

**THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN THE
JOHANNESBURG NORTH DISTRICT**

by

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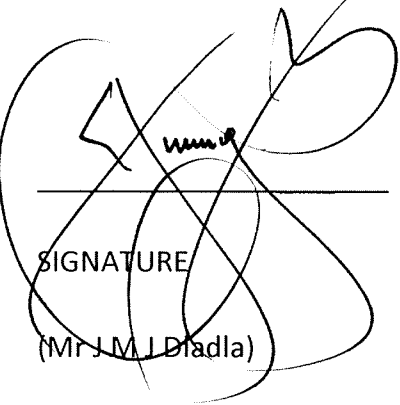
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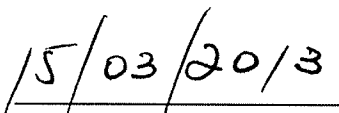
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MARCH 2013

I declare that **THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN THE JOHANNESBURG NORTH DISTRICT** 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.



SIGNATURE
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SUMMARY

This study was undertaken with the purpose of analysing the public accountability system of secondary schools in the Johannesburg North District. It also tested the relationship between the accountability system and the effectiveness and efficiency of secondary schools. Over and above principals, learners and parents, the study also utilised numerous published literature to analyse the current accountability system.

The findings of the empirical study revealed that there were disparities between the literature review and the current accountability system. Three major findings were made by this study. Firstly, there is a lack of synergy between internal and external accountability systems. Secondly, there are different accountability systems used by different secondary schools in the same District and lastly grade twelve results are used to measure the effectiveness and efficiency of secondary schools in the chosen District.

In conclusion, proposals which may assist in improving the current accountability system were made.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS:

SGB	School Governing Body
GDE	Gauteng Department of Education
HOD	Head of Department
SASA	South African Schools Act
IDSO	Institutional Development and Support Officer
PAM	Personnel Administrative Measures
RCL	Representative Council of Learners
IQMS	Integrated Quality Management System
LETU	Local Education and Training Units

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. OVERVIEW OF THIS STUDY	
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Background to the public accountability system	4
1.3 Research problem	5
1.4 Research purpose	5
1.5 Theoretical grounding of the investigation	9
1.6 Research design and research methodology	9
1.6.1 Research design	9
1.6.2 Research methodology	10
1.6.3 Sampling	10
1.6.4 Instrumentation	11
1.6.5 Data analysis techniques	11
1.6.6 Presentation of findings	11
1.7 Limitations of the study	11
1.7.1 Geographical dimension	12
1.7.2 Hierarchical dimension	12
1.7.3 Chronological dimension	13
1.8 Overview of chapters	13
1.9 Conclusion	13
2. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS	
2.1 Introduction	14
2.2 Research design	14
2.3 Research methodology and methods	16
2.4 Sampling	19
2.4.1 Purpose of the study	21
2.4.2 Focus of the study	21
2.4.3 Primary data collection strategy	21
2.4.4 Availability of informants	22
2.4.5 Redundancy of information	22
2.5 Data collection	23
2.5.1 Unstructured interviews	24
2.5.2 Direct observation	24
2.5.3 Document analysis	26
2.6 Data analysis and interpretation of results	25
2.7 Validity of results	28
2.8 Presentation of results	30
2.8.1 Report writing	31
2.9 Communication of findings	31
2.10 Conclusion	31

3. PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY: AN OVERVIEW	
3.1 Introduction	32
3.2 Concept clarification	32
3.2.1 Public	32
3.2.2 Public accountability	33
3.2.3 Public accountability system	37
3.3 Models of public accountability	38
3.3.1 Central control model	38
3.3.2 Self-accounting model	38
3.3.3 Consumerist model	39
3.3.4 Chain of responsibility model	39
3.3.5 Professional model	40
3.3.6 Partnership model	40
3.4 Theoretical background and assumptions about accountability systems	41
3.5 Principles of public accountability	42
3.5.1 Accountability	43
3.5.2 Precautionary	43
3.5.3 Coherence in assigned authority, duties and accountabilities	43
3.5.4 Identifying direct mind	43
3.5.5 Self-informing duty	44
3.5.6 Answering for precautions taken	44
3.5.7 Intentions disclosure	44
3.5.8 Corporate answering for fairness	44
3.5.9 Performance disclosure	44
3.5.10 Answering by those who are responsible	45
3.5.11 Validation of answering	45
3.5.12 Wages of abdication	45
3.6 Approaches to public accountability	45
3.6.1 Long route to the public accountability system	46
3.6.2 Short route to the public accountability system	46
3.7 Types of public accountability	47
3.7.1 Political accountability	47
3.7.2 Ethical accountability	48
3.7.3 Administrative accountability	48
3.7.4 Market accountability	48
3.7.5 Direct accountability	49
3.7.6 Indirect accountability	49
3.7.7 Positive accountability	49
3.7.8 Negative accountability	50
3.8 Common elements of the public accountability system	50
3.8.1 Governance	51

3.8.2	Measurement	51
3.8.3	Management systems	51
3.8.4	Reporting	51
3.9	The need for public accountability system	53
3.10	Problems of public accountability	55
3.11	Accountability, effectiveness and efficiency of a public secondary school	57
3.12	Public accountability, access to information and the legislative framework	58
3.13	Conclusion	59
4.	RESEARCH DATA ANALYSIS	
4.1	Introduction	61
4.2	Questionnaire as the data collection instrument	
4.3	Presentation of data	61
4.3.1	Data obtained from principals	62
4.3.1.1	Personal information of principals	62
4.3.1.2	The amount of time spent by principals on each elements of the accountability system	63
4.3.1.3	Views of principals about the importance of the elements of the accountability system	66
4.3.1.4	Views of principals with regard to the application of the elements of the accountability system	70
4.3.2	Data obtained from parents	74
4.3.2.1	Data obtained from parents about governance	76
4.3.2.2	Data obtained from parents about measurement	77
4.3.2.3	Data obtained from parents about the managementsystems	78
4.3.2.4	Data obtained from parents about reporting	79
4.3.2.5	Data obtained from parents about the processes of accountability	80
4.3.3	Data obtained from learners	81
4.3.3.1	Data obtained from learners about governance	82
4.3.3.2	Data obtained from learners about measurement	83
4.3.3.3	Data obtained from learners about the management systems	84
4.3.3.4	Data obtained from learners about reporting	85
4.3.3.5	Data obtained from learners about the processes of accountability	85
4.4	Conclusion	86
5.	SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND PROPOSALS	
5.1	Introduction	87
5.2	Summary of the study	87

5.3 The nature of study	89
5.4 Findings of the study	90
5.4.1 The role of district officials in the effectiveness and efficiency of secondary schools	91
5.4.2 The effect of accountability system on the effectiveness and efficiency of a secondary school	92
5.5 Conclusions	93
5.5.1 Lