our hard-earned monies are not well utilised by principals"*. This was a joint training session for the three selected SGB's respectively. Soon after the completion of this training session (two weeks), the *third focus group interviews* were held for each of the three SGB's. The researcher observed greater understanding of the roles and tasks of SGB members.

Section E: After the training sessions

After another four months (April 2005), the researcher observed the meetings of the three selected SGB's individually. The SGB members were also interviewed to clarify certain issues where relevant. The purpose of the observations of the individual meetings of the three selected SGB's was to see how they functioned – after having received the general training (two separate days) and two special training sessions. The last observations of the

SGB meetings took place nine months after the researcher had observed the meetings of the three SGB's for the first time.

The findings were that SGB members perceived and found the series of training sessions to have built capacity and empowered them to perform their duties successfully. For example, a parent commented: *"We are thankful about the training we have received. It opened our eyes and we can now be vigilant about things that we took for granted".*

In summary, by the end of all the training sessions, SGB members felt empowered by the training. There was an increase in participation and teamwork between and among SGB members. The working environment was observed to be healthy and characterised by openness, transparency, constructive criticism and team spirit. The newly acquired leadership skills of the SGB chairpersons and principals who participated in the research improved the interpersonal relations among the SGB members.

5.8 FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO A SUCCESSFUL TRAINING PROGRAMME

Participants indicated that the training of SGB's was worthwhile. They found the training rewarding and one participant said: *"[The]… training was long overdue"*. Some of the participants maintained, *"… the training came at the right time"* and *"it was the best thing that ever happened to us"*.

The following are some of the crucial issues mentioned which contributed to the success of the training sessions. The order in which they are discussed does not signify their importance.

5.8.1 Motivating SGB members to attend training sessions

SGB members must be motivated to be trained, so they can fulfil their roles as SGB members. Special mention of the leadership skills from principals and SGB chairpersons of the selected schools had a huge and positive impact on

the participation of participants in the training sessions. This seems to indicate that principals need to be encouraged to motivate their SGB's to attend training sessions. For example, the principal of School A said:

> *Good parents, I urge you all to participate in the research project aimed at the training of all SGB's. The training will give us knowledge and skills to govern our schools. When we meet with SGB's from other areas in the National Associations of School Governing Bodies (NASGB's), we can then be able to represent our schools well.*

Another factor to be mentioned is the motivation of participants themselves to learn. A parent from School B said: *"I am volunteering to participate in the training programme. I believe it will provide me with a learning opportunity".* The researcher did not experience any problems with participants' willingness to take part in the investigation. All of them volunteered after receiving an explanation of the intention of the research. This was a feature of a successful training programme.

5.8.2 Commitment of SGB members to attend training sessions

In order to fulfil their tasks, SGB members must be trained. This implies a commitment on their part to attend all training sessions. There was no problem with regard to the attendance of the training sessions by the SGB members. The reason might be that all the participants had volunteered to take part in the training sessions. The researcher encouraged SGB members who participated in the research by sharing his observation of their commitment to training shown during the last training session:

> *I am pleased with the way you have shown commitment for your training. You conducted yourselves well and attended all the training sessions satisfactory. I can only hope that the knowledge and skills you have acquired here will go a long way in helping you to govern your school effectively.*

The attendance rate – as depicted by the attendance registers – was very high with all SGB members motivated to gain from the training sessions organised for them. The first general training session was conducted over two days and attended by all the participants (37). During the second training session 35 participants attended (absentees tendered apologies). During the third training session 37 participants attended.

5.8.3 Choice of convenient times for training

The overwhelming majority of the participants indicated that Sundays were suitable for the training sessions for the SGB's. One parent argued:

> *The majority of us feel that Sundays are better suited for our training. I know that some of the people, including myself want to go to church on Sunday. But I am making a humble plea that we should just sacrifice for our own development because training comes once in a while.*

However, it should be pointed out that there was no mutually inclusive understanding and agreement among the SGB members about the appropriate day to conduct the training. Some SGB members felt that the holding of the training sessions on Sundays was inconvenient as indicated by a parent's remark:

> *The principle of saying majority rules is oppressive and therefore unfair. The rights of the minority, who want to worship God or their gods because of their religious conviction is actually not respected. For the sake of the success of the workshop we will agree on a Sunday even if it is against our will.*

The majority of the participants felt that a training session conducted during the week would be impossible because of many working parents (especially those who were living on farms). One of the parents argued against the idea of a training workshop held during the week:

> *I know that the majority of us are not working. For the sake of those who are working I think that the training should be on a Sunday when we can all attend and get the information. We cannot afford to have separate training days – for the employed and for the unemployed.*

In conclusion, some of the SGB members who are staying on farms indicated that Sundays were needed for rest because they have a six-day week. However, other members felt satisfied that the training sessions were conducted on Sundays because the majority of the people were not working.

5.8.4 The timing of the commencement of the training session(s)

The majority of the governors appreciated the timing of the training which took place just after they had been elected and were about to start with their governance functions. An educator participant from School A commented: *"Training has come at the right time when we needed it the most. Without training we can fumble a lot but with training we can see where we are going".*

Some of the members who were re-elected onto the SGB's mentioned: *"In the past, training was given to SGB members long after they were serving. Sometimes training was never conducted for the SGB's".* For this reason, the SGB members felt that the timing to commence and to continue with training for SGB's was appropriate.

5.8.5 The duration of the training session(s)

The training session was planned and executed over two weeks for the general training programme to cover the contents of the *Training Manual for School Governing Bodies* in the Free State Province. This seemed to be acceptable to the SGB members who indicated their satisfaction as one participant commented: *"We feel happy that you gave us enough time to grasp the vast knowledge over two days than forcing us to absorb it in one day without understanding it"*. Each of the training sessions was conducted on specific Sundays to enable the attendance of SGB members. A total of four

separate days were utilised for all the training sessions. SGB members indicated that they would like to have sessions that would last for the whole day due to transport problems. For example, a SGB member remarked: *"I do not intend to spoil the workshop but would like to make a request on behalf of the group that we should not break later than two o' clock because we have to catch the bus at three o' clock".* A maximum of five hours was allocated per training session to allow SGB members staying on farms to catch the busses in time. As a sequel to this request the researcher-cum-facilitator arranged that no training session would last beyond 13h00 on a particular day. Another SGB member added: *"I support what the former speaker said. We will appreciate it if our training can last until lunchtime so that some of us who are who are using the public transport should be able to catch the transport in time".*

A total of twenty hours on average was spent on the training sessions. There was a period of approximately four months between the training sessions. A period of fifteen months was the time span for the series of the training sessions and observations were made between sessions. This period seemed to be acceptable to the participants. For instance, when asked to comment on the length of the training programme, one participant said: *"The duration of the programme was fine and we are happy about it. I for one do not regret participating in the programme".* This might be attributed to the fact that the participants were part of the design and planning of the training programme.

SGB members requested for the repetition of the training sessions, in order to grasp fully the information given to them as one of them. One member explained: *"Some of us learn slowly better if the information we receive is repeated for us to learn. Maybe is because we belong to an old school of thought whereby information was drilled into our heads".* Another SGB member added that:

> *According to me this training has been very effective and efficient because it was presented piecemeal. The knowledge we have gained*

was not pumped into us as if were machines. We were also given ample time to ask questions and relate to what we learnt.

Thus, participants found the length of the training programme was neither too short nor too long. Participants remained motivated to participate in the training until the end of the series.

5.8.6 The relevance of the training sessions

The SGB members expressed their satisfaction with the relevance of the training sessions. For example, a participant said: *"The fact that the training addresses our specific needs, we feel it is very relevant to our problems and we are therefore happy about it".*

The participants felt that the training sessions had built capacity because it was relevant to their daily experiences. A member of the SGB commented: *"I have attended a number of workshops in the past. Some of them were just a waste of time. This is one of the best workshops I have attended because I could feel that it was talking to me"*. SGB members indicated after the training that they felt confident to discharge their governance duties and responsibilities. This confidence could be attributed to the fact that the planning of the training programme took into account the needs of the respective SGB's. Thus, needs-driven training programme will engender a sense of satisfaction in the trainees.

All the SGB members declared that the training sessions equipped them with knowledge and skills necessary to execute their governance mandate. A participant from School A said: *"Training has opened our eyes and minds. We can now see and think better. We have gained a lot of insight in the basic principles of governing our schools".*

Thus, the researcher concluded that the approach to training had led to the quality development of SGB's. This could enhance the quality of school

governance they will eventually provide in the execution of their functions as newly elected governors.

5.8.7. The provision of a training manual and supporting resources

The *Training Manual for School Governing Bodies* in the Free State Province was used to train the SGB members. The SGB members were taken through the training manual to induct them into their roles, functions and responsibilities. The training manual itself was found to be sufficiently detailed. A participant confirmed, saying: *"The content and layout of the training manual are relevant, useful and easy to refer to".*

The SGB members indicated that the division of the training manual into five modules was handy and easy to refer to. The facilitator compiled supplementary notes and pamphlets in the languages of the participants. The governors stated that these additional resources were very useful, reader-friendly and supportive of the training manual. The parent governors appreciated the supplementary notes as confirmed by a remark from one of them: *"We can now relate to the supplementary notes and feel that they have meaning to us because we can make sense of them. We think we will be in a position to internalise its content".*

However, some of the semi-illiterate parents in the SGB complained that all training manuals were written in English. A parent commented: *"Why don't we have these manuals in our own languages that we can understand? We don't understand English as we understand our own language. English is a foreign language to most of us".* This point will be discussed more fully under 5.9.3.

5.8.8 The need for training to be done by the external agent

The SGB members voiced their satisfaction about the fact that the Education Department was providing training. One of the non-educator participants said: *"We cannot believe everything we are told by principals. Some of them are not truthful and can easily mislead us".*

In the interview with the researcher most of the SGB members valued the open manner in which matters of concern were addressed. They believed that matters were handled in a transparent and competent manner by a knowledgeable person from outside their school communities. They felt that they could trust and rely on the Departmental Official especially regarding sensitive matters.

The SGB felt confident about themselves as confirmed by the comment of a parent governors: *"We feel that we are now armed with information. Nobody can take us for granted because we have received satisfactory answers and clarification that have been looking for from the authority figure".* This indicates that principals of schools, as members of SGB's have to prove trustworthy in order to be trusted. This is important for the training of SGB's since principals represent the Education Department at the school level.

5.8.9 The importance of administrative support of training programmes

SGB chairpersons of the participating schools and their principals played a pivotal role in ensuring that the logistical arrangements were always in order. They were committed to the success of the training sessions. The participants accepted ownership of the training arrangements as evidenced by a comment from a principal: *"Ladies and gentlemen, this is our training. Let us therefore volunteer to participate in all the logistical arrangements relating to it. We shall be doing that for ourselves and not for anybody else".*

SGB members motivated one another to attend all the training sessions and also to participate in forming catering committees to provide refreshments. For instance, words of encouragement from the principal of School A were noted: *"Good parents, I want to thank you for allowing us to use the facilities and equipment of your schools for the success of the training programme. This will help all of us to gain a wealth of knowledge and skills to run our schools."* This enabled the researcher to use school equipment, such as televisions,

overhead projectors and electricity free of charge for the sake of the success of the training sessions.

Apart from the strengths mentioned above, training also revealed certain weaknesses. The following section discusses the weaknesses of the training of school governors as depicted by this research.

5.9 FACTORS IMPACTING NEGATIVELY ON THE TRAINING PROGRAMME

In spite of the strengths of the training of SGB's, certain weak points identified. However, these should not detract from the benefits that the participants gained from the training. Instead they should be regarded as challenges or areas for future development. The following section discusses the weak points pertaining to the training of school governors.

5.9.1 Lack of funding the training programme

In accordance with Section 19 of the SASA (RSA 1996b), the funding of initial training for SGB's is the responsibility of the Head of Department in a province. For the 2003/4 financial year funds earmarked for the initial training of newly elected SGB's in the Free State Province could not be accessed due to bureaucratic procedures. The situation was no better for the financial year of 2004/5. The reason advanced was that there were no funds available even though Head Office in the province indicated that money had been budgeted for the training of newly elected SGB's.

To ensure that the training opportunity was provided, the researcher arranged with SGB's to budget for the training in order to make it a success. The three SGB's also volunteered to provide meals for their delegates except for farm schools, which were personally sponsored by the researcher. The chairperson of the local forum of SGB's announced: *"We have agreed as SGB's of schools locally here to cater for our delegates to the workshop".*

To cut down on expenses one of the local schools (other than the three selected schools) was used to accommodate the SGB members. The researcher used the budget allocation and resources (e.g. photocopier and photocopying paper) for routine school development workshops to run the workshops. Donations could not be secured for the research.

Training manuals given to all public schools in the province in the recent past were used for the training and supplemented by manuals in possession of the researcher. There were no serious transport expenses since the majority of the participants lived within reasonable distance to the school where the training sessions were held. A participant indicated: *"We shall walk to and from the training venue because is near our places of abode".*

The exception was SGB members who stayed on farms, who were willing to pay for their own transportation expenses. Some of the SGB members made arrangements to stay with relatives and friends the day before the training sessions.

However, inadequate funding of training sessions is a threat to the success of a sustained training program for school governing bodies in the Free State Province. But through the will, dedication, commitment and motivation from individuals and SGB's, the training sessions were a resounding success. To this effect, SGB's resolved to budget for ongoing training in order to promote the effective functioning of SGB's at their schools.

Thus, provinces should fund training of SGB's but in many instances they do not. In such circumstances SGB's can improvise to fund their own training but must be motivated to do so. In spite of this being one of the tasks of the researcher, this training would not have taken place but for the commitment of all involved.

5.9.2 Lack of transport of SGB members

Despite the successful attendance at the training sessions, transportation of participants to the workshops still posed a problem as indicated. Even though most of the SGB members from the public schools in the township walked to and from the training venue, some still had to use taxis to the training centre and paid for themselves while others who lived further from the school were compensated by the SGB's themselves as per their own arrangements. A parent mentioned: *"The finance committee of the school promised to reimburse us for the necessary expenses incurred because of the training. We are actually on duty during the training".*

It is important to choose a venue, which is within walking distance of most SGB members. The main problem was with the SGB members who stayed on the farms. They had to take a bus and pay for their own transport. These SGB members could not claim their expenses from the SGB because the SGB did not have funds. For those SGB's who had funds, those funds were so meagre that they could not be used to reimburse. Since the Free State Education Department did not make funds available, the researcher could not assist the SGB members except on a personal level.

5.9.3 Language of training material

With the exception of some of the parent governors who could read and understand English, many parent governors had to rely on their listening skills for most of the time during the training sessions. The semi-illiterate parent governors disappointed that the training manuals were written in English only while there are eleven official languages in South Africa. One of them commented:

> *We are really not happy about the fact that all these manuals are written in English while we cannot read or hear any English. We are asking ourselves as to why don't we have training manuals written in Sesotho or IsiZulu for us?*

During the interviews with the researcher, SGB members indicated that they felt the training manual fell short of its aim by excluding some of the languages spoken by the majority of the population in South Africa. An educator participant warned: *"If we are not careful, history will judge us harshly by being oppressors of our own and other indigenous languages. It's like English is the only important language".*

Therefore, the participants criticised the dominant use of English at the expense of other indigenous languages as they felt this was unfair and detracted from development of the indigenous languages. It is therefore important for the provincial government to ensure that training of SGB members should be done in such a way that they reap the maximum benefit from it. In rural areas, in particular, this should include providing training manuals in the local language.

5.9.4 Lack of sensitivity to the needs of diverse group of SGB members

For the sake of transparency, openness and cost-effectiveness, all the different SGB member components were trained together. This approach was not appreciated by some participants, especially the parent members. A parent commented:

> *The training is good but I do not understand why are we not trained alone as it happened with our election. I feel embarrassed if I had to say I do not understand something in the presence of learners. It belittles me in front of the children. I would have been better to be trained separate from learners.*

The decision to train all SGB members together was based on providing cost-effective training. This also enhanced the credibility of the training even though it resulted in logistical challenges in terms of the preparation and facilitation of the training. Although the researcher was easily able to switch from one language to the other and to interpret some information during the training sessions, the facilitation of such a diverse group in terms of

languages caused some unnecessary tensions among the participants. Some of the SGB members perceived their language to be given priority (e.g. the IsiZulu speakers) whilst others (e.g. Sesotho speakers) felt that theirs was given less attention.

Moreover, to meet diverse groups requires a facilitator who is conversant with more than one language and who can still execute the training within the time frame. In addition, the combination of the different SGB components, namely learners, parents, educators, non-educators and principals, was problematic in terms of status and age gaps between participants. For example, in support of the concern raised by one parent, a learner confirmed:

> *We were at times afraid to ask some of the questions concerning the financial allocations for matric dance of the learners. Parents were saying the money belonged to them because we are not working. In a way we felt intimidated and decided to keep quiet.*

Nevertheless, it should be emphasised that the benefits of joint training for all the different categories of SGB's outweigh the disadvantages. In this way, all SGB members learn to work together as a unified team. Training can also be provided on cost-effectively.

5.9.5 Conclusions on the training of SGB's

Despite vehement feelings expressed by some of the SGB members about the training manuals written in English, all of the participants appreciated the kind of training offered to them. They felt that the training provided was both current and relevant because it met their expectations. They were satisfied with the content of the training sessions and the approach used. They regarded a series of workshops conducted over a long period better than one-off trainings because they believed that they had an opportunity to interact with the content and purpose of the training.

Thus, the participants confirmed during the interviews, the training programme for SGB's provided them with valuable information and skills that were fundamental to their successful governance responsibilities. Therefore, SGB members require ongoing training and support to ensure that they are up to date and empowered to discharge their responsibilities and duties in the SGB forums. This empowerment through the training can help to sustain or increase co-operation and accountability between and among SGB members concerning their tasks in a school.

5.10 ABILITY OF SGB MEMBERS TO FULFILL THEIR TASKS

SGB's are required to possess certain competencies in order to perform their governance tasks. The following section, which is not exhaustive, discusses some of the competencies required of SGB members to execute their tasks. It also examines these competencies prior to training and the effect SGB members felt training had on the fulfilment of their roles and tasks on the SGB.

5.10.1 Accountable and transparent financial management of the school

The SGB's confessed that they are aware of financial mismanagement at schools due to a lack of transparency and accountability by school administrators. An educator governor from School C alleged that school funds were not properly controlled:

> *Sometimes principals accuse us of disloyalty when we want to know about the financial status of the school. It is embarrassing to learn at the general parents meeting that the school coffers are drying up and you don't know but you are the member of the SGB. Only finance committee members know about the financial position of the school as privileged members.*

School principals as accounting officials of their institutions did not monitor the expenditure patterns of their institutions. The principal of School A confirmed in an interview with the researcher, by saying:

> *You know what, it is so difficult for people to accept a 'no' for an answer when they need something out of school funds. All the committees want to spend their allocated amounts at the beginning of the year and end up overspending. When you tell them about the budget they accuse you of hoarding the school money for your personal use.*

The result of this is unauthorised expenditures by some members of SGB's. This attitude might lead to a situation where some of the principals feel inadequate to control the finances of the school as accounting officers of their institutions.

After the training of the SGB's on the financial management of the school, a more positive approach was adopted. The roles and responsibilities of the principal and finance committee were clarified and understood by all the stakeholders. A member of the school finance committee of School B remarked: *"I didn't know that the finance committee was to be chaired by another member of the SGB and that the SGB has to appoint the principal in writing as an accounting officer".*

After being trained the SGB's appointed in writing the principals of schools as accounting officers in accordance with the provincial guidelines on school financial management. The elected finance committees also compiled monthly reports and reported to the whole SGB every time they had their meetings. This did not happen before the training of the SGB members. In addition, quarterly reports, including the financial position of the school, were sent out to parents. Principals worked jointly with the financial committee and consulted with other members. An educator member of School B confirmed: "*The principal is an equal member of the SGB who is giving us advice that as*

the finance committee of the school we must make it a point that the financial report is a standing item on all the meetings of the SGB's".

This management approach dispelled perceptions of a lack of transparency. The school budget was strictly monitored in terms of expenditure and income and communicated to all the school community members. All relevant documents and records like analysis books, receipt books and bank deposit books were locked in the strong room of schools for safety.

During interviews some members confessed that principals had been falsely accused of financial mismanagement because people did not know how and for what the money was used. However, the knowledge gained during training would now prevent situation.

5.10.2 Implementation of the SGB constitution

The SGB constitution generally stipulates that SGB members should be involved in drawing up all school policies, including their constitution. Prior to the training SGB's of the participating schools did not have constitutions developed all SGB members. In most cases principals alone developed these documents without involving other stakeholders in the process. The principal of School A admitted:

> *I used the expertise of educators in the process of formulating school policies and only took such to the SGB and the parent community for ratification. Most of the parents are not educated and those that are, do not have time or necessary skills to assist the process.*

Another problem encountered was that although policies existed, they were not implemented. For example, the constitutions of SGB's were not fully implemented in the selected schools despite the fact that they were in place. The initial failure to implement the SGB constitution could be attributed to a lack of understanding about the importance and the rationale of such a policy. Some SGB members indicated that some SGB constitutions were adopted

from other schools. They accepted them without acknowledging the context of the schools from which they came and without adapting them in any way.

The SGB members also acknowledged that the constitutions had not been implemented.

> *To be honest and self-critical, I want to believe that we are not following our constitution to the letter. For example one member did stay away for more than three meetings without giving written reasons. We did not say he has terminated his membership because he is such an important and helpful person in the SGB.*

This lack of adherence to the policies is problematic. However, the SGB's realised that the proper application of the law very important for legislation to have only meaning. A learner remarked:

> *Law is law. Rules must be applied to all of us equally fair. We must not judge people against their family background but according to the nature of their problem. We must not say this one comes from a rich family or has money and therefore turn a blind eye to his sins.*

Participants noted that, for them to govern well, they had to understand the importance of legislation and should ensure that it is applied correctly and consistently.

After training the dealing with the constitution of SGB's, all the participants came to understand the critical importance of the constitution of the SGB's. As a result, there was a great improvement in the review of existing policies, such as the SGB constitution, and the developments of new policies because of the involvement of all the stakeholders, including learners in Schools B and C.

All the SGB's committed themselves to ensuring the consistent implementation of their constitutions. The participants realised that it was important to had constitution as basis for school governance, but most

importantly agreed that such documents must be referred to regularly. In this way, a constitution is a living document guiding the operations of the SGB's. Moreover, policies should be reviewed and developed to align with the latest developments in education. A parent explained:

> *Without the constitution, an SGB cannot exist. There is nothing an SGB can do without this important document. Without a constitution an SGB does not have a leg to stand on. It is the legal requirement of all SGB's.*

This is important as SGB's are regarded as a juristic person in terms of the SASA. Before the training, all SGB's of the three selected schools had pro forma constitutions, which were not adopted. After the training all SGB members, SGB's particularised their constitutions to reflect their vision. The constitutions were adopted as a sign of ownership by the SGB's. A constitution of a SGB is legal document adopted by SGB members which stipulates what the SGB of a particular stands for. It contains a set of rules and procedures of how the SGB has to function and what should happen if members of the SGB fail to conduct themselves in accordance with the vision of the SGB.

5.10.3 Promoting the best interests of the school community

In accordance with the SASA, the SGB's are compelled to promote the best interests of their schools and to strive to ensure their development through the provision of quality education for all learners at school. It is assumed that quality education can only be achieved where all members of the SGB should respect each other as equals. They should all have a common goal of doing the best for the school. This was not always the case, and the relationship between parents and learners on the SGB was often strained.

The majority of parents felt that learners will always remain learners no matter what, as confirmed by the comment of a parent from School B: *"Their (learners) being in the SGB does not suddenly make them adults. Children*

will remain children. I know that some of them also have kids, but that does not make them adults in terms of age and behaviour".

At the beginning of the training sessions some parent governors mentioned that they did not like to be trained with the learner governors. But with passage of time it was observed that this negative perception about the learner governors gradually changed.

Following the training of SGB's, all the participants came to an understanding of a democratic approach to school governance. During interviews with the researcher, the learner governors confirmed that they were respected for their good behaviour and the maturity they have showed when debating issues with other SGB members, such as budgeting for school activities. The learner governors were observed to be making constructive inputs during the SGB meetings especially with regard to drawing up a code of conduct for learners. At the end, the learner governors felt accepted as equals on the SGB because everything was debated in an open and a transparent manner. It was observed that learners took it upon themselves to request temporary withdrawal from SGB meetings when sensitive and serious matters concerning adults were discussed.

Learner governors viewed themselves as respected and valued by the other SGB members on an equal basis. All the governors regarded their working relations to be based on mutual respect because of the equal treatment they received within the SGB. The learner governors also reciprocated the positive treatment and respect they received from other SGB members who regarded them as future adults.

5.10.4 Implementing and monitoring of the Learner Admission Policy

The admission policy of a public school is determined by the governing body of the school in terms of Section 5 (5) of the SASA. The SGB must make a copy of the school's admission policy available to the Head of Education in the province. Furthermore, the Head of Department in the province and the

SGB's should encourage parents to apply for the admission of their children before the end of the preceding year. The SGB members perceived the admission of learners to their schools to be without discrimination or prejudice. One parent commented: *"We admit any learner who meets the requirements on the first come, first serve basis until the school is full. Learners who stay in the feeder zone of the school receive first preference".*

Many SGB members were aware that education was a right and not a privilege. To this end the SGB was observed motivating parents to enrol their children in the school. For example, one parent recalled:

> *During our times things were tough. We were oppressed by the discriminatory laws, which denied us education. It is our duty and responsibility to ensure that our children are not subjected to the same conditions that we were subjected to. We must create space and opportunity for our children to learn.*

The SASA prohibits SGB's from administering any form of testing on the admission of learners or direct the principal of the school or any other person to administer such test.

The principal of School C alerted the SGB members to high school fees charged by other SGB's as a barrier to the admission of learners to school.

> *When SGB's set fees, they should be accommodative of those parents who cannot afford the fees. Mechanisms are available to SGB's to employ in order to assist those who are unable to pay – exempting their parents from paying the school fees – in accordance with their circumstances.*

Following the training of SGB's, the participants indicated that their experience was that most of the learners of school going age were in school. A commitment was made by the SGB's to identify learners who might not be attending school in order to assist them to return to school. The majority of the

SGB members felt that some learners might be out school because of other reasons not related to the schools' admission policies or rules. SGB members were confident that the schools were doing everything possible to provide quality education to all the learners. All the SGB members made a commitment to abide by the principle that recognises education as a right to all the learners.

The governing body of a school must inform all parents of learners admitted to a school of their rights and obligations in terms of the SASA including the admission policy for ordinary public schools.

Training assisted SGB's to draw up admissions policies that were compatible with the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa and the laws and regulations governing education. For instance, SGB members became aware that they cannot adopt discriminatory admission policies in terms of race or religious belief.

5.10.5 Realisation of the Education and Religion Policy

According to the *National Policy on Religion and Education* (DE 2003b:10), South Africa is a multi-religious country with over 60% of the population claiming allegiance to Christianity. The aim of this policy is to extend the concept of equity to the relationship between religion and education, in a way that recognises the rich religious diversity of our land. The policy is not prescriptive, but provides a framework for schools to determine policies, and for parents and communities to be better informed of their rights and responsibilities with regard to religion and education (DE 2003b:13).

In accordance with the Constitution, the SASA, and rules made by the appropriate authorities, the SGB of a public school may make their facilities available for religious observances, in the context of free and voluntary association, provided that facilities are made available on an equitable basis. An SGB member indicated this:

> *We have developed a policy of renting the school facilities for fundraising activity as well as to make our school the centre of community life. In this way, the community members feel that they have the ownership of the school. Incidences of vandalism have been greatly reduced.*

It was observed that many of the SGB members were not aware of the religion policy in education even though a few had an idea of a wide variety of religious traditions. It was also observed that SGB's had problems with the implementation of the Education Religion Policy. For example, the SGB of School A insisted that the majority of their learners come from Christian background and therefore they wished to adopt Christianity as the religion to be practised at their school. It is questionable whether the SGB members are doing enough to ensure that the religion policy in education becomes a success. At the assemblies of both School B and School C held every Friday of the week, no efforts were made to invite religious leaders of other faiths besides Christians, to the schools to address the school community about their faith.

Following training, all the SGB's that attended training became aware of the Religion Policy in the education fraternity. SGB's realised the importance of adopting and implementing the Religion Policy in their schools in a fair and equitable manner. It was established through the interviews that Christianity still enjoys more support at the expense of the other religions despite the stipulations of the policy on religion, which advocates that all religions should enjoy equal treatment and exposure. SGB's realise that they are required to determine the nature and content of religious observances for educators and learners, such that coherence and alignment with the Education and Religion Policy and applicable laws are achieved.

5.10.6 Respect for Codes of Conduct for Learners and for educator-governors

The three SGB's that participated in the project have adopted codes of conduct for both learners and governors. The perceptions of SGB members

were amongst others, that a considerable number of learners are violating their own code of conduct. For example a participant remarked: *"It has become a common sight of learners, including RCL members to arrive late at school and to bunk classes. Then one is left wondering as to what kind of leadership are we grooming".*

According to the governors these actions constituted disrespect for the code of conduct for learners. A school principal mentioned that it was not only the learners who violated their code of conduct but SGB members also failed to respect their own code of conduct.

> *The same applies to the other SGB members who would absent themselves many times from meetings without valid reasons for that matter. This type of attitude resulted in the postponement of meetings unnecessarily even when urgent pressing matters had to be discussed. The SGB members seem to have forgotten that they made a commitment to honour and to uphold their own codes of good practice.*

A code of conduct for educators is set out by the *South African Council of Educators* (SACE), a statutory independent professional structure with compulsory membership for educators in public and private institutions (RSA 2000). One objective of the SACE is to set, maintain and protect ethical and professional standards for educators (RSA 2000). However, a school principal registered a concern about the unbecoming behaviour of some educators: *"The way some of the educators misbehave, you can think that there are no disciplinary measures taken against them, which include dismissals".* This suggests that the SACE has difficulty in disciplining the defaulting educators who are found guilty of misconduct.

Following the training of SGB members, it was observed that SGB's had developed Codes of Conduct for learners and those policies were also monitored by the SGB members. The learner governors became aware that a code of conduct should be respected by all learners. SGB's drafted and

adopted procedures in case of disciplinary measures for learners who have defaulted.

SGB's were also made more aware of codes of conduct drawn up specifically to regulate their behaviour. It should be noted that there are as yet no guidelines drafted regarding the code of conduct for SGB members by the Head of Department in the province, as required by SASA as amended.

The SGB's learned that the code of conduct for educators is not their responsibility but it is the professional responsibility of the principal. Likewise, the SGB has been made aware that the issue of disciplining educators is not within their area of jurisdiction.

5.10.7 Blurring of management and governance responsibilities

According to Section 16 (1) of the SASA, the governance of every public school is vested in its governing body and it may perform only such functions and obligations and exercise only such rights as prescribed by the Act. Section 16 (3) of SASA stipulates that the professional management of a public school must be undertaken by the principal under the authority of the Head of Education in the province. SGB members concurred that there was an overlap between the management and governance responsibilities, which sometimes resulted in conflicts. The principal of School C elaborated:

> *The SGB, especially the chairperson does not know where to stop sometimes. He just comes to school without appointment and wants to get in the classrooms to monitor the delivery of quality teaching. This is as a result of the grey area between the governance and professional duties. Getting into classrooms by the SGB chair is way beyond the area of jurisdiction of the SGB.*

It was observed that where healthy working relations existed between the SGB's and principals of schools there were no problems identified even if the responsibilities overlapped. The opposite was also true. Some SGB members

mentioned in an interview that, in some instances the overlap between management and governance responsibilities caused confusion and frustration. The lack of clear boundaries between the management and governance functions resulted in the encroachment of the area of jurisdiction of one party by the other.

Following training, there was a better understanding of the tasks of each of the stakeholders. Difference of opinions could be accepted in good spirit. Problems were resolved before reaching a point that could hamper good working relations among the SGB members.

5.10.8 Learner pregnancy and school rules

The SASA require SGB's to formulate and implement school rules. These rules assist SGB's to govern their school and to control the actions and behaviour of learners. All the school rules formulated and adopted by the schools should be within the confines of the Constitution and the SASA. Sometimes the wishes of the parents are curtailed by the provision of the law. As a democracy South Africa has to respect rights enshrined in the Constitution including the rights of learners to education. Should female learners fall pregnant while still attending school, the law protects their right to receive education and prevents discrimination. This policy is often not supported by SGB members.

A great number of learners fall pregnant and drop out of school. Some of them leave the school system permanently and nobody knows what finally happens to them. Calls by the Department of Education to keep children in school, especially girls, and to provide quality education to them, is difficult against the background of teenage pregnancy, which defeats the aim of school attendance.

The concern of a non-educator in School C was striking. She commented:

> *I am worried about learner pregnancy but more worried about them [learners] contracting AIDS. I am wondering if we are winning the battle to combat the spread of HIV/AIDS seeing that a significant number of girls still drop out of school due to teenage pregnancy. But the mere fact that our learners get pregnant, to me is obvious that they care less about the prevention of the spread of HIV/AIDS. This is actually a double jeopardy that we have to deal with, namely teenage pregnancy and the spread of HIV/AIDS.*

The problem of learner pregnancy is prevalent is secondary schools. However, incidents of learner pregnancy have been noted even among primary school learners. A parent of School A said:

> *You will not believe that one of our challenges is to talk to the parents to take their children for prevention of unwanted pregnancy. Our children at the age of 13 or 14 got pregnant. As a precautionary measure their parents should encourage them to use contraceptives. There is little that we can do as parents because we are not with these children all day long.*

The law protects pregnant learners. Thus, SGB's do not have power to expel such learners from school. However, many members of the SGB's disagreed on this point. The principal of School B expressed disapproval, saying:

> *It is clear that learners have unlimited rights. I guess it's like girls also have rights to be pregnant while boys on the other hand have rights to impregnate girls. The right to education seems to be the overriding one to protect these girls to continue schooling regardless of their pregnant status.*

It appears the training was able to ensure a better understanding of the laws governing pregnant learners but in general could not change the perception that allowing pregnant learners to remain in school undermines discipline at the school.

5.10.9 Interviewing educators for posts/promotions

In accordance with SASA, it is the responsibility of SGB's to recommend to the Head of Department in a province the appointment of educators and non-teaching personnel. The duty of SGB's is to shortlist and to conduct interviews for vacancies that exist at schools. It should be noted that this is one of the most challenging tasks SGB's have to perform. A parent confirmed:

> *The department is putting down many rules and regulations, which we have to follow when we want to appoint educators. We know which educator is working and who is not working. But we are not allowed to choose our man without interviewing. Interviews are not fair because some people talk nicely to impress the SGB.*

An educator governor expressed his discontent about the low levels of competency of some SGB members, saying:

> *The greatest challenge we have as SGB's is concerning the conduction of proper job interview, especially with the parent component. Some of our parents struggle even to read a question that has been written down for them. That is very embarrassing when a principal of a school is being interviewed for example.*

Despite the training offered by the Department of Education, high levels of illiteracy among the parent components in the SGB's is the main problem contributing to the optimal functionality of SGB's as this relates to interviewing of educators for new posts or promotions. The problem of language as indicated earlier in this report, adds to the questionable level of competency of SGB's in that some languages seem to receive priority at the expense of others depending on the local situation or context.

The result is that some SGB members who are educated tend to abuse their position at the expense of those who are poorly educated when formulating or

interpreting questions, especially in English for those candidates who might not understand the locally used language. As a result all SGB members are accused of corruption and favouritism. This is a problem in one of the schools researched as it relates to the task of SGB members to make recommendations to the Head of the Department in the province to appoint new educators or to promote those that are already employed. A parent complained:

> *In some of the instances, it is labour unions that are corrupt because they encourage and accepts bribes from some of the SGB members just to have their so-called comrades appointed. Due to intimidation of SGB members by education labour unions and acceptance of bribes by both unions and SGB's reciprocally, wrong or non-deserving appointees find themselves working.*

However, after the training of SGB members it seemed this practice was discontinued. Disputes are handled professionally with due consideration of laws and resolutions taken at the Education Labour Relations Councils (ELRC). Training ensured that SGB's and union members work co-operatively for the success of school governance.

5.10.10 Observing meeting protocols by SGB's

Correct procedures for meetings must be observed for optimal efficiency. In one school it was observed that there was little team spirit among SGB members. The SGB chairperson frequently dominated the meeting instead of directing its course. The chairperson is a shop steward for municipality workers at the local government where he is employed. The principal tried on numerous occasions with little success to call the chairperson to order during meetings. Tension resulted due to different opinions on how to run the meeting. Many SGB members were not actively involved in the meeting except for simply nodding or saying murmuring to show their support of an idea under discussion.

The SGB kept all the records for the meeting. These included but were not limited to invitations, attendance registers, minute book and financial records. However, minutes were not read and adopted because the secretary of the SGB did not have time to write detailed minutes. Apologies were not noted or recorded. A participant complained:

> *Matters are discussed endlessly. Lengthy and directionless meetings are tiring and boring. At times you find that we have wasted more time but achieved less. As a result some of the members just disappear during the course of the meeting without even apologising or indicating that they are leaving the meeting.*

In School B, the chairperson did her best to control the meeting relying on her professional skills as a teacher. There was a good understanding between her and the principal. However, the meeting did not start on time as indicated in the invitations. At school B, inviting people to meetings also proved difficult. An educator explained: *"Some of the members cannot read or write. We therefore invite them verbally a day before the day of the meeting".* The observation of meetings at this school proved that this practice works because nobody claimed to have forgotten about the meeting despite the fact that the correct procedure was not followed. The meeting was opened with a prayer by a parent member.

It was observed that the SGB members participated optimally in the proceedings of the meeting. On the other hand, SGB members did not show due respect when they arrived late for the meeting. In addition, members spoke without waiting to be given the opportunity to speak by the chairperson. Even on matters that the chairperson had made a ruling, some members of the SGB wanted to re-open the discussion. Meeting procedures were not observed. Learner members were passive for most of the meeting while educators dominated the discussions of the SGB.

In School C, the chairperson was very serious about starting and running the meeting on time. Some members arrived late for the meeting, to which the

chairperson responded: *"People will have to respect the importance of time. The respect for time will enable our meetings to start and finish on time. This will leave more time for other members to attend other matters".*

However, the punctual commencement of the meeting meant that a quorum was not formed and some decisions were not valid. The venue was not well organised for the meeting because members of the SGB, especially those who arrived late had to look for chairs.

Minutes of the previous meeting(s) were not read or discussed, as was the case at School A. However, invitations were sent out in time to SGB members, who acknowledged them by signing alongside their names on the invitation circular for SGB members. Learners were invited to the meeting by word of mouth. The chairperson of School C works at the local supermarket and is a respected community member. No proper records were kept for the meeting.

Following the training of SGB's, meetings at all three schools were properly constituted and conducted. All the principals worked co-operatively with the SGB chairpersons. The SGB chairpersons confirmed that they felt empowered to conduct and control meetings. Principals reported less stress because meetings were conducted correctly with little or no assistance from them. However, not all sub-committees of SGB's were in place nor chaired by SGB members due to the poor education levels of some SGB members.

After training, proper records of the SGB's were kept in all three schools. These included invitations, attendance registers and minutes. Secretaries gained note-taking skills. The chairpersons were respected and not disrupted by other SGB members while directing the meetings. SGB members waited for the chairperson to give them the opportunity to speak following the procedures for the meeting. The minutes of the SGB meetings were properly validated through the adoption of the minutes by the meeting.

5.11 FACTORS IMPACTING ON THE ROLES OF SGB MEMBERS

SGB members have to fulfil many roles and these are influenced by the context of the particular school community. During the general training of SGB members, all aspects of the roles/tasks of SGB members were dealt with. However, most schools had problems specific to their schools and communities. During the training programme, a number of aspects were mentioned by participants. According to Lewis et al (1998:446) factors like school organisation, climate and curriculum relevance, impact on the ability of SGB's to execute their duties. Therefore, the context within which SGB's work is important to understand the challenges they face in fulfilling their governance roles. Some of the contextual and other factors identified in this study, which impact on school life are discussed in the following paragraphs.

5.11.1 Societal problems impact on the functions of the SGB

The issue of orphan learners has relevance for SGB's. According to Section 20 (1) (a) of the SASA the SGB of a "public school must – 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". The SGB cannot ensure the provision of the quality education for all the learners if the interests of the orphans are not taken care of. The high rate of orphans is both a social and a school problem. In accordance with the principal of School A:

> *The number of orphans is on the rise, whether due to HIV/AIDS or not, I cannot tell. But one thing for sure we cannot feed the needy and hungry learners that we have at the school. Children are children you know, even those learners who have parents, it is not all of them who get a decent meal at their home.*

One educator governor at the same school added:

> *Some of us as the educators do sacrifice a lot for the orphans and poor learners. Every month we donate something towards a fund meant to augment what the government is providing for kids. This need not be*

> *money only but anything ranging from extra groceries left at our homes to old or unused clothes.*

The school and the broader community is planning to harness all potential helpers to solve the problem of orphaned learners who live alone. One parent governor of school B said:

> *Why don't we think broadly and act locally? If we have projects like 'adopt-a-cop' we can also have our own 'adopt-an-orphan' project. Each SGB member or anybody in the community can sort of adopt an orphan or learners staying alone and help.*

Meeting the basic needs of orphaned learners will encourage their school attendance. Educators can understand the classroom problems of their learners better and assist accordingly before the future of these learners is ruined. Frustrations experienced by some educators in class can be reduced if not eradicated as indicated by a remark from an educator in School B:

> *You will find a child not concentrating in the classroom and wonder whether he/she is hungry or sick. Some come to school without having done their homework and even end up literally sleeping in the classroom. When investigating, one would find that such a child did not sleep well let alone doing the schoolwork because he/she was caring for a sick parent, small as they are.*

The SGB cannot execute its duty of ensuring quality education if orphans in their schools are hungry. The problem of orphaned learners is not new but is growing at an alarming rate and threatens the SGB's ability to promote the best interests of the school and the provision of quality education for all learners at the school.

Discussion

As an official of the Free State provincial education department, the researcher was aware that the number of orphans had increased as reflected in the orphan surveys of the provincial Education Management Information Systems (EMIS) data. The same argument holds true for the increasing number of learners with single parents as captured by the provincial Orphan Survey forms. The data is used by the Free State province for planning as well as by school management officials, principals and SGB's to manage their schools.

During the Provincial Launch of food parcels for orphans by the MEC for Education in the Free State, Mrs M.A. Tsopo, in Harrismith on the 25 January 2005, the department committed itself to increase the budget from R4 million for 2004/5 to R12 million for the financial year 2005/6 to feed 287 000 orphans in the province in both primary and secondary schools.

It is also important to note the document compiled by the National Department of Education to guide school governing bodies (and school management teams) in developing HIV and AIDS plans for their schools. The document states:

> *In South Africa the HIV epidemic has already reached the stage of generalised infection. It is estimated between 4.5 and 4.8 million people are infected with HIV. Approximately 350 000 people are already sick and dying of AIDS (DE 2003a:4).*

Participants indicated that the rate of absenteeism from school and the rate of mortality at their schools for both learners and educators has increased. According to the *National Policy on HIV/AIDS, for Learners and Educators in Public Schools, and Students and Educators in Further Education and Training Institutions,* it is stipulated that:

> *In order to meet the demands of the wide variety of circumstances posed by the South African community and to acknowledge the importance of governing bodies and parents in the education*

> *partnership within the broad principles of this policy, the South African Schools Act of 1996 and any applicable provincial law, should develop and adopt an HIV/AIDS implementation plan that would reflect the needs, ethos and values of a specific school and its community (DE 1999:16).*

The facts presented in the above paragraph are alarming and hold serious implications for SGB's in South Africa, which have to promote the best interests of the school as well as ensure the development of the provision of quality education for all learners, including orphans in schools. Thus, additional training sessions after the first general training were important to identify specific problems.

After training SGB members understood that it was their duty to ensure that the Codes of Conduct adopted for learners at a school should include provisions regarding the unacceptability of behaviour that may create the risk of HIV transmission. SGB members were advised to plan for and to manage the impact of HIV/AIDS. In their meetings and workshops, SGB members should advocate responsible sexual behaviour by all stakeholders.

5.11.2 The impact of customs and traditions on school attendance

The insistence on the practising of customs and certain rites by traditional leaders in certain communities disrupts schooling, especially where such practices are incompatible with the vision of the SGB's to ensure quality education for all learners at their schools. Regular school attendance is one of the indirect responsibilities of SGB's to ensure quality education for learners. The practice of initiation has implications for SGB's, who in terms of Section 8 of the SASA has to adopt a code of conduct for learners with the aim of establishing a disciplined and purposeful school environment, dedicated to the improvement and maintenance of the quality of the learning process.

SGB's have to ensure that no learner is exempted from the obligation to comply with the code of conduct of the school attended by such learner. This

includes the stipulation that learners may only be absent from school due to illness. Additional training assisted SGB members greatly in understanding that failure to comply with the code of conduct for learners at a particular school by learners necessitated the implementation of disciplinary measures by the SGB of that school. This ensured that SGB's were empowered to enforce the code of conduct of its learners. Likewise, the *Regulations to Prohibit Initiation Practices in Schools* is aimed at assisting the process of effective teaching and learning in schools. It stipulates:

> If any initiation practices or acts take place through the actions of learners, the governing body as the authority responsible for the discipline of learners, must take appropriate action in terms of section 8 of the Act or a Code of Conduct to prevent such practices and to protect learners from such practices (DE 2002b: 70).

The principal of School B raised concern about some cultural observances as practised by initiation schools which destabilise effective teaching and learning:

> *Another challenge we have as SGB members is the issue of initiation schools, which disrupts effective teaching and learning. Please you must understand me well. I do not say initiation schools do not have a place in the new democracy. What I am saying is that the timing of the initiation schools is not favourable for learners. Learners are kept there for long and do not return in time to complete their academic year. In many instances these initiation schools are run during the middle of the academic year and …we see learners going away to such schools and leave schooling behind. Some never come back to continue with their education, hence leave school early and do not complete at least even grade 12.*

The view of an educator governor of School C concurs with the concerns raised in the preceding paragraph:

> *It really makes one to wonder whether some parents are serious about the education of their children. By the time the initiates finish with their cultural customs and return to school, they are already behind with their education. It then becomes a problem how to catch up with their fellow learners who were at school all along.*

A non-educator governor of School C added:

> *Apart from being behind with their schoolwork these learners who are from the initiation schools pose additional behavioural problems. They all of a sudden think they are men and women who have graduated from the traditional initiation schools. The majority of them do not respect educators or anybody else for that matter, who has never been to the initiation school. Cultural values and beliefs seem to gain an upper hand at the expense of formal education.*

All the participants shared the same sentiments about the influence of initiation schools on the schooling of learners. A parent in School B commented:

> *We are not criticising initiation schools but what we should be saying is that parents have to get their priorities in order. We should encourage communities to get education first then the observation of cultural values and beliefs can follow. In reality the two aspects cannot be separated. Initiation schools have been part of existence for this community for many years gone by. What we should be aiming at is to make sure that the time of running these initiation schools should be during school holidays and it should not disrupt or interfere with the academic school calendar.*

It is recommended that school communities, through SGB's and the broader community, should synchronise their plans to accommodate each other's needs and visions about education. SGB members were advised to realise that times are changing and so are the demands of life. It is not wrong to

practise customs and traditions but these practices should not interfere with the provision of formal education. However, every nation has a right to exercise its belief in terms of customs and traditions among other rights. Initiation rites are some of the customary rights that have been and are practised by certain ethnic groups in South Africa. However, this should not conflict with schooling.

Discussion

Cultural traditions associated with the transition to adulthood are not new. In a study to determine communication strategies of women in educational management by Thakathi and Lemmer (2002:110), it was found that:

> In South Africa male dominance frequently pervade in black schools. In this inquiry, a male educator referred to gender-specific men's talk, "In our culture [black], when we speak as boys, we are more arrogant when we talk to girls, because we were taught in the initiation school that if you are a man you have to be seen to speak as a man does. So, in a way, when I am speaking with a woman then I must show [this].

While being sensitive to and appreciative of traditional customs and norms, lessons have to be learnt to transcend cultural barriers to communication and the manner in which education is acquired. With regard to the relation between culture and education, Capotorti (1991:60) states that the mere existence of cultural rights presupposes the right to education, for example, as set forth in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).

In other words, it can be stated that there can be no right to culture without at least a minimum of education (Mothata & Lemmer 2002:106). Education (formal or informal) is the key to unlocking the potential growth of any cultural belief and values. To conclude, it should be emphasised that the practice of customs and traditions, though being essential aspects of socialization, should not be realised at the expense of formal education as a form of social development. Thus, educational policy is a key element in evaluating the

situation of members of a community with regard to their rights to enjoy their own culture (Wallace 1997:206). This topic was addressed to the satisfaction of the SGB members during the training sessions.

5.11.3 The impact of violence and gangsterism on school attendance

Gangsterism and violence, within the community threaten the safety and discipline within schools. Therefore, SGB's are the legal structures that have to ensure the safety and discipline of learners at school in terms of Section 8 of the SASA. A parent in School B argued that in some cases gangs and violence in schools could be related to initiation at schools.

> *We are experiencing a problem of gangsterism in our community started by the initiates who come from different initiation schools. As a result this type of a situation lead to a power struggle as to which group or gang is strong to control the terrain. Innocent people become targets of crime and violence.*

However, the problem is more complex and other societal issues, such as lack of parental guidance, contribute to violence and gangsterism. The need to address the situation before it gets out of hand was realised by one educator in School C:

> *The sooner we address this problematic situation the better. I know that this kind of a situation will need long-term intervention strategy. We must adopt a multidisciplinary approach whereby all stakeholders and experts get involved. As an educator who deals with the school safety project, it should be our objective to create safe schools. We cannot talk of safe schools if within our schools we have the element of hooligans. Vulnerable learners and educators end-up being victims of these gangsters or thugs that have become a threat to peace and order in our communities. Drug misuse and abuse result from irresponsible thugs. In the final analyses nobody will be safe.*

Therefore, for additional training of SGB members is necessary to assist them on dealing with these issues.

Discussion

According to the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English* (Crowther 1995:486), a gang is defined as "… a group of especially young people who go around together and often cause trouble". According to the *South Africa Yearbook 2004/5* (RSA 2004:450), "…violence is defined as a controlling and abusive behaviour that harms the health, safety or well-being of the victim" while Martin Luther as quoted by MacDonald (1997:144) concurs by saying that: "Violence is anything that denies human dignity and leads to a sense of helplessness or hopelessness".

As indicated by participants the problem of gangs emerges as a direct consequence of initiation schools. Young people, often learners, from initiation schools group themselves accordingly and start to develop their own group. In most cases these groups form at school where petty crimes and violence typify certain groups according to the geographical area where the young people were initiated. These gangs grow in size and stature and their activities extend beyond the school premises and develop into street gangs that terrorise the community.

In conclusion, *Regulations for Safety Measures at Public Schools* stipulates that: "Public schools must encourage governing body members and parents to participate in community policing forums" (DE 2001:67).

Such voluntary community service can greatly assist in eradicating violent behaviour and curbing gangsterism. Violence and gangsterism can be regarded as threats to peace, safety and order in schools. SGB members were advised to draw up and adopt school safety policies to prevent such problems. Training of SGB members helped the SGB's to deal with the problem. They realised that they had to work in partnership with other

stakeholders in combating violence and that they need policies as a foundation for their operations.

5.11.4 Difficulty of accessing information

SGB members can only be effective if they have access to relevant information. However, in some cases it appears that privileged information was withheld from SGB members. A participant of School C complained:

> *We do not get prompt feedback from some of our colleagues when they had attended workshops or meetings. We do not get the information when it is still fresh but when it is actually stale and irrelevant.*

An educator governor at the same school shares this concern: *"I am sorry to say that more often than not our head of institution leaves much to be desired. How can one provide support and guidance if one lacks information?"*

According to a participant of School C the reason why SGB's lacked information was:

> *Principals deliberately hide information from educators probably because they do not want SGB members to be informed or to be empowered. I have seen this many a times at school here and it will become worse with the new and ignorant SGB. The principal is the only person knowledgeable and would sometimes agree that he/she forgot to distribute some information provided that the information was of no use anymore.*

It can be concluded that the causes of lack of information vary. Some reasons appear to be deliberate although this is difficult to prove. Lack of information can result in incapacity of relevant stakeholders to play a meaningful role in the governance of the school. For example, governors cannot make inputs in the SGB if important information is not made available to them. However,

SGB members are sometimes guilty of not giving feedback to those who elected them. Privileged information obtained by principals because of their position should be disclosed to or made accessible to others.

Discussion

Lack of information can be attributed to many factors. Access to information is one of the fundamental rights for all citizens in South Africa including SGB members. Principals have a responsibility and duty to avail information to all stakeholders. Principals are frequently hurt by the allegation that information was purposefully withheld from other stakeholders. This information is privileged information but treated as entitlement by the alleged principal.

The position of principals gives them the privilege of receiving firsthand information by virtue of authority vested in them. This may lead to the abuse or misuse of power. Principals and those in positions of authority in schools must be made aware that they are bound to disseminate information to other stakeholders while it is still fresh and useful for the benefit of the institution. Structures like the SGB, RCL and educator unions, among others, can be of great help if given relevant information on time in terms of school governance. During training, the SGB members were advised to adopt a policy of making information accessible to all members except for confidential information which has to be handled by the principal and the SGB chair as matters warrant. Information should also be made available timeously to other members of the SGB.

5.11.5 Increased learner misconduct

There was a general perception that misconduct of learners was increasing. This was blamed on societal factors, as well as on the prohibition of corporal punishment in schools. Many participants, except learner governors, agreed that because of the lack of discipline, most learners have become disrespectful. As one non-educator of School B remarked:

> *Truly speaking, there is no respect in schools anymore. Our children have no morals. They are not ashamed of kissing each other in public. This is a shame! Instead you as an elder person you will be the one to feel small. But in the olden days we used to respect everybody especially elder people regardless whether they knew you of not. Today educators and principals cannot enforce school rules because learners know that if they can transgress nothing will happen to them.*

The majority of governors viewed the abolishment of corporal punishment with mixed feelings. The parent governors viewed the state's abolishment of corporal punishment as a "raw deal" they had received in the name of democracy. A parent in School A criticised the government:

> *I cannot express my disappointment in our government of the day for abolishing corporal punishment. They [government officials] themselves were punished but they passed laws that prevent us from instilling discipline in our children.*

The principal of School B agreed with the sentiments expressed by the educator.

> *The abolishment of corporal punishment has really brought more harm than good to our schools. Learners are without discipline or respect because they know that they cannot be corporally punished. It is so difficult, if not impossible, to have control over learners without a stick and still have order.*

Likewise parent governors regarded the lack of discipline by learners as a direct consequence of the banning of corporal punishment. A parent in School A commented:

> *We [parents] were beaten during our school days and nothing happened to us. Did we die? No, here we are still alive and kicking! I*

> *am not even written on my face that I was beaten. In fact my educators opened my eyes and my mind.*

The majority of educator governors confessed that alternative measures to corporal punishment were ineffective in disciplining learners. An educator in School C contended:

> *In the meantime the government has failed to provide educators with something tangible as an alternative to corporal punishment. Even the publication at giving guidelines about alternative methods to corporal punishment is very theoretical and does not provide tangible strategies to replace the abolished corporal punishment. The result is that learners do anyhow they please and there is nothing you can do as an educator. You dare touch them and they lay an assault charge against you, then you will rot in jail and lose your job in the final analysis.*

In contrast, some SGB members felt that corporal punishment was unacceptable because it was administered in a cruel and inhumane manner. A comment by an educator in School B indicated:

> *Tough as it may be, together we can make it happen. It is public knowledge that corporal punishment has been abolished and therefore we must look for other means for making our learners to behave like human beings without degrading them. It is a fact that some of the educators enjoyed inflicting pain onto others. That I might say was good for barbarians and not for civilised people in a democracy.*

The majority of parent governors blamed the lack of discipline by learners on a plethora of human rights. A parent in School B complained: *"Learners seem to be in control of all the situations while we as parents are actually at their mercy. Our own children have become almost untouchable. There is nothing you can tell them or do to them".*

The participants did, however, appreciate that corporal punishment was contrary to the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa which protects the rights of all the citizens including children. A non-educator in School C mentioned:

> *The Constitution is the supreme law of any country. Nobody is above the law, not even Mandela himself. It is therefore important to realise that anybody who is against the Constitution is still living in the past era. Whether we like it or not we must respect the laws of the country. They warned that the defaulters would face the wrath of the law.*

However, still all of the learner governors and some educator governors confessed that corporal punishment was still being administered by certain educators and principals in schools. An educator in School C remarked:

> *Though some people will not say it because of fear of victimisation, canes are still used to beat the hell out of stubborn learners … When seen carrying them around and asked: 'Why are you carrying a stick?', one would lie without even winking and say: 'I use it to point at something on the chalkboard or chart'. So can you honestly say corporal punishment is dead? No, definitely not.*

During the SGB training, members were reminded that equating corporal punishment with discipline is engraved in the minds of many people because of the historical past. It will take time and effort to change this belief. In this regard training can assist SGB members to understand why corporal punishment has been abolished and to realise its negative outcomes. Laws are made to protect the citizens of the country and not to expose them to exploitation or danger.

Discussion

Educators find it difficult to educate undisciplined and disrespectful learners. School principals and SGB's are no exception because they respectively find

it equally challenging to manage and govern schools. There are numerous reasons about this state of affairs. As indicated above, many participants blamed it on the new democratic order which brought about the abolishment of corporal punishment, which is often regarded as a panacea for all learner problems.

It is erroneous to equate discipline with corporal punishment because in this way only the punitive side of discipline is emphasised at the expense of the growth or developmental side (Mabeba & Prinsloo 2000:34). Therefore the warning by Van Wyk (2001:200) should be seriously considered:

> If South Africans are to have a positive culture of learning and teaching in their schools, the learning environment must be safe, orderly and conducive to learning. To achieve this, educators need to be taught proactive and constructive alternatives to the use of corporal punishment in schools. Educators also need to realise that a classroom climate based on mutual respect within which learners feel safe and affirmed will decrease the need for disciplinary action and develop learners' abilities to practice self-discipline.

Learners are human beings as well and they need to be treated as such. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa protects their human rights as stipulated in Section 12 (1) of the Constitution (RSA 1996a) stipulates: "No person shall be subjected to torture of any kind, nor shall any person be treated or punished in a cruel, inhuman or degrading way".

Furthermore, paragraph 10 of the South African Schools Act (SASA) (RSA 1996b) stipulates that no person may administer corporal punishment at a school to a learner. Any person violating this law will be charged, prosecuted and if found guilty will be sentenced.

It is relevant for SGB members to receive training on issues surrounding corporal punishment. During the training SGB members understood that when

they formulate policies to foster discipline, their policies should not advocate corporal punishment because it is illegal.

5.11.6 Involvement in curriculum matters

Although accepted as an important issue, parent governors perceived their involvement in curriculum matters as an encroachment on the professional terrain of educators. Their experiences were largely of frustrations when they have to deal with the school curriculum. The principal of School A had this to say:

> *Parental participation with regard to deciding about school curriculum seems to be a challenging task for all of us. In fact many parents feel that this is the matter to be deliberated upon by educators. This is where the matter becomes a concern to the curriculum committee.*

Despite the stipulations by the SASA of 1996 (RSA 1996b), that parents should be involved in deciding on the curriculum design of their schools, parent governors felt that educators are better equipped to deal with curriculum matters. A parent in School A commented:

> *I find the participation of parents in drawing up Work Programmes [WP] of the Foundation Phase in primary schools as required by the policy on the Revised National Curriculum Statements [RNCS] for schools with grade R-9 quite a challenge. I say this because many of us battle to understand some of the terms used. Besides we are not as highly educated like the educators.*

The parent governors felt that the educator governors should guide the curriculum committee concerning the purchase of materials for teaching and learning activities. Their view was that involvement in school curriculum design was being imposed on the SGB instead of being included under the competency of the educators.

Moreover, illiterate and semi-illiterate parents did not feel competent to handle curriculum matters. In practice the parent governors in the SGB's avoided dealing with school curriculum matters or decided to remain passive in the whole process. Frequently, principals and the educator governors found themselves handling curriculum matters on the curriculum committee, advertently or inadvertently.

Finally, the higher the level of education, the more confident SGB members become to handle their tasks. Education empowers the SGB's to govern their schools as legislated by SASA specifically.

Discussion

According to the *South Africa Yearbook 2004/5,* since 1994 the number of people with no schooling has reduced from 15% to 8.2% and the number of people who have completed primary education and who are therefore functionally literate has grown from 63% to 80% (RSA 2004:431).

Notwithstanding this data, the problem of low levels of schooling or no schooling at all is still a feature of South African society. According to the Ministerial Review Committee (MRC) appointed in February 2003 by the then Minister of Education for the purpose of reviewing and assessing the state of school governance in public schools it was found that: "Large swathes of the parent population continue to be either functionally illiterate or have minimal levels of education" (DE 2004:VIII).

To this effect, many of the good intentions propounded by SASA and allied policies about school governance have failed to materialise. According to the Ministerial Review Committee:

> In 2003, the Department of Education spent a great deal of its time and person-power resources in dealing with the governance implications of the New Curriculum Statement (NCS) to transform the education

system, however, its weakness is the inability to translate its intentions into sustainable and durable processes and structures (DE 2004:149).

The issue of the role of the SGB members in curriculum matters was discussed during the training. SGB members were encouraged to be actively involved in the decision-making process about the curriculum taught at their schools. However, training did not change the perception of the majority of SGB members, especially the parents who believe that educators were qualified and knowledgeable to deal with curriculum issues.

5.11.7 Conclusions on factors impacting on the roles of SGB members

Schools cannot dissociate themselves from their environment. Societal problems typical of township life influence school life, and vice versa. School life cannot improve if social problems are not addressed. It should be acknowledged that the quality of schooling can only improve if there is sound interaction and support between the school and the broader community.

Therefore, it can be concluded that malfunctioning of SGB's can be attributed to a range of contextual factors such as customs and traditions, violence and gangsterism, difficulty of accessing information, and increased learner misconduct. The list is not conclusive but gives an insight into the problems that affect effective school governance. The question of illiteracy, has and still is, affecting the majority of people by denying them access to opportunities of learning.

5.12 GUIDELINES TO IMPROVE THE TRAINING OF SGB's

It should be noted that many guidelines can be deduced from the findings. However, only the most important issues are briefly discussed in the ensuing section.

5.12.1 Appropriate preparation and on-going training for SGB members

Training session(s) of SGB members should be a thoroughly planned activity. Appropriate preparation will ensure success of the training programmes so that SGB's gain lasting knowledge and skills. A participant remarked:

> *Training programmes of SGB's should be planned and budgeted for long before the execution thereof. Such a training will benefit the trainees because they can plan their personal matters no to coincide with the training.*

Since learning is cumulative and skills need to be practised, enough time should be allocated to the training of the SGB members. A participant commented: *"We are not equally gifted to grasp the big chunks of information forced down on us. Training should be spread evenly through the week".*

Thorough and qualitative school governance can be achieved through an on-going training provided to the SGB members. Training done in haste and on an *ad hoc* basis is bound to fail.

5.12.2 Common training sessions for a diverse target group of SGB members

Diverse languages spoken by a heterogeneous target group of SGB's presents the issue of the language to be used during the training. Tensions were noted among the participants regarding different languages. A parent stated: *"It is evident that English is the better language as compared to IsiZulu or Sesotho. We are given training manuals written in English only regardless whether we grasp it or not".*

South Africa is a multilingual nation with eleven official languages. Not all people are equally gifted in speaking and understanding all the so-called official languages in South Africa. Although the policy of the country is to move towards multilingualism and integration in all its facets, it is impossible to provide for the language needs of all participants. In this regard, a common language for training is a practical matter.

Despite diversity between SGB members along racial, ethnic, religious and language grounds, it was necessary to train the target group together in order to ensure that they function as a unit. In this manner, SGB members derive maximum benefits from the training session(s) aimed at unifying them as a team.

5.12.3 Training of SGB members should be needs-driven

Any training programme of the SGB members should be tailor-made according to the needs of the local school community. Such training sessions should be relevant, easy to assimilate and motivating. A participant commented: *"The Free State Education Department must find out what the needs of SGB members are? Training should not just be provided for the sake of training but should be informed by the needs of the community".*

If the training is based on the needs of the community, then the SGB members will not feel taken for granted. In that way SGB members will feel important and respected.

5.12.4 Appropriation of funds to train SGB members

According to SASA, it is the responsibility of the government through provincial education departments to train SGB members. As indicated by one of the principals, training is important for SGB members to perform their tasks: *"Without training, SGB members cannot exercise their governance responsibilities successfully".*

Therefore, enough money should be appropriated for initial and on-going training of SGB members. A SGB chairperson complained:

> *The Education Department should do everything in its power to allocate schools enough money for the ongoing raining of SGB's if it wants to give over the responsibility of the training of SGB's to schools completely.*

The initial training of SGB's does not offer as much of a problem as the continuous training. Continuous training is necessary to sustain the gains of the initial training, which is normally inductive in nature.

5.12.5 Training conducted by Departmental Officials versus private agency

The Free State Department of Education has adopted an approach where its officials are responsible for the training of SGB members. All the officials, namely School Management Developers (SMDs) receive initial training from the Non-governmental Organisations who have been awarded tenders. Thereafter, the cascade training model has been used to roll out the training programme. However, this model was criticized by a principal, who said: *"The quality and nature of trainings offered to our SGB's differ radically. The same workshop is presented differently to SGB's because of the different presentation abilities of the officials cascading the training".*

After April 1994, all training of the first democratically elected SGB's was conducted by private agencies in the Free State Province. But since then, the job description of the SMDs dictates that the training of the SGB's is their responsibility. Though a weakness of this approach might be uniformity, it has proved empowering, cost-effective, practical, relevant and meaningful. One cannot rule out the financial motive involved in the training offered by a private agency while the quality of the outputs might be debated depending on the credibility of the agency. It can be concluded that at district level the implementation capacities were depleted and training was not well co-ordinated and aligned.

5.13 SUMMARY

In this chapter a report on the findings of qualitative research method was presented. The findings indicated that participants perceived the training of SGB's to have far-reaching implications for school governance and school management.

A need for a sustained training programme for SGB members cannot be over-emphasised. To this effect, SGB members need constant training and support to ensure that they are up to date with current developments. Sustained training and monitored implementation programmes will empower the SGB members to perform their functions successfully. This can help to increase co-operative school governance among the SGB members.

Whilst the report on the findings of qualitative research method has been given in this chapter, it cannot claim to be exhaustive but captures the crux of the investigation – the perceptions and experiences of SGB members about the training they received in the Free State province. The next chapter seeks to offer recommendations for training needs of school governing bodies in the Free State province.

It was found that the perceptions and experiences of school governors about their tasks on the SGB's in the Free State province were broad and varied in nature. These perceptions and experiences were influenced by many factors that include, but are not limited to social background and historical past of the individuals.

Some of the major perceptions and experiences of SGB members who participated in the research project were: Lack of legal knowledge and its implications, lack of interest and non-involvement in school activities, lack of transparent and accountable school governance, failure to implement the constitution of the SGB, mutual respect and equality of treatment, common and transparent training sessions, admission of learners, questionable implementation of the religion policy in education, lack of discipline and the abolishment of corporal punishment, violation of the codes of conduct for learners and governors, incompetent parent governors in the school curriculum design, ineffective communication strategies and advocacy of the Bill of Rights.

Chapter 6 focuses on the summary of the research project and recommendations thereof.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, MAJOR FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a brief summary, which is aimed at giving a general overview of the investigation in order to show that the aims originally expressed in section 1.6 have been addressed and achieved.

The theory underlying the nature of SGB's and decentralised school governance forms the core of the training of SGB's. Qualitative research methodology has been used to explore the nature and the training of school governing bodies. The chapter presents a synthesis of major research findings and recommendations that can serve as guidelines for the training of school governing bodies, particularly in the Free State Province.

Finally, recommendations for further research and some limitations of the study are also given. The chapter ends with a brief conclusion on the research's summary and recommendations.

6.2 SUMMARY: AN OVERVIEW OF THE INVESTIGATION

Before embarking on the research a thorough understanding of the literature on decentralised school governance, SGB's and their training was sought. Likewise, the institution of SGB's within the South African context and their roles were clarified.

6.2.1 Democratic school governance: A theoretical basis

A literature review of different forms of decentralised decision-making was undertaken as this is central to the nature and training of SGB's (2.1). Decentralised decision-making demands that different stakeholders with an interest in education should be actively involved in school affairs (2.2.2). For

this reason Sayed and Carrim (1997:91) contend that the greater representation of different stakeholders ensures educational accountability, legitimacy and democracy. Local and international literature, with special reference to the USA and England and Wales, concerning shared or co-operative decision-making was reviewed (2.5). It became clear from literature that there has been a major shift to self-governance for schools in many countries throughout the world including South Africa (Bush & Heystek 2003:127). It is necessary to mention that different theories of decentralised governance (2.4) and principles underlying them (2.3) were set out to bring about an understanding of co-operative school governance.

6.2.2 School governors and their governance tasks

The importance of the role that is played by SGB structures as dictated by the legal prescripts contained in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA 1996a) and the SASA (RSA 1996b) cannot be overemphasised (3.2.1). However, to fulfil these tasks, it is necessary to train SGB members. In essence, Chapter 3 provided an extension of a literature study of co-operative school governance by focusing on the nature and role of SGB's (3.2). General and allocated functions of SGB's were discussed in detail (3.2.2.2) together with the structure/composition of SGB's in public ordinary schools (3.2.2). The process of capacity building of SGBs in South Africa and elsewhere was discussed in some detail as well (3.3). Both theoretical and practical implications for SGBs regarding their tasks were explored.

The literature review of decentralised school governance as explored in Chapters 2 and 3 formed the foundation for the investigation (3.2.5 & 3.2) as well as informing the focus group interviews conducted as part of the research (cf. Annexure B). It also illustrated that the training of newly elected SGB members with regard to their tasks and responsibilities is pivotal for effective and efficient schools. Successful training, based on the needs of SGB members was believed to be a prerequisite for effective co-operative school governance in the South African context (Sibuyi 1997:59; Looyen 2000:4). Likewise, capacity building was seen as particularly important for developing

countries like South Africa (3.2.4 & 3.2.5). Based on the literature review, an informed deduction could be made that training of SGB's was needed (2.4; 5.5).

6.2.3 The research design

Chapters 2 and 3 provided a useful and necessary background to the nature and role of SGB's in a decentralised form of decision-making. However, they did not provide a detailed account of the training of SGB members to execute their tasks. As few studies have investigated the former, a phenomenological qualitative approach (4.2) was considered appropriate for this investigation. Chapter 4 was devoted to the research design and research methodology. The role of the researcher in the qualitative approach (4.3) and different data collection methods (4.4), which included participant observation (4.4.1) and focus group interviews (4.4.2) were covered in detail. The rationale behind the choice of the research methodology (4.4.3.) and major characteristics of focus group interviews (4.4.4) were explained. Advantages (4.4.5) and disadvantages (4.4.6) of focus groups were also explored. The data were subjected to qualitative analysis and organised according to emerging key themes (4.6.7). The concepts of reliability (4.7.1) and validity (4.7.2) in qualitative research were elucidated. Ethical considerations (4.8) and some limitations of the study (4.9) were explained.

The themes relate broadly to the context within which the process of SGB training takes place (5.3), the selection process of SGB members (5.4) and the imperatives for the training of school governors (5.5). A further synthesis of the emerging themes was undertaken whereby significant findings discussed under 5.6 highlighted factors contributing to the success (5.6.1) or failure (5.6.2) of the training programme. Competencies to be possessed by SGB members in order to discharge their responsibilities (5.7) and other factors impacting on the SGB's in the performance of their functions (5.8) formed the core of the findings of the investigation.

6.3 SYNTHESIS OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There are several important findings with regard to the training of SGB members, particularly in the Free State Province. The summary of the findings is not exhaustive but aimed at highlighting major issues pertinent to the research. It was the intention of this investigation to come up with some recommendations that will have a positive impact on the type of training being currently offered, particularly in the Free State Province. Good practices can only be consolidated by research findings for a strong and informed approach to the training of SGB members, particularly in the Free State Province.

6.3.1 Training of diverse SGB members is challenging

The training programme of SGB members focussed on principals, educators, parents and learners (in the secondary school) in the group (5.3.1; 5.3.2; 5.3.3; 5.3.4; 5.6). This group included people who are highly qualified as well as those who can barely read. The challenge for the trainer was to find common ground when training these people. For example, it was useful for the training programme to focus on the needs of the target group to be trained (5.6.1.6).

Recommendations

It is recommended that any training programme of the SGB members should be tailor-made according to the needs of the local school community. Such training programme should be relevant, easy to assimilate and motivating to the targeted group. The onus lies on the presenter of the training programme to determine the needs of SGB members, before embarking on any form training. Training should not just be provided for the sake of training but should be informed by the needs of the community. Research has indicated that if the training programme is based on the needs of the community, the SGB members will feel recognised and respected (Sibuyi 1997:31).

It is also recommended that aspects of cultural diversity and teambuilding should form an integral part of the training of SGB's. Training should make

SGB members aware that SGB's are legal school governance structures, where the talents of many are combined with the prime purpose of taking the best decisions for the school community (DE 1997:7). Since the establishment of governing bodies, one of the key problems confronting provincial departments has been building the capacity of SGB members. This is particularly the case among previously marginalized and disadvantaged school communities (Karlsson et al 2002:168). Thus, training will provide the necessary skills for SGB members to participate fully in governing their schools in a democratically responsible manner.

6.3.2 The role of principals and other SGB members needs clarity

Training of SGB members was essential in building capacity for all members to ensure to ensure successful school governance. Principals were part of such training in this investigation despite being regarded as *ex officio* members of the SGB's (5.3.1). Learners in secondary schools were also included in the training process despite the feeling of the majority of parents who regarded them as not mature because of their age (3.2.2; 5.7.6). Training assisted SGB members to work as a unit and in consultation with all the other stakeholders with an interest in education (2.2.2).

However, this investigation indicated that, in practice, principals were often reluctant to relinquish or even share their power and authority with other SGB members (3.2.3.4). In this investigation, it was found that principals were directly or indirectly leading SGB's to function. This was particularly so in schools situated in previously disadvantaged communities, particularly where principals did not make any attempt to empower SGB's. Training of SGB members reduced reliance on principals by SGB members and brought about a realisation that all SGB members were equally important in making SGB's successful, particularly where principals were providing support and leadership (5.3.1; 5.6.1).

Recommendations

Principals are most important, but in some cases they tend to dominate meetings, policy-making and access to information by SGB members. During training sessions, the trainer needs to clarify the roles and responsibilities of all SGB members. Joint training sessions of SGB members should make all participants realise that principals should not be regarded as "lords in their own education fiefdom" (Holt & Murphy 1993:175). In research conducted by Bischoff and Phakoa (1999:89) it was found that the under-aged learners perceived their restricted participation negatively, which, in turn, caused them to participate half-heartedly in the governing process of public secondary schools. Therefore, all SGB members have to work collaboratively. Tasks need to be delegated and each of the delegated members has to take responsibility for the task given.

Research has indicated that it has been the practice all over the world for SGB's to often "delegate authority back to the principals", and as a result preserve the *status quo* (Lindle 1996:20). Thus, training should focus on teambuilding and delegation of duties to assist all SGB members in fulfilling their tasks. Moreover, training sessions should make SGB members aware that although principals are pivotal to the functioning of the schools, other members can make a valuable contribution.

6.3.3 Interpretations and implementation of policies remains difficult

Policies such as the Code of Conduct for Learners, Language Policy, Admission Policy, Religion Policy, Drug and Substance Abuse, *et cetera* are often written in such a way that many parents are unable to grasp the exact meaning and implications of these policies (5.7.6; 6.5.5). Moreover, such documents are often not freely available.

Recommendations

It is recommended that policies need to be dealt with in detail in the training programmes so that SGB members can make informed decisions regarding policies for their schools. During training sessions SGB members should be

taught to understand the importance of school policies. They must learn how to formulate policies to meet their specific needs and to implement them. Moreover, SGB members should understand that policies should be reviewed periodically in order to make them relevant to their current situation.

6.3.4 Contextual factors impact on the role SGB's have to play in schools

Poverty and unemployment are other features seen in many rural areas in South Africa (HSRC 2005:25). The environment in which a school is situated and therefore the context within which SGB's work, has a profound impact on the school itself (6.3.6). In this research poverty and unemployment impacted on the communities in which schools were situated (Tables 5.2; 5.3; 5.4). In turn, this affected the type of issues SGB's have to deal with. For example, parents were unable to contribute financially to the school (5.7.1). Moreover, poverty and unemployment contributed to crime rate in the community, which probably affected discipline in schools. The investigation suggested that many SGB members were living and functioning in poor environments (Tables 5.2; 5.3; 5.4). Research has shown that unemployed and impoverished people might find it difficult or impossible to participate fully in school governance activities because they are pre-occupied with the hardships of their lives (RSA 2004:187). The findings of this study confirmed that the environment in which a school is situated has a profound impact on the school itself and its activities (5.4). The three selected schools were situated in a poverty-stricken area, which has no amenities (5.2).

Recommendations

It is recommended that rigorous and continuous training be offered to SGB members of rural communities. These SGB's need particular attention when training programmes are planned. Research has indicated that SGB members, who are struggling to survive and have almost no energy left for school' obligations is that they find it difficult to be involved and to be committed in the governance affairs of their schools (Van Wyk 2001:196).

According to Bush and Heystek (2003:133), in a case study conducted to determine the fee levels and income in the Gauteng schools, it was found that a township school was able to collect only 50% of its potential income because of high unemployment in the schools' catchment area. Moreover, McPherson and Naicker (2002:53) found that issues such as socio-economic environment of the school and attendant financial implications have profound impact on effective school governance.

In addition, certain communities have to deal with issues specific to their communities, such as learners attending initiation schools; a high level of crime; poor discipline; many young mothers; high levels of HIV/AIDS and increased number of orphans (5.11.6). Thus, training of SGB's should focus on giving knowledge and skills to SGB members who have to govern schools under such trying conditions. It is also recommended that all facilitators of SGB training programmes should know the communities from which the members come so that they can teach them how to deal with issues specific to their communities.

6.3.5 SGB members find dealing with 'specialised' tasks difficult

Although SGB members need training to be able to cope with all tasks, they did mention that certain 'specialised' tasks proved to be difficult in their context. These included dealing with school finances; interviewing educators for appointments/promotions and taking decisions on curriculum matters (5.7.1; 5.8.6). These issues will always need particular attention in training programmes of SGB members.

It was established by the research findings that the differentiation of schools in terms of their status or functions (For example, Section 21 or non-Section 21) impacted on the level of functionality of the SGB's). Section 21 schools were better able to procure items they needed with ease (5.3.3) as compared with non-Section 21 schools who had to follow the bureaucratic procedure when accessing their 'paper budget'. This investigation also revealed that low levels of schooling of the majority of SGB members had a negative impact on their

participation in curriculum matters (5.8.6). The parent governors felt that educators were qualified and knowledgeable to deal with curriculum issues. As a result, principals and educators found themselves handling curriculum matters in schools.

Recommendations

It is recommended that during training sessions simple and user-friendly procurement processes be formulated to assist SGB's to access and use their allocated funds. Training of SGB's on the financial management of the school will empower SGB members to take control of their financial accounting responsibilities. Thus, training should focus on the roles and responsibilities of all SGB members, including the school's finance committee members. It is also recommended that school principals be appointed in writing by the SGB's to commit and make them accountable to the SGB's. It recommended that the powers given to SGB with regard to deciding on curriculum matters, especially rural SGB's be reviewed. Curriculum matters must be included in the competency of principals and educators who are dealing with professional matters of the school.

6.3.6 SGB members have difficulty in accessing relevant information

Lack of information on the side of some SGB members has been a major concern from the SGB members (5.8.1). In order to function effectively SGB's need relevant information. This was often difficult to access. For example, training materials are in English making it difficult for many to understand. Likewise government documents (policies, directives, etc) are generally in English (5.6.2.3). In addition these documents are often kept in the principal's office which makes access extremely difficult. This created the impression that important information is withheld from other SGB members. Thus, lack of information resulted into incapacity of relevant stakeholders in playing a meaning role in the governance of their schools. For example, governors cannot make inputs in the SGB if important information is not made available to them. In addition such SGB members are unable to give feedback to those

who elected them. During training sessions, SGB members should be advised that privileged information should be made accessible to other members.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the government should consider making training manuals available in other languages. In addition, officials of the DE should make important policies freely available and to see to it that the chairs of the SGB's get one or two copies. The content of the more important documents can also be also be dealt with in training programmes. Moreover, training units for SGB's and principals can be established to disseminate information in a uniform way to all SGB members (including principals of schools).

It is recommended that the training manuals should not be written in English only but should also cater for other languages. The provincial government should ensure that SGB's in rural areas are provided with training manuals in their language. Thus, provision should be made to train the SGB members in the language they understand and can relate to. Notwithstanding what is mentioned above, SGB members should be encouraged to move towards multilingualism and integration of languages in all their facets.

6.3.7 Provincial Departments of Education seem to lack commitment to provide training for SGB's

According to Section 19 of the SASA (RSA 1996b), the funding of the initial training of the SGB's is the responsibility of the Head of Education in the province. In this investigation, it was established that funds earmarked for the initial training of newly elected SGB's in the Free State province could not be accessed due to bureaucratic procedures for the financial year 2003/4 and 2004/5 respectively. However, funds were allocated to the districts for the training of SGB's in terms of the provincial budget but could not be accessed for the purpose it was budgeted for.

After April 1994, all training sessions of the first democratically elected SGB's were conducted by private agencies in the Free State province. But since then, the SMD's are responsible for the training of SGB's. Although the pitfall of this approach was uniformity, but it nevertheless cost-effective. Moreover, it can be deduced that the implementation capacities were depleted at district level due to not well co-ordinated training programmes. Each SMD would plan and execute his/her plan according to his/her programme.

Recommendations

It is recommended that simple procedures should be adopted by the provincial governments which will make funds readily available by the districts. Delegation of the financial accountability to the district level can enable SMD's to access money and execute planned training sessions. Enough money should be expropriated for the initial and continuous training of SGB members.

6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The findings of this study on the training of SGB's in the Free State province suggest some of the following priority areas in the search for further knowledge. From a methodical point of view, it is recommended that the potential use of qualitative research methodology in the investigation of educational issues in rural areas, particularly black communities should be further explored. This methodology seems particularly appropriate for cross-cultural research. The differentiation of groups in South Africa in terms of their rural or urban location, poverty and unemployment have led to different assumptions and challenges. These factors hold special implications for the training of school governing bodies in order for them to discharge their functions.

Large scale quantitative research based on erroneous assumptions could prove to be costly. A qualitative methodology is appropriate for the discovery of important areas or themes because it allows participants the opportunity to

define the topics and questions to be pursued in lager research projects. This investigation on the training of school governing bodies in the Free State Province focussed on training *per se* to see if it built capacity for SGB members. Many aspects relating to the training of school governing bodies require more detail research, such as:

- School governing bodies as vehicles for transforming schools in South Africa.
- Tension between stakeholders and the broader community and school governing bodies in policy formulations
- The effectiveness of school governing bodies in South Africa since 1994: An evaluative approach.
- Legal accountability of school governing bodies.
- Values in education and school governing bodies: An agenda for transforming schools.
- The election process of school governing bodies in South Africa and transformational school governance.

The following section discusses the limitations of this investigation on the training of school governing bodies in the Free State Province.

6.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

As a phenomenological research project based on qualitative methodology, this study of the training of school governing bodies in the Free State Province demonstrates both the strengths and the limitations intrinsic to such an investigation. This study like any other study has its limitations that had to be acknowledged (4.9). According to Marshall and Rossman (1999:42), a discussion of limitations of any study demonstrates a researcher's understanding that reality is such that findings of one study cannot be conclusive or generalised to other settings but can in the least be transferable.

The small size of the sample, typical of qualitative research (4.4.4.1), is the most obvious limitation of the study. It cannot support the general theory of

the training of school governing bodies. Different schools and different communities will disclose different findings. On the other hand, this research was designed to be exploratory and descriptive in nature. In other words, it was not concerned with generalisations or predictions. Moreover, it does allow important conclusions to be drawn about the situation in which the three schools are found (4.6.3), about the SGB members involved in the focus groups (4.6.4) and problems experienced with the training of SGB members (4.6.5).

The research was also intentionally limited to three selected schools (4.6.3), namely a primary school (grade R-6), an intermediate school (grade 7-9) and a secondary school (grade 10-12). Purposeful sampling method was used to select the three schools but SGB members volunteered to participate in the study. Thus, the method of selection was not based on sufficient criteria to allow a precise replication of the study. Moreover, the fact that both the schools and the participants were selected on the grounds of convenience (4.6.3) and voluntarism (4.6.4), respectively, to be part of the research, implies that different results might be obtained in different circumstances, such as by including the SGB members who were not comfortable with participating in the research for an example.

The primary goal of the study was to the training of SGB members from the perspective of the participants themselves within their context and other factors impacting on their functions. Therefore no attempts were made to generalise or quantify the findings (Strauss & Corbin 1990:17). Data were presented in descriptive form only. While the overview of the existing literature, Chapters 2 and 3, provided a valuable background to the interview, the paucity of information on the training of SGB members dictated that unstructured interviews be used in the form of interview schedule (cf. Annexure B).

The suggestion that focus group interviews (4.4.2) are especially well suited to the exploration of the attitudes and experiences of the participants (4.4.4.5) led to the choice of this data collection strategy to gather data from the SGB

members who participated in the investigation. Participant observation was used to investigate and clarify school context (4.4.1). The potential for bias was present in as much as the researcher himself constituted the research instrument (4.3). All possible factors, which could have influenced the research were included in the statement of subjectivity (4.6.2). Following data gathering (4.6.6) and analysis (4.6.7), findings were presented according to themes, which emerged from the participants' accounts (5.8).

Despite these limitations, the rich data, characteristic of qualitative research methodology (4.6.1), yielded information which may be used for a larger and more rigorous study. It also illustrated the complexity of social, educational and management realities in the training process of SGB members. Moreover, certain key areas (5.4; 5.5; 5.6; 5.7 & 5.8) contributed to a better understanding of the training of SGB's and the context in which it took place and indicated areas in which further research needs be done (6.4). In this limited sense, the study may expand knowledge of the training of school governing bodies through the presentation of grounded theory (6.3) and speculative hypotheses, which may form a useful basis for large scale studies of the training of school governing bodies.

6.6 IN CONCLUSION

In this chapter a summary of the research topic, synthesis of major findings and recommendations were presented. The summary of findings indicated that participants perceived the training of SGBs to be having far-reaching implications for school governance and school management (5.5). A need for a sustained training programme for SGB members cannot be over-emphasised (5.6). To this effect, SGB members need constant training and support to ensure that they are up to date with current developments. Sustained training and monitored implementation programmes will empower the SGB members to perform their functions without failure (5.9). This empowerment can help to increase co-operative school governance among the SGB members.

Whilst the summary of the findings of qualitative research has been given in this chapter, it cannot claim to be exhaustive but captures the crux of the investigation – the perceptions and experiences of SGB members about the training they received in the Free State Province. Areas for further research (6.4) and recommendations towards the training needs of school governing bodies in the Free State Province have been noted for consideration (6.3).

It was found that the perceptions and experiences of school governors about their tasks on the SGB's in the Free State province were broad and varied in nature (6.3.1). These perceptions and experiences were influenced by many factors that included but are not limited to social background and historical past of the individuals (5.3).

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A QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY TO ASSESS THE TRAINING NEEDS OF THE NEWLY ELECTED SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES (2003) IN THE FREE STATE.

Instructions

(1) This questionnaire is anonymous. You need not indicate your name on it except the name of your school for identification purposes only.
(2) There is no correct or wrong answer. Your honest response will be appreciated in order to assist with the design, implementation and evaluation of the training programme of a school governing body based on your needs
(3) The questionnaire has two sections, A and B.
   a. Section A: Biographical and general information
   b. Section B: Training needs assessment.
(4) The questionnaire should be completed by all members.
(5) It will take you about 30 minutes at most to complete the questionnaire. Just make a cross (x) next to your choice where applicable.

SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL AND GENERAL INFORMATION.

1.Please indicate the name of your school_____

2.What is your age group?

2.1.Less than 20 years ☐
2.2.Between 20 and 29 ☐ years
2.3.Between 30 and 39 ☐ years
2.4.Between 40 and 49 ☐ years
2.5.Between 50 and 59 ☐ years
2.6.60 years and over ☐

3.What is the highest level of formal education you have completed?

3.1.No formal education received ☐
3.2.Primary school education (up to grade 7) ☐
3.3.Secondary education (up to grade 12) ☐
3.4.Tertiary level education (beyond grade 12) ☐

4.What is your sex?

4.1.Male ☐
4.2.Female ☐

5.What is your marital status?

5.1.Unmarried ☐
5.2.Married ☐

5.3.Divorced
5.4.Separated
5.5.Widowed
6.What type of a school is your school governing body serving?

6.1.Primary school (grade R-7)
6.2.Intermediate school (grade R-9/8-10)
6.3.Secondary school (grade 8-12/10-12)
6.4.Combined school (grade R-12)

7.What kind of constituency are you representing on the school governing body?

7.1.Parents
7.2.Educators
7.3.Non-educators
7.4.Learners
7.5.Co-opted persons
7.6.Ex officio member

8.How long have you served on the school governing body?

8.1.First term (between 0-3 years)
8.2.Second term (between 4-6 years)
8.3.Third term (between 7-9 years)

9.How would you define the area where your school is situated?

9.1.Rural
9.2.Deep rural
9.3.Urban
9.4.Semi-urban
9.5.Metropolitan

10.How many member, combined does your school governing body has?

10.1.Less than 7
10.2.Exactly 7
10.3.Between 8 and 9
10.4.Between 10 and 17
10.5.More than 18

11.In your own opinion, why are you a member of your school governing body?

_____

_____

SECTION B: TRAINING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

1.Should your school be selected, will you be willing to be part of the training programme for newly elected school governing bodies?

1.1.Yes ☐
1.2.No ☐

2.Have you received training in the past concerning your role, duties, functions and responsibilities as a governing body member?

2.1.Yes ☐
2.2.No ☐
2.3.Uncertain ☐

3.If your response is 'yes' in 2 above, please mention the organisation or individual(s) who offered the training.

3.1.Principal ☐
3.2.Education official(s) ☐
3.3.Fellow colleagues ☐
3.4.Non-governmental organisation (NGO) ☐
3.5.Others ☐

4.How long did the training last?

4.1.One day ☐
4.2.Two days ☐
4.3.Three days ☐
4.4.Five days ☐
4.5.More than five days ☐

5.Was the training adequate to provide you with functional skills or knowledge?

5.1.Yes ☐
5.2.No ☐
5.3.Uncertain ☐

6.What areas/aspects/activities would you like to receive training on? For example, How to conduct interviews professionally. Draw your own priority list.

_____

7.Any other comment on issues that you would like to be taken into account for the training programme of school governing bodies.

THANK VERY MUCH

APPENDIX B

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

THE TRAINING OF SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES IN THE FREE STATE PROVINCE

FOCUS GROUP 1

The emphasis in this first focus group interviews is on what the SGB members knew of their tasks as school governors prior to training as well as what they know after the first “general training session”.

1. Why are you a member of the SGB?
2. How were you chosen?
3. What experience do you have that could assist you in fulfilling the tasks of an SGB member?
4. What aspect(s) of this school would you personally like to address in the time you are an SGB member?
5. What task(s) of the SGB do you find particularly challenging?
6. What is your opinion of the fact that the Department of Education is providing training for the SGB?
7. You have just received the first “general training” for SGB members. What is your opinion of it?
8. To what extent did it meet your expectations?
9. What, according to you are the strong points of the training session?
10. What are the weak points of the training session?
11. What should the facilitator change in future when offering this training?
12. Have you had time to look at the training manual (or notes) provided to you? How helpful is it?
13. Have you come to new insights regarding your task as SGB member? Could you explain in more detail?

14. After having received this training schools usually indicate that there are still specific areas in which they need training. What would this SGB like further training in?

FOCUS GROUP 2

The “first specific training session” dealt with *the constitution of the SGB*.

The interview schedule therefore includes some of the questions asked in the first focus group interviews, but more on what they found helpful in the first “general training session”

1. How are you enjoying the role you are playing on the SGB?
2. How are you coping?
3. How are you progressing in dealing with the aspects you feel should be addressed at your school?
4. With hindsight do you feel that the first general training assisted you in fulfilling your role on the SGB?
5. What task(s) of the SGB do you still find particularly challenging?
6. You have just received the first “specific training session” on *the constitution of the SGB*. What is your opinion of it?
7. To what extent did it meet your expectations?
8. What, according to you are the strong points of the training session?
9. What are the weak points of the training session?
10. What should be changed in future when offering this training?
11. Have you had time to look at the notes provided to you? How helpful are they?
12. Have you come to new insights regarding your duties, functions and responsibilities as the SGB member? Could you explain in more detail?
13. Do you think you will now be able to deal more effectively with your duties, function and responsibilities as the SGB member?
14. Are there any other areas in school governance in which you feel you need more training? Could you explain in more detail?

FOCUS GROUP 3

The next “specific training session” dealt with the *financial management* aspect of school governance.

In third interview focus is on the second specific training they received. The interview schedule therefore includes some of the questions asked during the second “specific training session” they attended. The interview schedule for this focus group interview is similar to the second focus group interview except that emphasis is more on what they now know and if they feel that training or experience has led to the fact that they now better able to fulfil their tasks.

1. How are you enjoying the role you are playing on the SGB?
2. How are you coping?
3. How are you progressing in dealing with the aspects you feel should be addressed at your school?
4. With hindsight do you feel that the second “specific training session” assisted you in fulfilling your role on the SGB?
5. What task(s) of the SGB do you still find particularly challenging?
6. You have just received the second “specific training session” on *financial management*. What is your opinion of it?
7. To what extent did it meet your expectations?
8. What, according to you are the strong points of the training session?
9. What are the weak points of the training session?
10. What should be changed in the future when offering this training?
11. Have you had time to look at the notes provided to you? How helpful are they?
12. Have you come to new insights regarding financial management? Could you explain in more detail?
13. Do you think you will now be able to deal more effectively with financial management of your school?
14. Are there any other areas in school governance in which you feel you need more training? Could you explain in more detail?

In some instances additional training sessions may be required.

THE VERBATIM TRANSCRIPTION OF THE FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS

The following keys will apply in this transcript:

R	Researcher
G1 – G3	Focus groups
P1 – P3	Respondent (parent governors)
A1 – A3	Respondents (principals)
E1 – E3	Respondents (educator governors)
N1 – N3	Respondents (non-educator governors)
L1 – L3	Respondents (Learner governors
S (A)	School A (primary school)
S (B)	School B (intermediate school)
S (C)	School C (secondary school)

FOCUS GROUP 1 (SCHOOL A)

R: Why are you a member of the school governing body (SGB)?

G1/P1: You see [cough], in the first place I did not want to be in the committee [SGB] again, e… because people elect you then put pressure on you to deliver. But then parents wanted me to be in the SGB.

G1/A1: [Silence] Ja, e… for me to be a member of an SGB is not [clearing the throat] …e, a matter of choice. By the mere fact that I am the school principal, I automatically have to be one of the team [SGB]. If, e…maybe we [principals] had a choice, I would probably not be part of the governing body because …m…there are so many problems…which sometimes give a person so much headache. But then here am I doing my best under the circumstances.

G1/N1: Personally, I am here representing the non-teaching staff of my school. Sir, e…I mean, all the clerks and the cleaners and including myself, e…I mean as someone repairing all the broken windows and doors and furniture [factotum]. I think… [tape inaudible]… they trust me to do the good work for them by looking after their interests, e…meaning not to be on my own for my own interests forgetting who put me where I am.

I regard myself as their [fellow colleagues] mouth, ears and eyes in this committee [SGB]. So, m… I think I will not let them down but to be their trusted person who will consult with them from time to time when I have a problem.

G1/E1: [Pause] Ja, e…what the latter speaker has said …e…is true and very important. You see, e…in a democracy, one does not represent oneself but the constituency one comes from. For me to be here, e…means that I carry the mandate of my fellow colleagues. In whatever I do and say e…I must bear in mind that I must not misrepresent them [fellow educators]. Rather, I must communicate with them when in doubt so that when mistakes occur I should not be blamed alone. They must also share in the spoils because I would not like to be the easy target for frustrated people if things do not go according to our wishes. I know that it is not an easy thing to work with people.

R: How were you chosen?

G1/E1: I was democratically elected by educators in my school through the secret ballot paper in a meeting.

G1/P1: [Clearing the throat]. We were in a meeting of parents only. Parents nominated and voted for me to be in the SGB because I had learners at the school. I had the required number of votes and therefore managed to be one of the parents elected.

G1/P1: [Pause] Just like Mr…[name withheld for protecting identity] said, I received votes from some of the parents. Those votes allowed my name to be placed on the list for the number of parents needed to be on the SGB.

G1/A1: Obviously, e… we all know that principals are ex officio members of SGBs. Meaning they are automatically members of the governing structure without being elected by anybody. I am therefore naturally or by law governing schools in South Africa, a fully-fledged member of the SGB.

G1/E1: Yap…I do not want to repeat what have already been said by other speakers. But then if I do not say anything other people might think I do not want to be part of the meeting. I just want to agree with my fellow colleagues and emphasise the importance of the will and trust of the people who voted during the ballot process. The have shown their trust in me as well by asking me to be part of the SGB. Through the power of the ballot paper…[tape inaudible] …happy to member of the team [SGB].

R: What experience do you have that could assist you in fulfilling the tasks of an SGB member?

G1/P1: Yes…mmm…my guess is that I will assist the governing body with negotiation skills. As a parent working for the local government I find myself talking on behalf of my fellow union members.

Sometimes it is necessary to fight for one's right. Unfortunately this is the language understood by the government and those who are in power. I do not think that I sound like a difficult person to work with, like I have realised that many people tend to label trade union members. Maybe may people are still ignorant about the value and role of unions in a democracy. There is nothing wrong for people to belong somewhere and organise themselves to talk with one voice in order to protect their interests.

I should acknowledge that it is not an easy job to be a shop steward because you end up being hated by your bosses at work and sometimes by your fellow workers if negotiations fail. But nevertheless I enjoy what I am doing for the good of all my fellow workers. I hope my experience will help the SGB to fight and protect what is rightfully theirs.

G1/P1: [Clearing throat]. As a retired educator and principal for that matter, I know for a fact that I enjoy good human relations with most if not all the educators. It is my wish to continue with that positive relation with them though in a different terrain. My wealth of knowledge my assist our society greatly. Together we can make things happen in our schools and communities. Together we can face and overcome challenges brought by the democratic order.

G1/P1: As a person running business on a small scale I do not think I can bring much experience in the SGB except for my basic accounting and bookkeeping knowledge which might no be up to the required level. But one thing for sure nobody can cheat me when coming to money. I can see that this is the income and this is the expenditure.

G1/P1: Ja…I want to agree with the latter speaker that school monies are in many instances the cause of troubles and fights in schools. If school monies are well handled and all the stakeholders are briefed on what money was used for, then everybody will be satisfied about the financial status of the school. As a mathematics teacher, perhaps I will also be in a position to assist as I do in the other community based organisations where I am involved.

G1/P1: Unlike other members who have already spoken I do not have the expertise they possess. Having grown and worked on the farms for most of my life, I could not get the education of high standard. The only thing I know is to work with my hands. I can do anything from tilling the soil and working with steel. If the principal wills, I will repair all these frames of unused broken desks and tables for our crèche to make playing tools for them.

G1/P1: I have realised that in many instances we do not put God first in what we do. The greatest wisdom comes from Him above. Being Minister of religion I think I will contribute greatly the moral regeneration of our community.

People are far from God because of the terrible things that we do simply because we no more fear the Lord. I strongly believe that it is why we experience so many hardships in life. God will not forsake us if we always come to Him as the giver of life.

I have already decided to be part of the project of religion education which will take place after schooling time to teach all interested people about the Christianity as we are all aware that all religions have to be equally observed and respected. This will be an important contribution to heal the minds and troubled souls of God's people.

G1/A1: [Silence]. My role is to provide professional leadership, guidance and support to the SGB. My contribution cannot be individualised but should be seen as an overall vision of the Education Department to provide life long quality education to all the learners at the school. To achieve this ideal were have to work collaboratively by creating and managing sound governance and management structures, which is my mission in the SGB.

R: What aspect(s) of this school would you personally like to address in the time you are an SGB member?

G1/P1: Thank you, e… for me parental involvement and support to all school activities is very important. I cannot overemphasise the importance of parental involvement in making schools successful happy families for learners. Schools can only achieve this status if parents are involved and participate in all the schooling events.

It is such a bad thing for parents to only come to school when there are problems or coming to lodge a complaint. Parents should visit the school at irregular intervals to give support to the school and to show learners that they

really care about their well being. My intention will be to encourage all the parents to be committed to this ideal.

G1/E1: Ja. I agree with the latter speaker. The main problem at our school is that parents do not just want to be involved in school matters. E…as an SGB member I also want to ensure that parents become informed about the school's plans and program for the whole year for them to be active in school activities.

This should not be function of the principal alone but for every member of the SGB. Parent and other members of the SGB can know ahead of time as to when can the school need their support for whatever activity, for example the cleaning campaign at school.

I think…yes, I think this approach will assist with changing of the negative attitudes from the parents towards the school. Parents can then also plan their things in such a way that there are no clashes when the school need them.

G1/P1: Okay. This is a difficult question for me to answer. I say so because, e…as a new person in the SGB I am not sure what problems are in such a forum. Maybe I sound negative but I intend doing is to uproot corruption in the governance of the school. I am not implying that there is any case corruption at this school but I know that at one stage parents were not happy about the financial report they received. So, my belief is clean administration of school affairs since even the government of the day encourage all its citizens to eradicate corruption.

As a moral principle, it will be my mission to be upright and trustworthy to the parents who elected me. I would not keep quiet when things go wrong nor would I like to be associated with unscrupulous people. I want my hands to be clean from underhand dealings.

G1/A1: [Sighing]. Yes. Look here. Since the SGB can decide on the school curriculum, I will ensure that there is active participation in choosing the right

and relevant teaching and learning material for the school. All the stakeholders, especially educators should ensure active participation and positive influence in academic and curriculum matters.

Sound classroom management will improve the quality of education. All of the SGB members should strive towards the provision of quality education for all learners which will ultimately lead towards quality life for them. For example it is the responsibility of parents to check and monitor the work of their learners. Educators need the support of parents in this regard.

G1/E1: Yeah. My view is that as an educator representative I can contribute to the SGB by organising and ensuring that educational tours do happen at school. I am a sport fanatic and would move heaven and earth to pass this love of sports to all the learners.

Children who only get book education, e…I mean, do not develop in totality. Learners must be exposed to reality of life. They [learners] must be allowed to explore and discover on their own about the world out there. It is through experience that they will learn to be independent adults-to-be.

My view is that the governing body should plan for such organised tours or visits for learners to link what is taught in the classroom and what is out there in the world. Teaching and learning cannot and should not be theory alone but need to be underpinned by reality which can be actualised through educational trips and field excursions. Parents should accompany their children in such endeavours and provide support to the school by assisting with the supervision of the learners.

G1/PI: [Coughing]. I do not know if other people are happy about the way our school surroundings and buildings look like. I for one I am not. We should be emphasising the fact to our learners that cleanliness is next to godliness.

Learners must not litter papers and orange peels all over the place. Our children must learn to appreciate the value of clean environment. Our place

[school] should not look like a dumping ground. Dirty surroundings can lead to breeding ground to diseases and eventually deaths. School walls should not have graffiti and toilets should be clean as well.

It will be my task and responsibility to embark on the cleaning campaign of our school and surroundings. I will engage the local government and the Department of environmental affairs to assist us the governing body to promote clean environment and to promote tourism. Our educators and all the parents and stakeholders should get involved. In this way we can promote the good name of our schools as clean and beautiful places.

R: What task(s) of the SGB do you find particularly challenging?

G1/P1: [Silence]. What I find difficult I can say is to understand so many laws and regulations that govern our schools. I do not know whether is it because I did not go too far with education or what. But the terminology is very difficult for me to understand. I really take trouble in understanding it.

I am wondering as to why we do not have these laws and Acts in our own language? [IsiZulu or Sesotho]. We cannot read and understand the difficult English written in the documents we are given during the workshops. It is good to listen to and follow what principals and Departmental officials say during training sessions but becomes a problem to keep everything in memory. Since some of us experience problems with the English language, we sometimes end up not opening the training manual to read.

I think this is really unfair on our side because some of us did not get education of a high standard, not out of our own volition but because of oppression of the past government. English is foreign language to most of us even though many people understand it. Maybe it can be good to have only educated people in the SGB who can read and understand the language on their own.

G1/E1: [Coughing]. Thank you very much for the opportunity. The greatest challenge we have in the SGB, especially for parent component is the issue of conducting interviews. With the high illiteracy level, we have observed with concern that conducting interviews actually need trained and skilled people. It just becomes an added disadvantage for the majority of parent governors to interview prospective educators, even in their own languages – let alone in English.

It is embarrassing to observe that many of the semi-literate parents struggle even to read out questions to candidates during job interviews, especially for promotional posts of principals or deputy principals for example. In some instances some parents would feel that they not confident to interview candidates for the job despite training and coaching by the Departmental official responsible for school management and development. But the law dictates that they must carry out the function, difficult as it may be.

Even though the Department of Education is aiming at empowering school communities, one is tempted to think that a highly specialised task like job interviewing should be given consultants. Despite the fact of being expensive, school may benefit from their [consultants] expertise. Problems associated with favouritism and corruption might be reduced if not eradicated.

G1/P1: I agree with what has been said by the latter speaker. But I think we should be careful of blaming each other. All people have weaknesses. Nobody is perfect. What we must do is to commit ourselves not to abuse or misuse powers vested in us as SGBs, lest the Department [of Education] considers withdrawing the recommending powers to appoint staff.

I support the idea that we must learn to do for ourselves whole-heartedly. We therefore have to learn how to conduct interviews credibly and with good intentions. The government of the day understands that in a democracy people must be involved in deciding their fate by being involved in decision-making.

G1/E1: Yes. What my colleague has just said is hundred percent correct. Some SGBs simply recommend people they know or happen to know their parents or relatives. This kind of treatment of the candidates for the job brings them [SGBs] in dispute with the labour unions.

In some instances, it is labour unions who are corrupt because they encourage and even accept bribes from SGB members just to have their so-called comrades appointed. Due to intimidation of SGBs by unions and acceptance of bribes by both unions and SGBs reciprocally, wrong or non-deserving appointees find themselves working.

G1/P1: I cannot express my disappointment in our government of the day which has abolished corporal punishment. They [government officials] themselves were punished but they passed laws which prevent us from instilling discipline in our learners.

The abolishment of corporal punishment has really brought more harm than good to our school. Learners are now without discipline because they know that they cannot be corporally punished. It is so difficult if not impossible to have control learners in schools without a stick and still have order.

We [parents] were beaten during our days and nothing happened to us. Did we die? No, here we are alive and kicking! I am not even written on my face that I was beaten by my educators. In fact my educators opened my eyes and my mind.

G1/A1: Thank you for the opportunity as well. I just want to add on what the other speakers have already said. E…really, the abolishment of corporal punishment is a difficult challenge to deal with currently. More than being just a habit it has become mental problem that we keep on thinking about whether consciously or unconsciously.

In the past corporal punishment was a way of correcting bad behaviour in the learners. But of late, we have noticed that this has partly given us m…e some

problems. We have observed that learners are quite without discipline because they know that there is nothing that an educator can do to them. You cannot take stick, and …e… attempt to use it. It has been outlawed.

In the meantime the government has failed to provide educators with something tangible as an alternative to replace corporal punishment. Even the publication aimed at giving guidelines about alternative methods to corporal punishment is very theoretical and does not provide tangible means to replace corporal punishment. The result is that learners anyhow they please and there is nothing you can do as an educator. You dare touch them [learners] and they lay a charge against you [educator], then you will rot in jail!

G1/E1: E… its just a reaction from what the previous speaker has said. E… with regard to corporal punishment is a big challenge as to how to run and control schools without it especially in the classroom. We are learning our lessons the hard way and we have to cope now as a measure of coping with the challenges of change.

E… one other aspect that has been brought to the fore is the question of education laws govern the running of schools and SGBs. E…m… in the past it was a norm for schools to operate without a vision and mission statements. Since the democratic government brought about changes, every school should formulate and adopt its own constitution. This will be the guiding document in the governing of the school.

To control the misconduct of the learners and the school governors themselves, the SGB must draw up and adopt a code of conduct for learners. Learners must also be allowed to make inputs and finally take ownership of the code of conduct document.

G1/A1: The corporal punishment, in my view was previously used to victimise learners. But I do not believe that it had to be totally banned at schools. Because, I think it gave a parent, like the educator dignity. Like today learners at schools know that in whatever they do, they will not be beaten or scolded.

Truly speaking, there is no respect in schools anymore. But in the olden days learners knew that if they transgressed school rules, they would be given a hiding. That made the educators to be respected as the bearers of authority.

R: What is your opinion of the fact that the Department of Education is providing training for the SGB?

G1/E1: E… e…I think…e, intensive induction and capacity building workshops [on roles and responsibilities of SGBs] are very… very important, …on all, e… stakeholders' side. I think… e… learners in particular, they need an intervention of some sort from outside, I mean an outside donor who's going to take them out for a camp and workshop them thoroughly on their duties and responsibilities.

In as far as their role is concerned, e… governing bodies, e… m… I think the same should also be done with educators. We, we shouldn't just preserve em… certain positions simply because they are seen to be capable. I think they can, should not be… reduced to, into… e… minute writers and money managers of the governing body.

There are other aspects that they should be involved, in like…. e… e… I believe they should help the school a great deal in fundraising and other stuff. So, if we can all be properly inducted, … em… from capitalising on mistakes but let us try to build strengths from weaknesses of others.

G1/A1: [Pause] E… I think also what can help… to… maintain healthy relations is that… e… especially the parents, should be… should be involved in school activities, say at school you have activities like e…all types of sport. Maybe they [parents] should be formally invited to come to school, to meet the chairman for example or the educators for that matter.

Maybe when we have farewell functions, the parents can also be invited not only when there are problems at school. The Departmental officials at the

District level may also be invited to motivate the parents to get involved in the school matters by explaining to them about their duties and functions. In a way, SGBs cannot know all these things if they are not capacitated. Therefore workshops are so important for SGBs to carry out their work.

G1/P1: As far as I am concerned, e… I think the Department [of Education] is doing great job by training us as SGB members. Like the government of our school, we [SGB] must be taught about a wide range of laws that guide us in making educational choices and decisions in the interest of our school communities.

Our decisions must be fair and should be able to stand the test of time. We [SGB] have to be accountable to the people whom we are representing, meaning the parents of the learners. You see… e… we cannot do all the right things if we are not trained as to how to do them. That's my view really. Proper training is important for us as SGBs in order to be able to do our work thoroughly. That's how I see it. Thank you.

G1/P1: Ja. I agree with the latter speaker in totality. If we are trained we will not be "used" by anybody to do wrong things. We [SGB] will be knowing exactly what to do and how to do it. There will be clarity concerning our functions and the powers we have as school governors. Training will really prepare and empower in us controlling our schools. We will be the voice of the community we are serving.

G1/P1: [Coughing] E… training will help us to work as a family. We have to respect each other's roles and be able to protect our rights as well. Everyone of us [SGB] will be independent and will not have to rely on someone else for the rest of one's life. Principals of schools will learn to know and respect capable chairpersons who can run the SGB meetings by not totally depending on principals all the time.

It's like the stages that the child has to go through before he/she can walk independently. We [SGB] have to be assisted along the way but at the end we

must be able to do things for ourselves. We should not expect principals to shoulder us [SGBs] forever. No, not at all! That will make slaves of us and expose us to abuse due to ignorance.

G1/E1: In my humble opinion I think, e… training is of paramount importance. How? In this way Healthy working relations will prevail between the school governors and the school management. All of us will be supporting each other. The conflicts and perceived struggles that sometimes characterise our relations will be eradicated. Nobody will be thinking of scoring any points. But all of us will be looking forward to work for our schools.

There will be no professional jealousy in wanting to achieve our goals. Everybody's contribution will not be viewed as a personal glory rather as part of the contribution towards the success of the whole team [SGB].

R: You have just received your first "general training" for SGB members. What is your opinion of it?

G1/E1: Training has come at the right time when we needed it the most. Without training we can fumble a lot but with training we can see where we are going. It has opened our eyes and now we can see better. We have gained insight in the basic principles of managing school fees [finances] and the organisation of the school.

G1/E1: [Clearing throat]. I agree hundred percent with the latter speaker. E… e… the training we have received has empowered us all. It gave us some important information about school governance. As members of the SGB we will be in a position to drive and manage school programmes in the right direction. We can be able to sat yes or no because we will be knowing what is right or wrong. We would not work like people who are in the dark but like people who have been enlightened.

G1/E1: Training has given us pride in ourselves as human beings who have to take decisions for the sake of our school. We can feel like parents who

have to be respected because know the rules that have to guide us in working in the right manner. We must always do the right things and not disappoint those that have put us in these positions of leading in the SGB. Leading people is a very important but difficult responsibility. Therefore training will equip us with knowledge of exactly how to handle matters.

G1/E1: This workshop is empowering for all of us [SGB]. But it's important not to use our power badly. We must be sensible when dealing with people. We must not be cruel towards others simply because we make decisions at school. Respect e… must always be there. If some parents cannot pay school fees, we must really sympathise with them and give them some time to pay according to their ability.

G1/E1: I am happy that the Department is giving us the workshop. This is a good indication of giving power to the parents. Even when we might no longer SGB members in the future but we will still be empowered as a community. We can help new SGB members with advices because of our experience. So, the Department is not wasting money but investing in its human resource.

G1/E1: I think it's important for everybody to have knowledge and skills about the work one is doing. That is why I see workshops to train people are so important. We cannot do our work satisfactorily if we are not trained as the SGB. I am highly impressed that the Department is providing this training for us free of charge. As people who must govern e… we can't carry out our function properly without good foundation, which is training. We must know about these new Acts and laws.

My opinion about the training is that it is a good thing. This has been an interesting training because I have enjoyed it. The training session has been informative and because it sharpened my mind about some of the things I took for granted. The training we have just received gave me as a person an insight in how the SGB functions. This is a wonderful experience.

R: To what extent did it meet your expectations?

G1/E1: E… [Clearing throat] I think the training met my expectation in the sense that I expected to gain new knowledge about my role in the SGB. I now know that it is important for me to attend meetings and participate in making decisions.

G1/E1: I… I…had great expectations and I am convinced that the workshop lived up to my expectations. I am satisfied because I now know what the law says school governance. I am really satisfied because that the workshop helped me to realise that as an SGB member I am the custodian of rights of many stakeholder and not only my constituents.

G1/E1: I concur with the latter speaker that the training has been informative. I think e… the information we have gained will be essential in running the governing body as a unit. I was worthwhile to be part of this workshop. Those who could not attend have missed out a great deal.

G1/E1: [Silence] This training was up to standard the way I see it. The school regulations and laws were explained to us step by step though at a time I got tired with a lot of content to deal with. I can say that as I expected I now have an idea of what to do and how to go about doing it in the committee [SGB]. In this manner I think my expectations were met.

R: What according to you are the strong points of the training session?

G1/P1: The content of the workshop was very good. The training manual for SGBs had all the information we need. We think we will be able to refer to them now and then.

G1/A1: E… e… to add on what has just been said, I… I … believe the training official was able to use and integrate a lot of resources. This assisted with the emphasis of some important points. Documents like “The South African Schools Act”, “Understanding the South African Schools Act”, “First Steps in

School Governance: A resource Package" for example and may more others were good to use and refer to.

G1/P1: What I liked the most was e… the use of handouts and pamphlets in our languages [IsiZulu and Sesotho], e… the languages we can understand as parents who have little education [formal education].

G1/E1: The fact that the presenter conducted the workshop and not our school principal, was a strong point for. Sometimes it is good to hear things from somebody from outside. I mean somebody who can be neutral and fair about issues of importance. I am not saying that our principal is dishonest in any way. The official [SMD] was knowledgeable about how schools have to be governed and managed.

G1/E1: Not speaking bad of other religious beliefs, e… I think it was good that the workshop was conducted during the weekend to enable parents who are working an opportunity to attend. We know that many parents work for farm owners whoa do not want to hear a thing about the empowerment of people. Other farm owners still make our parents to work even on Saturdays but nevertheless the workshop was a success.

R: What are the weak points of the session?

G1/P1: Yes. This is now the weakness of the training session as such. The training manual and some of the documents used are written in English. This makes it difficult for some if not all of us to understand as if we are all English speakers. This is terrible because South Africa has eleven official languages but is obvious that some languages are more important than others.

The facilitator [SMD] had to interpret the documents and at some instances it was straining on his part to move between two indigenous languages to find precise words though he handled the situation well. But I personally feel that it

could have been better and good for all of us to deal with one language in a workshop of this nature.

G1/E1: I agree that the documents received especially the SASA has difficult legal terms. The use of English language only poses a problem for me. There is no consideration for the majority of parents who are illiterate. This resulted in some of the parents not participating fully during the session.

G1/E1: E… e… Notwithstanding the question of unity in diversity, the combination of different ethnic and racial groups causes a problem. Some of the participants preferred IsiZulu to Sesotho and vice versa. The presenter had to strike a balance between the language not to be seen favouring one language at the expense of the other. In most instances educator preferred English to Afrikaans while most parents preferred Afrikaans to English, probably because of the work environment.

G1/N1: [Coughing]. The fact that the workshop is conducted on a weekend especially on a Sunday was in itself inconveniencing. Working people need to rest or attend their errands that they could not attend to during the week. Besides some people would love to be given the latitude to observe their religious beliefs. Probably some of the delegates could not attend because of their religious convictions.

G1/E1: [Sighing]. Ja. E... I just want to comment by saying that sacrifices had to be made at one stage or the other. For me it's like a matter of the obvious whether the training was conducted during the week or weekend, still someone would be inconvenienced. But if everybody could show commitment, dedication and sacrifice – whichever day should be relatively suitable. Otherwise I am afraid that we would not have had the training at all.

R: What should we change in future when we offer this training?

G1/E1: I for one do not think that you must change anything. This is my personal feeling. I think all what has been done was fine. Maybe you can

improve on the issue of managing time. The training should in future not last beyond 13h00 especially on a Sunday.

G1/P1: I am also satisfied with the training itself. My request would be that the Department should arrange transport for us [parents] who had to walk some distance to the school where training is taking place. Even some those of our colleagues who have to catch the bus from here [training venue] to their homes on far away farms, should be financially assisted.

G1/E1: Though we were not bored, I my humble opinion I would submit that if we can have more than one presenter for the sake of variety, that could bring about great improvement on the attention span of the delegates. With due apology some of us cannot listen to one person for a long time. Maybe is because human beings are funny creatures who concentrates when they see new faces that they are not used to.

G1/E1: I would strongly recommend that separate training sessions should be conducted for different groups especially for the different languages. This is not to encourage discrimination on grounds of language but will help with the proper understanding of the whole content of the training. With one word that one does not understand one might lose out or misinterpret what is said despite the fact that the majority of us understand most of the languages.

G1/A1: The issue of e… almost all the documents used especially the Acts being written in English is something that need to be looked into. Experts who can translate and transcribe these could be of great help. Literal translation during the workshop itself serves the purpose but for consistency over time a common translation and transcription is necessary.

R: Have you had time to look at the training manual/notes provided to you? How helpful is it?

G1/E1: The notes are very useful. They detail all the issues of the training session. The notes are reader friendly and easy to refer to.

G1/E1: Though not a verbatim transcription and translation of all the documents containing the Acts and regulations, the handouts we received served the purpose of the training very well. Main issues of the training were comprehensively captured and easy to follow.

G1/N1: Yes. I also share the same views with what the other speakers said. What I also want to say is that the fact that the notes are written in IsiZulu and some in Sesotho made it easy for me to understand the core issues of the training. When reading on my own I could easily follow the main points and purpose of the training session.

R: Have you come to new insights regarding your task as SGB member? Could you explain in more detail?

G1/P1: Yes. I have come to realise that being a member of the SGB means more responsibility and accountability. I mean e… I cannot exonerate myself from the wrong actions of some of the members because of the collective decision making in the SGB. It means I am also part of them.

G1/E1: My take of the situation is that even though I am representing educators in this forum, I have the mandate to take some decisions on their behalf. I can only consult on very critical issues which need a renewed mandate in terms of the direction to take. This means that I need not consult now and then even on trivial matters that need my reasoning. When giving feedback to them I can be able to explain the logic behind every decision taken in the SGB.

G1/N1: What I have learnt is that every member of the SGB takes ownership of the decision and actions of the body even if one does not agree. The majority's decision and actions are the most important ones.

G1/P1: I was actually shocked to realise that the SGB is a juristic person who can sue or be sued if its actions or decisions cannot stand the test of justice. So everything we do and decide should be within the parameters of the law.

G1/A1: I have learnt that all of us in the SGB are equal though given different responsibility. As the school authority I have authority over certain matters and equally so have responsibilities. I cannot abuse my powers in the SGB nor can the chairperson either do the same.

G1/P1: As the chairperson of the committee [SGB] I am like the principal of the SGB. I have come to realise that I have an important and power role to play in leading the SGB. I cannot succeed in this delicate position if I am not impartial and loyal in my actions.

R: After having received this training schools usually indicate that there are still specific areas in which they need training. What would this SGB like further training in?

G1/A1: I think one of our great challenge is to be trained on how to conduct interviews in a credible and fair manner. This is my worry because accusations of favouritism and corruptions are so rife here.

G1/P1: We also have a problem of parents who cannot afford to pay school fees. As a school that has been allocated the section 21 functions of the South African Schools Act we are expected to fundraise to augment the funds. This becomes so difficult as our community is so poor and the majority of parents are not working. Can we really be assisted how to fundraise to have the school going?

G1/E1: Coupled with fundraising skills is the question of financial management especially the budgeting process. Drawing the realistic school budget is a headache. If we can get a good foundation in this critical function, especially for parents, I think our school can go far.

FOCUS GROUP 1 (SCHOOL B)

R: Why are you a member of the SGB?

G1/P1: Just like …[clearing throat] myself as well, I am also here [SGB] to represent parents who elected me because they believe in me that I will not disappoint them. It is my intention to serve the interest of all the parents. [Pause] As a parent myself, I have children of my own that I would like to see them getting the best education possible without disturbances. All my bigger children schooled here, including myself. So, e… e…I am jealous about this school and want to all the children getting what they deserve.

Children can only get good education if we as parents play our part. We can play our parental role by supporting all the school activities and paying school fees. In this way teachers can teach without problems because they can buy anything they need to teach the children.

G1/P1: Unlike Mrs…[name withheld for anonymity], I do not know much about what happens in a school committee [SGB]. But e… I will also learn like the others. We [parents] will ensure that educators teach and not play with our children.

Our children should be not like us who did not have an opportunity to learn but left school early to seek employment. They [learners] must wish to be like their educators who are like the light of the earth. Therefore learners must respect their educators but equally important, educators must respect themselves by not doing bad things in front of the learners or with the learners.

G1/E1: E… with me …e… I actually volunteered to stand for the elections. I think I am having the will to bring about meaningful changes in the governance of our school. Former educator representatives did not consult enough with us as educators but pushed the agenda of the SGB at the expense of their fellow colleagues. They actually betrayed the trust we had in

them as our mandated colleagues. I am not prepared to do the same thing but to work for the success of the school but not forgetting the interest of my constituency.

For an example, sometimes, e…let me say most of the time we [educators] did not get feedback from the SGB meetings. Decisions were taken and we [educators] did not know how and why despite having representatives in the SGB. Please understand me well, I do not mean to say that I will do miracles but at least I will consult and communicate with others.

R: How were you chosen?

G1/E1: Like my fellow colleague I amassed more votes to be one of the elected representatives for the educator component.

G1/P1: Parents of the learners at this school voted for me to be a new member of the SGB. When votes were counted I was among the parents who got the required number of votes.

G1/A1: As the principal of the school I automatically became a member of the SGB. I am the only member who is actually not voted onto the SGB.

R: What experience do you have that could assist you in fulfilling the tasks of an SGB member?

G1/E1: E… as educator and a library teacher, e… I will bring in my love for reading. Our learners and parents should be a learning nation which can develop mentally.

G1/P1: As a policeman I think I can assist with the curbing of lawlessness which is accompanied by drug abuse and violence. Counselling will be my focal point before our community get addicted and even ending up in jail about the crimes that it might indulge in.

G1/P1: Working with people is what makes me tick. My nursing experience will come handy to reach out to the community I am serving especially the learners.

G1/E1: I do not think that I have any specialised skill or knowledge except being a teacher who can assist the SGB with disciplining of learners. Together we can make it happen. We all know that corporal punishment has been abolished and therefore we have to look for other means of making our learners to behave like human beings without degrading them.

R: What aspect(s) of this school would you personally like to address in the time you are an SGB?

G1/E1: Being an educator I have seen that learners are not taught properly by new educators. I will use my experience as an educator to influence them in teaching learners properly. The cooperative learning approach is the proper method to teach our big classes. I have since realised that teachers of nowadays are really not coping with carrying the message across to learners.

Cooperative learning is no the so-called spoon-feeding of the learners. It is the method whereby more advanced or gifted learners can assist those who are slow to grasp meanwhile the educator is concentrating on helping others of the same problem though in groups by taking turns.

G1/P1: What I would like to change is that it is not a sin for an SGB member to take some time off and visit the school to support the staff. In fact that is the function of the SGB. I would like to see SGB members coming to school to provide moral support to the staff without disturbing the program of the school. Parent in the SGB should take turns to address learners in addressing learners at assemblies for example.

G1/N1: [Pause]. I align myself with what the latter speaker has said that if the SGB members come to school, by their mere presence can change the

attitudes of learners. Discipline could be better instilled in the learners because we will be all in this together.

G1/A1: The former SGB was too conservative in using money for boosting the practical subjects like Biology and Physical Science teaching for example. Educators at one stage battled to buy the consumable products for experiments because the budget was so stringent ad did not allow for virement. I therefore would like to see that changed so as to give a bigger share to the proper teaching of these critical subjects for an example.

R: What task(s) do you find particularly challenging?

G1/P1: [Clearing throat]. Working with children as my equals is such an unthinkable thing for me how to manage it. Kids will always be kid no matter what. It does not mean that if they in the SGB then they will become adults. They always need a matured person to help them in arriving at some of the decisions. That's how I see it.

G1/E1: The involvement of learners at schools with grade 8 and above is political decision based on our past history as South Africans. Maybe if we can embrace the learners with an attitude that we have to teach and initiate them into the world of responsible adulthood we may reap the fruits of good lessons. We have to realise that as the law dictates we have to coexist with the learners in governing our schools.

G1/N1: I also find it such a challenge to deal with learners in the SGB particularly those who are here with hidden agendas to destabilise the working of the SGB for the progress of the school. I have since observed that the interest of the learners is money in most of the cases and not education. Most of the learners want the school to entertain them. If things don't go their way then the school is disrupted for such petty demands like the so-called farewell parties.

G1/L1: It becomes clear from the onset that our problem as learners is harassment and humiliation we receive from members of the SGB. It is not easy to speak up our minds to some of the parents and educators who are convinced that there is nothing better we can contribute as learners in the SGB.

If one learner has done something wrong then all of the learners must suffer from that. This is not fair. I would appeal that we should be treated with respect as human beings and be given a chance to exercise our democratic right of representing our fellow learners. Where we are doing wrong we can appreciate if we are guided accordingly by our elders.

G1/P1: It is such a problem her at school to work with feeding scheme of children. We don't know which child to feed or not to feed because they all want the meals. We appreciate what the government has done for schools but what we get is so little that we find difficult to make ends meet.

I think as the SGB we should talk to parents and request for some donations to supplement the shortage of meals in order to benefit all the learners. The nutrition scheme of the Department has fallen short of its intention of feeding every child and I therefore feel that as a caring parent community we must do something to help the poor kids.

G1/A1: [Silence]. E… another problem closely linked to the one by the former speaker is the issue of orphans. Some of us might not have realised how the numbers have of children without parents have increased. Without speculating on the cause of this high numbers, I hope we can to make a plan of assisting these learners with grants to keep them at school and save them from the dangers of the cruel world out there.

Maybe as a start we should think about linking orphans to parents who might not necessarily adopt the orphans but can look after their needs, for an example emotionally, physically and materially where possible. This adopt-an-orphan strategy can be extended to the community by requesting able and

willing parents or any community member to assist with the problem of orphans. I think this is what I would like to achieve with other members of the SGB.

R: What is opinion of the fact that the Department of Education is providing training for SGB?

G1/P1: My opinion is that our Education Department is a caring department which looks after the interests of its people. It does not only legislate that SGB should be elected but makes sure that it also capacitate them to carry out their duties and responsibilities.

G1/E1: I also think that the Department has done us good by providing training for us. We are happy that we have been trained though I think it could be a wonderful thing if this training can be continuous so as to sustain the capacity building process of SGB's.

G1/N1: To avoid monotony I suggest that we move forward because we all unanimously agree that the Department of Education has done us proud by providing training for us.

R: You have just received the first "general training" for SGB members. What is your opinion of it?

G1/L1: I have learnt a lot from the "first general" training. I was worried that I was to represent the RCL onto the SGB without knowledge. Now I have my notes and manual to read from though I might not understand all the English written in there but I can always ask from my educators.

G1/P1: The training was both enjoyable and enlightening. I feel confident about myself and what is expected of me after this training session.

G1/E1: I share the same sentiments of fulfilment about the first training I have just received. I think most if not all of us share the same feelings of satisfaction.

R: To what extent did it meet your expectations?

G1/L1: The training met my expectations to my great satisfaction.

G1/P1: My expectation was to receive knowledge and that has been met without any doubt.

G1/E1: It's unbelievable what the workshop did for me. I do not have any complaint. My expectations were actually exceeded such that I feel the knowledge I have gained will always be part of me.

R: What according to you are the strong points of the training?

G1/PI: The reference materials we have received are a good summary of the main points of the content of the workshop.

G1/L1: I think it is the strong point of the workshop that all the SGB members receive training at the same time, including learners. This shows that every member of the SGB is treated as an equal.

G1/E1: The fact that languages that could be understood by parents were used changeably was a strong point of the workshop.

R: What are weak points of the training session?

G1/E1: The fact that the workshop was conducted over the weekend is a weakness.

G1/P1: I don't think of any weakness about this training session.

R: What should we change in future when we offer this training?

G1/P1: In terms of the content nothing should be changed. I can only suggest an improvement in terms of the day of the week that we should have the workshop on a Saturday.

G1/E1: The training session was okay and I do not see anything that should be changed in future when this workshop is being presented.

R: Have you had time to look at the training manual/notes we provided you with? How helpful is it?

G1/N1: Yes I did peruse the notes you gave us. They are carefully selected to be understood by everybody.

G1/E1: Just to add as well I also agree with the other speakers that the training manual is well detailed though written in English while the notes give a short account of important aspects that the presenter wanted to emphasise.

R: Have you come to new insights regarding your task as SGB member? Could you explain in detail?

G1/P1: Yes, I think I can now understand why some of the previous members resigned. To be a member of a SGB is so demanding. You actually overwork yourself for the sake of the learners.

G1/E1: You see, with due apologies it's so difficult if you are not educated [learned] to some extent to grasp what is written in policy handbooks. This made mw to realise that you can be taken for granted if you have to rely on someone for all the information when coming to decision-making.

R: After having received this training schools usually indicate that there are still specific areas in which they need training. What would this SGB like further training in?

G1/P1: For now I cannot think of something that I would like training in except for being given a chance to go home and read about my functions as an SGB member.

G1/E1: I would like to receive training concerning finance control of the school. I believe that all of us as SGB members need to know how to control school finances. It should not be work of the treasurer and the cashier only. I do not mean the in and out of it but the basic understanding of financial control.

G1/NI: I am fine for now. Maybe after the next training I might have thought of something of real significance.

FOCUS GROUP 1 (SCHOOL C)

R: Why are you the member of the SGB?

G1/L1: I am a member of the SGB to represent the learner component. I like to be one of the leaders of the learners.

G1/P1: I have agreed to be a member of the SGB because I think I have an important contribution to make as a parent. The overwhelming confidence that the parents have shown in me is an indication that I will do the SGB good.

G1/N1: Being the only non-teaching staff member I am representing my interest in the SGB as required by law.

G1/A1: I am a member of the SGB by destiny and not necessarily by choice. By this I do not imply any dissatisfaction with my being an SGB member.

G1/E1: I am an SGB member because I am here to represent and to advocate the interests of educators. I also believe that election of SGB members should be based on willingness and interest than anything else.

R: How were you chosen?

G1/L1: I was elected by many learners and therefore became a member of the RCL [Representative Council of Learners]. From there I was chosen by the RCL members to represent them in the SGB.

G1/E1: E…I was democratically elected through the secret ballot paper system. I received the required number of votes that allowed me to serve onto the SGB.

G1/P1: I… I was requested by some parents to stand for the elections and got elected through the secret ballot papers.

R: What experience do you have that could assist you in fulfilling the tasks of an SGB member?

G1/P1: I don't know if I understand the question well. But the way I understand it is that as a former member of the old SGB I now understand how to work with people of different personalities. There will be times of conflicts like they used to be in the former SGB. This is where I will be of great help because of my experience in such matters.

G1/L1: I don't think I have any experience that I will bring in to the SGB except to say that I will cooperate will all the members and learn how to do things.

G1/E1: I think my listening and clear communication skills in both writing and speaking will be of great help to carry my task in the SGB.

R: What aspects of this school would you personally like to address in the time you are an SGB member?

G1/E1: E… you see. This might not sound nice but I must say finances of the school are not properly managed. There are a lot of things that one does not understand in terms of the way the public funds are used at this school. It is not my hunch that school funds were not well managed because of the outcry of the community. I think that it will be important to get this right during our term of office.

G1/P1: [Pause]. The solution of all the school problems must start with the SGB and the parent community. Wrong things happen in schools because parents do not get involved in school affairs. Whoever does wrong at school do so because he can realise that there are no watchdogs for the parent community whose money is being misused.

If parent can have an interest in school affairs the battle shall have half won. Newsletters should be send out to parents on a quarterly bases to inform them about the financial status of the school as well as about other issues of importance.

G1/A1: My intention is to have the ABET centre established to encourage the illiterate sector of our population to get education. Everybody has a right to education hence I will be happy to make a contribution in this regard. All of the SGB members who did not get an opportunity to get education to the required level will be the first ones to benefit.

G1/E1: According to my understanding the SGB is the body making recommendations to the Head of Education in the Province for the appointment of educators. What I don't understand is why can't we have a say when educators got redeployed by the Department [of Education]? We have lost quality education because of this redeployment of educators. I wish to make a great influence in changing such kind of policies. We should be involved in every decision made by the Department not only when it suits them.

G1/N1: The Department has failed to live up to its promise of re-skilling excess unqualified educators who chose to be translated to administrative clerks. One of my colleagues is now more than a year in his new job but has not been re-trained to perform the duties of his new work. I think as the SGB we can budget for training or courses for the development of our staff members and not wait for the Department.

R: What aspect(s) of this school would you personally like to address in the time you are an SGB member?

G1/A1: I am worried about the diminishing enrolment of learners at this school. This is affecting the school in more ways than one. The school is losing the number of teaching posts allocated by the Department. Maybe we have to look at our admission policy very closely to analyse factors like the quality of education we are offering for an example.

G1/EI: I guess the decline in the enrolment of learners might also be caused by the obsolete curriculum we are offering. I believe we cannot fool ourselves that a curriculum that has been in existence for more than half a decade is still relevant to the demands of the technological world. We must move with the times by introducing new learning areas and subjects that will be relevant to the demands of the current job market.

G1/L1: The other problem faced by the majority of learners is that they do not have the school uniform. Regardless of the fact that they cannot be barred from attending school due to uniform, they feel bad and its like they do not belong to our school. For this reason many have decided to go and seek for employment in the Gauteng Province because their parents are unemployed. We have tried to show them that their option will make regret later in life but with no help. I guess it's high time that we must involve social workers in such kind of problems as well.

G1/N1: I… [cough] I deal with the admission of learners at school here. The problem I am seeing is that many learners do not have birth certificates. The

problem is even worse for some of the learners whose parents stay on farms because even some of their parents do not have birth certificates or Identity documents. It is such a problem to help them because the Home Affairs Department need the same documents. They become so disadvantaged because they cannot access many of the amenities available. We must do something as different partners in the community to solve this problem especially for the benefit of the learner.

R: What task(s) of the SGB do you find particularly challenging?

G1/A1: [Silence] The big challenge for me is to curb the rife sexual relations between learners and educators. This is more prevalent between male educators and girls. May educators have been dismissed from work but this problem does not seem to abate. Many cases are not known because some parents are silent about these relations because they think they will benefit in one way or the other.

But when relations become sour, it's only when they [affected parents and learners] break the silence. In many cases it's late to correct the problem. This has many negative repercussions for the both parties. It's my commitment to uproot this evil from our school and community. I cannot achieve this alone but would rely on the other members of the SGB.

G1/P1: This is a real nerve wrecking problem. In our times it was unheard of educators who fell in love with educators. Educators are supposed to be like parents to our children. The problem is that educators see lovers instead of learners that must be taught. How will learners respect educators who go to bed with them? This is what corrupts schools. We must work hard to eradicate this madness.

G1/L1: E… we as learners are not happy about the love affair between educators and girl learners. Educators had their chance to enjoy their youth but they are denying the same to our fellow girl learners. This is because educators promise the girls money and nice things and drive them in fancy

cars. Such kinds of things result into school disruptions and put the lives of teachers in danger.

G1/E1: It is not a good thing to generalise that educators have love affairs with girl learners but to say it is some of those corrupt ones who do such filthy things. Unfortunately the image of all educators is dented by such irresponsible educators who actually do not have to belong to the honourable teaching profession.

The results of such an action are learner pregnancy and dropout from school by girl learners. At times this becomes a social problem where many children are be fatherless. In some instances there have been youth suicides because their hopes have been shattered by the misleading so-called educators.

R: What is your opinion of the fact that the Department of Education is providing training for SGB?

G1/P1: E… It is a good thing. The Department shows that it cares about effective school governance.

G1/N1: I am happy about the Department's gesture of training us. This training e… will empower us to govern our schools professionally. We really welcome the training with open arms.

G1/A1: I think we really have to be grateful towards the Department for the training. Though it is actually the responsibility of the Department to provide the training by law, we are really happy that finally happened.

G1/E1: Without the wasting of time I think we all share the same sentiments of the previous speakers. We are delighted with the training provided to us.

R: You have just received the first "general training" for SGB members. What is your opinion of it?

G1/A1: I it was a resounding success. I have attended many workshops in the past but this one was unique in its own right.

G/E1: [Pause] I held the view that the workshop was well planned and presented. The logistical arrangements were relatively good except for the fact that it was held on a Sunday.

G1/P1: I am holding the presenter in high esteem as a patient and knowledgeable person who could explain the content of the workshop well for all the parents in the language of their own.

R: To what extend did it meet your expectations?

G1/P1: My expectations were met to a great extent. I am highly impressed.

G1/L1: I am satisfied like other SGB members about the workshop. It was really good and it gave us a lot of information.

G1/E1: I am more than happy about the training session. It provided worthy information for all of us. It's content was relevant to what we do in the SGB's.

R: What, according to you are the strong points of the training session?

G1/A1: The training was conducted by someone knowledgeable about school governance issues. The manner and approach of presenting was not boring but lively with some humour. The variety in the facilitation skills helped us to be focussed throughout the session.

G1/E1: E… e… the content of the workshop was researched and meaningful. We could relate well with the case studies as they were about the things we have heard of.

R: What are weak points of this training session?

G1/E1: Time was not well managed especially at the start and during the short breaks. This can be improved upon.

G1/P1: Other people have already mentioned the fact of the training manual being in English was a problem for myself as well.

G1/A1: This is not a weakness as such but a comment that sometimes people learn better in a new environment. If the Department can take us out to quiet place away from our normal place of work, I believe that can impact positively on our personalities to come back as changed persons.

R: What should we change in future when offering this training?

G1/E1: Nothing. I think the workshop was fine and I am personally happy about it.

G1/P1: I am satisfied about almost everything. I would however plead that we should also have training manuals written in our indigenous languages.

G1/A1: I would suggest that in future the training venue be changed to a place outside our residence area depending on the availability of funds of course.

R: Have you had time to look at the training manual/notes we provided you with? How helpful is it?

G1/P1: The manual and the notes are helpful. I can read through the notes with ease.

G1/E1: The manual is so detail that you do not need anything extra. All the information one need is contained in the manual.

G1/N1: I also agree with all the former speakers that the manual and the notes we have received are very handy and relevant for our training course.

R: Have you come to new insights regarding your task as SGB member? Could you explain in more detail?

G1/P1: I have indeed come to new insights about my task as a member of the SGB. It is important for me to encourage parents to create conducive atmosphere at home for learners to study because at school learners have a small fraction of time to do the things that educators want them to do. Some of the work has to done at home as extra work to assist the learners to progress well with their work.

G1/N1: [Silence] I have learned that to be an SGB member is not an easy task as I initially thought. I t need great sacrifice and commitment.

R: After having received this training schools usually indicate that there are still specific areas in which they need training. What would this SGB like further training in?

G1/P1: I think if we can be trained as to how to write business proposals so that we can ask for donations from big businesses. According to SASA, as a section 21 status school it is expected of us to fundraise and I think we still some help in this regard.

G1/E1: I am ok for now.

FOCUS GROUP 2 (SCHOOL A)

R: How are you enjoying the role you are playing on the SGB?

G2/P2: E…It's a tough job to lead the SGB but I am enjoying this challenge. I am always learning to work with people of different personalities.

G2/E2: It's too early to say. But I think up to now I am coping well as the secretary of the SGB. It is not for the first time that I am a secretary because I

also the secretary of our school's staff. I presume I am good at writing minutes and therefore enjoy my role very much.

G2/A2: It is always a pleasure to be a member of the SGB and to work with different people because that is in itself a learning opportunity. I do enjoy my role of assisting and giving advice to the SGB as the principal of the school as well. I value the contribution made by everybody like they also value my contribution as well.

G2/N2: [Pause] Like all the other speakers, I also enjoy to be part of the succeeding team. Even though I am not an executive member I feel worthy of being human since the other SGB members value my contributions as well as they do with those of the others. I have the impression that all of us are important in the SGB.

R: How you coping?

G2/E2: I am coping well because I am achieving my goal of serving the parents. I am not experiencing any problems with my work up to so far.

G2/P2: Sometimes one feels that things are difficult to be achieved as one would wish. Meetings would sometimes last till late because we debate issues. I also try my level best to stay till that late even though it is disturbing at a time.

G2/N2: It's nice to be serving on the SGB. I am coping well with my fundraising responsibilities. The minimal skill I have helps me to forge ahead. Fundraising is an important part of the SGB and I am ensuring that it succeeds at all costs.

R: How are progressing in addressing the aspects you feel should be addressed at your school?

G2/P2: E… I am progressing well in addressing some of the important issues. Unlike in the beginning, we now have more and more parents being involved in school activities which was not the case in the past.

G2/A2: With me I can say there is minimal improvement up to this stage. Parental participation with regard to deciding about school curriculum seems to be challenging task. In fact many parents feel that this is the matter to be deliberated upon by educators. This becomes a matter of concern in the curriculum committee. The South African Schools Act stipulates that parents through the SGB should decide on the school curriculum.

G2/N2: There is good progress with the way our school looks like. The graffiti that we used to see on school buildings particularly have vanished. The renovations done on the school building have been a good thing done by us as SGB members. We have used the school monies wisely indeed.

G2/E2: We have made great strides in correcting the alleged financial mismanagement. We have put in place financial control measurements. There is still some more work to be done in this regard but at least we can see where we are going.

R: With hindsight do you feel that the first general training assisted you in fulfilling your role on the SGB?

G2/P2: Definitely! I have a big picture about what must I do in the SGB. My role is to ensure that I support all the activities of the SGB.

G2/E2: For sure I can say that the first training was a nice experience. We have empowered to run and control our school's affairs. Since the first training I can see that we have made good progress in governing our school.

G2/N1: I am feeling happy because I am satisfied about the content of the first training that we have already received. I can say with confidence that I know

How to perform my duties independently. I feel confident as compared with my experience during the first days of my governance functions.

R: What task(s) of the SGB do you still find particularly challenging?

G2/A2: I for one believe that the majority of the SGB members especially in the executive members still need to understand the financial management responsibilities. All the SGB members must understand that as the principal of the school I am an accounting officer of the school. So, the monitoring of the adopted budget is actually the control instrument of the school's expenditure. We cannot spend money on items that we did not budget for.

G2/P2: I can say that what is a challenge for me and also for the other members of the SGB is to establish a common forum for all SGB's in our area. The first attempt to establish the National Association of School Governing Bodies [NASGB] failed. It's like people don't have commitment to achieve this aim.

I am trying hard to have the NASGB established to enable local SGB members to talk in on voice about their common problems. I will start by convening a meeting for all the chairpersons and thereafter will broaden the involvement of other stakeholders.

G2/N2: We as SGB members still have to convince parents to register their learners at schools closer to their area of residence. Though it is the right of every parent to register his/her child where he/she chooses, parents should be advised by the SGB members to make decisions that will benefit the learners in terms of travelling especially the small ones.

G2/N2: The way SGB meetings are run is still a challenge to be overcome. Many meeting are still not procedural. Minutes are not properly recorded. Sometimes meetings are still unnecessarily long and at some stages discuss things that are not even on the agenda.

G2/P2: The participation of parents in drawing up Work Programmes [WP] of the Foundation Phase as required by the Revised National Curriculum Statement [RNCS] for schools with grade R – 9 is quite a challenge. Many parents will find it difficult let alone illiterate or semi-illiterate ones.

FOCUS GROUP 2 (SCHOOL B)

R: How are you enjoying the role you are playing on the SGB?

G2/L2: At the beginning parents did not take us serious but they now do because they also respect our views. I am happy that we have achieved that progress in that respect.

G2/P2: I am enjoying what I do. When I come across problems I consult with the other chairpersons of the other SGB's as well as with our principal.

G2/E2: The role I am playing needs me to be always extra careful about the school funds and what they are used for. I like because it makes me to always on alert and not to be careless about the money of the community.

R: How are you coping?

G2/E2: I am coping well with my role in the committee [SGB].

G2/N2: We are going along very well. I think we are handling matters well and I don't know if I'm the only one who feels like that.

G2/A2: Up this far I think as SGB members are doing great. We execute our tasks with great enthusiasm.

R: How are you progressing in dealing with the aspects you feel should be addressed at your school?

G2/P2: There is a good progress. For an example SGB members are reaching out to visit learners at the assemblies to motivate them and to show that they care for them.

G2/E2: Through the mentoring programme that we have initiated we have observed that there is great improvement in the performance of learners and that of new and inexperienced educators. Co-operative learning approach and team-teaching are bearing the fruits of improving learner performance.

There is teamwork between School Management Teams (SMT) and the educators. Every member of the SMT realises why he/she is here at this school. This team spirit is reflected in the performance of the learners as well as on the positive school environment we are enjoying. In that view I think there progress is impressive.

R: With hindsight do you feel that the first general training assisted you in fulfilling your role on the SGB?

G2/P2: Yes it has. I have improved greatly because of the information I gained from the training. I am able to make positive inputs in our meetings.

G2/E2: I feel happy because there is now clarity on some of the issues that I was not sure how to deal with.

G2/N2: When I look back I am being filled with pride about the better me now. I do not regret having been elected a member of the SGB.

R: What task(s) of the SGB do you still find particularly challenging?

G2/P2: The time of holding meetings in the evenings is a problem. In many instances meetings last till late and this causes a strain on my family relations. Being a mother it makes life rather difficult for me. If our meetings can just take place over a fixed time, for an example maybe two hours, then I can

make arrangements for my children because my husband is sometimes not at home or he arrives late from work.

G2/E2: Ja. You see meetings that are unnecessarily long have negative results like absenteeism from meetings. I am a culprit when it comes to that score. Sometimes you come to the meeting with a hope that the meeting will not last for too long so that you can still attend some other matters like marking the work of the learners that one has to submit the following day. This becomes a nightmare when one has to spend sleepless night thinking about failure to meet the due dates for submissions.

G2/N2: I think we have the code of conduct for learners but it's like we do not have. We still experience a lot of problems about learners who do not respect their own code of conduct. Instead of problems getting less, they are escalating. You still see a lot of learners arriving late for classes while others dodge classes or absent themselves from school.

G2/A2: The problem is not only about the code of conduct for learners only but the same goes for the code of conduct for SGB members. As school governors we must also be guided by our own code of conduct. But my observation has been that some of the SGB members break their own rules as well. They do not respect the laws they drew up for themselves. This becomes a serious problem when the code of conduct for school governors is being implemented.

For an example you will find one member absenting himself/herself without a reason or apology for more that three times. In most cases these are constructive members. The result of this action is that they have actually dismissed themselves and the SGB should now go back to hold by-election to fill in the new vacancies.

G2/E2: I think I am experiencing a problem of paper work to deal with as a secretary of the SGB but this is not a big deal. What I think I have to master is strategy that will work for me to take notes.

G2/E2: The implementation and the practising of the education religion policy is a great challenge. We have a nice local policy on religion align with the National Policy on Education Religion but we still the practice of Christianity being dominant. I am not sure whether is because of our past or is it the choice of many parents as their religion. It is a challenge for us to turn the situation around and give all religions an equal opportunity to exist and to grow. We have to sensitise the parent community about the importance of equality of opportunity.

G2/A2: E…another challenge we have to deal with is the issue of racial integration. We have to go an extra mile in order to get educators of other races to be part of our staff in order to deliver quality education. The same goes for the learner population but for a start we can lure good educators who can teach well.

I should not be misunderstood as if I am saying we do not have good educators but I am saying is that we should actively recruit educators of other races when filing vacant posts to execute the mandate of integrating schools. Ten years in the democratic era schools are as they were ten years ago in terms of racial and ethnic composition.

G2/P2: [Silence] I am convinced that discipline is still a challenge we've got to deal with in our school – particularly among learners. Learners seem to be in control of all situations while we as parents have less power to control them. These days learners do as they wish because of so many rights that they are enjoying while parents are actually at their mercy. Our own children have become almost untouchable.

R: You have just received the "first specific training session" on the constitution of the SGB. What is your opinion of it?

G2/P2: I feel satisfied because I have learned a lot about the importance of a constitution of a SGB.

G2/E2: I share the same sentiment with my fellow colleague. Without a constitution the SGB cannot function. If it does it will be unlawful.

R: To what extent did it meet your expectations?

G2/P2: It met my expectation to a great extent.

G2/E2: The training actually exceeded my expectations. I have gained a lot form this training.

R: What, according to you are the strong points of the training session?

G2/E2: The strong point of the training is that it provided us with the needed information to govern our schools.

G2/P2: The use of our languages [IsiZulu and Sesotho] was a good thing for us to understand things easily.

G2/N2: The workshop handled one topic with focus on everything that has to do with it. It was time saving and not tiring for most of us.

R: What are the weak points of the training session?

G2/P2: The manuals that we have are written in English and I think that's a weakness because some parents cannot understand the English so well.

G2/E2: I was wondering why we were one race only while we have integrated schools. But because of the language issue for the sake of training purposes only, I now understand. That would have been a weakness for me about this session.

R: What should we change in future when we offer this training?

G2/P2: The workshop should not be conducted on a Sunday but I know that the majority feels it's the right time.

G2/E2: I don't think we should change anything. The workshop was fine.

R: Have you had time to look at the notes we provided you with? How helpful are they?

G2/P2: To tell the truth I did not have time to look through the notes due to lack of time. We are work very hard during this time of the year.

G2/E2: The notes you provided us with are very good. They are easy to refer to. The manual gives details while the notes are short and to the point.

R: Have you come to new insights regarding the constitution of the SGB? Could you explain in more detail?

G2/N2: The constitution of the SGB is like a plan of a house. Without a plan the builder cannot continue to build because he would not know where to put the window or door frame for an example. Like building plan the constitution of the SGB gives all the specifications of what must be done and how to do it.

R: Do you think you will now be able to deal more effectively with the constitution of the SGB?

G2/P2: Yes. We know for a fact about the types of meetings to hold, procedures to follow and valid minutes amongst others.

G2/A2: The training on the constitution of the SGB will enable us to deal more effectively with the drawing and adoption of the code of conduct for SGB members. This will reduce if not eliminate discipline problems amongst us as SGB members.

R: Are there any other areas in school governance in which you feel you need more training? Could you explain in more detail?

G2/E2: Yes. I believe we need more capacity building about the school's financial management. Many problems that crop up at schools stems from dissatisfaction about the way school monies are handled.

G2/P2: If we can also receive training on how to conduct interviews in proper way, that will minimise the disputes we are experiencing when we have to fill in vacancies.

FOCUS GROUP 2 (SCHOOL C)

R: How are you enjoying the role you are playing on the SGB?

G2/P2: I am enjoying it very much. At first when I started Iwas not sure if I was doing the right thing but I know what am I doing.

G2/E2: E… I also enjoy my role in the SGB. The only problem is volumes and volumes of paper work that I had to deal with. Otherwise everything is fine with me.

G2/N2: It feels good to be in the SGB. I am happy with my position and I think even the other SGB members are happy too.

R: How are you coping?

G2/E2: I am coping well. I think I have adjusted to the SGB schedule.

G2/P2: We are learning well and I feel like I have done the work for a long time whereas it's my first year.

G2/N2: There is no problem. I'm coping well, so far so good.

R: How are you progressing in dealing with the aspects you feel should be addressed at your school?

G2/N2: I am wondering if we are winning the battle to combat the spread of HIV/AIDS seeing that a significant number of girls still drop out of school due to teenage pregnancy. This is a worrying factor to me even though I do not have any statistical data with me right now. But the mere fact that our learners get pregnant, to me is obvious that they care less about the prevention of the spread of HIV/AIDS. This is actually a double jeopardy that we actually have to deal with, namely teenage pregnancy and the spread of HIV/AIDS.

G2/E2: [Pause] I think it's a great challenge to teach our school community about the Constitution of our country – South Africa, especially about the Bill of Rights. The Constitution is the supreme law of the country and had to be treated as such. There are many people out there who still complain about the rights of learners as if there are no rights for other people. It is our duty to teach others that rights go hand in glove with responsibilities. As SGB members we have to teach the community that it's the primary duty of every citizen to respect and to uphold the Constitution of the country.

It will not do us good to forget the oppressive system of the past where structures like the SGB were not recognised except for being oppressive instruments of the state. Now we are living in a democratic era and we have to be seen governing our schools as such. We can't talk democracy on the one hand and practice autocracy on the other. We are all learning to adapt to the new order. We were trapped in the past to such an extent that it's difficult to unchain ourselves and to move on with life.

G2/A2: E…e… another challenge we have as SGB members is the issue of initiation schools which disrupts effective teaching and learning. Please you must understand me well. I do not say initiation schools do not have a place in the new democracy. What I am saying is that the timing of the initiation schools is not favourable for learners.

Learners are kept there for long and do not return in time to complete their academic year. In many instances these initiation schools are run during the middle of the academic year and e…we see learners going away to such schools and leave schooling behind. Some never come back to continue with their education, hence leave school early and do not complete at least grade 12.

G2/E2: I just want to agree with the latter speaker. What has been said by the latter speaker is very true. It really makes one to wonder whether some parents are serious about the education of their learners? By the time the initiates finish with their cultural customs and return to school, they are already behind with their education. It then becomes a problem how to catch up with their fellow learners who were at school all along.

G2/N2: Apart from being behind with their schoolwork, these learners who are from the initiation schools pose additional problems for the school. They all of a sudden think they are men and women who have graduated from the traditional initiation schools. The majority of them do not respect educators or anybody else for that matter, who has never been to the initiation school. Cultural values and beliefs seem to gain an upper hand at the expense of formal education.

G2/P2: We are not criticizing initiation schools but what we should be saying is that parents have to get their priorities in order. We should encourage communities to get education first then the observation of cultural values and beliefs can follow. In reality the two aspects cannot be separated. Initiation schools have been part of existence for this community for many years ago. What we should be aiming at is to make sure that the time of running these initiation schools should be during school holidays and it should not disrupt or interfere with the academic school calendar.

G2/P2: Initiation schools and the results thereof give me a great worry. To cite an example, we are experiencing a problem of gangsterism in our community which emanates from initiates who went to the different initiation schools. As a

policeman I know that this type of a situation results into a power struggle as to which group or gang is strong. Innocent people become targets of crime and violence.

We are definitely affected as a school as well. We have to find ways and means of dealing with the situation because these law-breakers are in our schools. We know that some of them have been arrested and many more have been maimed or even killed. Our schools cannot be the breeding for ill-disciplined learners any longer.

G2/E2: [Sighing] The sooner we address this problem the better. I know that this kind of a situation will need long-term intervention strategy. We must adopt a multidisciplinary approach whereby all stakeholders and experts get involved. As an educator who deals with the school safety project, it should be our objective to create safe schools. We cannot talk of safe schools if within our schools we have the "tsotsi" element. Vulnerable learners and educators end-up being victims of these gangsters or thugs which are a threat to peace and order in our community. Drug misuse and abuse result from irresponsible thugs. In the finale analyses nobody will be safe.

R: With hindsight do you feel that the "first general training session" assisted you in fulfilling your role on the SGB?

G2/P2: I feel great. The training session has empowered us a great deal. I have come to realise that without the constitution the SGB cannot do anything. The decisions we take must be guided by the constitution we have adopted. The code of learners which is our responsibility has helped us a great deal by trying to bring about discipline in our learners. We can now distinguish learners from thugs. I have a peace of mind now that we do not learners with the so-called dreadlocks which I personally did not like, especially when worn by learners. I don't if adults wear them because I think they know why they are wasting their money.

G2/E2: You know that it is easy for people to form impressions about those who wear dreadlocks. If we could we would discourage even educators from wearing them but laws of democracy would not allow us. In the long run it is such kind of examples that would expose our codes of conduct to be challenged and ultimately undermined.

G2/A2: Ja. It's tough these days in schools. People do what they want. The same could be said about the way educators dress. Some do not appear professional at all. Some appear sloppy as if they are not educators who earn what is due to them by the end of each month. Really good people, one becomes ashamed to be associated with such colleagues.

These educators will defend themselves by saying that they are the ones who teach learners and not their clothes. Besides, the Education Department does not buy uniform for them. So nobody can prescribe for them what to wear or not to wear. They just wear anything that will make them feel comfortable when discharging their duties.

G2/L2: You see, the other learners would want to copy the examples set by educators. That is why some learners do not want to wear school uniform. Of course learners are not educators and therefore should not compare themselves with educators. But the fact of the matter is that some learners would want to emulate examples set by educators whether they are right or wrong to them it does not matter.

G2/E2: I can only comment by saying that these days the Congress of the South African Students [COSAS] is adamant that uniforms and school fees should be abolished from schools.

G2/P2: The training has empowered us to come up with rules that will actually help us to get school fees from parents as agreed upon during the budget meeting. We can now lay charges against defaulting parents who do not want to honour their financial responsibilities. In the past we used to see learners who had to suffer by not getting their progress report when parents did not

pay school fees. Now the circumstances have changed because it will be the parents who will have to face the consequences of not paying school fees and no learners to become victims of circumstances.

R: What task(s) of the SGB do you still find challenging?

G2/P2: The reasonable use of school facilities by the community is for me a problem. I understand that the community should have access to the facilities so that they can own the school. But my main concern is vandalism that might happen. I know how people are. When they begin they will behave well but as time goes by they will change.

G2/E2: E… may I also say that the National Education Department expect school to be centres of community life. This means we [SGB] have to come up with policies that will serve as a contract of good behaviour between the users of the school facilities and us [SGB]. In this way we can benefit by charging minimal fees for the use of the facilities and at the same time we will be fundraising.

G2/L2: I agree with the latter speaker that people should be allowed to pay and use the school building otherwise the level of vandalism might increase if they see a school as something that they cannot benefit from. For that reason the school can become a target for their frustrations.

FOCUS GROUP 3 (SCHOOL A)

R: With hindsight do you feel that the "second specific training session" assisted you in fulfilling your role on the SGB?

G3/P3: Yes. In the beginning you could feel some tension within the SGB. There was some hidden power struggle going on in the SGB. Some of the members wrongfully wanted to be in control. Now that everybody knows what role to play, we are functioning as unit. Teamwork and dedication is what keeps us going.

G3/E3: When looking back I can see that not every member was part of the decision making process. Some members of the SGB would keep quiet when serious decisions were to be made. Others were actually working against the mission of the SGB rather than to work for the school. But now everybody is free to disagree and to air his/her opinion. Members can now agree to disagree.

G3/A3: There is good understanding and a healthy relation between all members of the SGB. We now can distinguish between the professional duties by the principal and governance duties by the SGB. Conflicts and suspicions that used to reign are now the thing of the past.

R: What task(s) of the SGB do you still find particularly challenging?

G3/P2: We still have to a way of encouraging stakeholders to offer voluntary services to the school. Nowadays people are so obsessed with money. Nobody wants to do anything for sweet. It should be our mission to change this mindset of people if we want to build our nation.

G3/E2: The offering of voluntary services to the school has to start with us [SGB]. In fact it has already started by the mere fact that we are members of the SGB and we are not paid for the services we provide the school with. We should just take the lead and make the community aware of the importance of this endeavour.

G3/A3: I think everything is under control. No challenges have been picked up so far.

FOCUS GROUP 3 (SCHOOL B)

R: With hindsight do you feel that the "second specific training session" assisted you in fulfilling your role on the SGB?

G3/A3: All the members participate in decision-making. The apathy and passive resistance that we had is gone. As the principal I sometimes had to take over and decide on matters for the SGB because decisions would not be reached.

G3/P2: Some of us were still looking as to how the SGB was functioning. The principal would just tell us what to do. But since the training we could confront issues and not the person to address the problem amicably.

We sometimes thought of the principal as an autocratic leader who wanted to do things alone. Our perception of a unilateral decision-maker who sort of despised other SGB members resulted into a disjointed working relationship within the SGB. There are no cliques any longer and we all work as a team. We consult each other on matters of common interest.

G3/N3: The SGB is working collectively on all matters of concern. We now have a common vision and our mission is clear as to how to achieve our set goals. We all work together towards the achievement of our ideals. I think there is collective accountability by all members of the SGB. Decisions are owned by all involved in taking them.

G3/E3: Every member understands what co-operative governance means. In the beginning some SGB members thought that when they went to school they were there to inspect or maybe to spy what the educators were doing. Clearly this was beyond their line of jurisdiction into the terrain of professional management. But now all the SGB members understand their governance role and responsibilities. The SGB chairperson no longer dominates meetings but guides the proceedings.

FOCUS GROUP 3 (SCHOOL C)

R: With hindsight do you feel the "second specific training" assisted you in fulfilling your role on the SGB?

G3/A3: When we started working as the new SGB there were some allegations of financial mismanagement. But now that everyone can see how the SGB operates, everybody is satisfied about the financial position of the school and the way funds are managed. There is transparency, openness and accountability about the school monies.

G3/N3: The rate of vandalism has gone down. The SGB has succeeded in advocating school ownership to the learners and the community. Every member of the community now looks after the school and its property. Should any learner be seen vandalising the school property, then disciplinary measures are immediately taken against such learner.

G3/L3: The training has given us skills like participating in the meetings where decisions are made and this is an opportunity for us to make contributions as well. In this way we feel respected and valued as human beings. We are now included in all forms of debates. As learners we are no longer victims of harassment and one-sided decision-making processes of the SGB.

G3/E3: Our admission policies are non-discriminatory. This is a great improvement towards of quality education to all the learners in our community. School fees were the main source of revenue to enable SGBs to maintain school administration. In the process of accumulating these school fees some of the learners became victims of school fees non-payment. But now we have since learnt to make provision to exempt learners whose parents cannot afford to pay school fees according to their family background.

G3/P3: I have learned that every member of the SGB is important and is needed by the committee [SGB]. Duties are delegated to all of us to learn as to how to perform some of the functions of the SGB. Duties and responsibilities are not only of those who are the office bearers but for everybody. This approach enabled us to understand that proper school governance is all about co-operation.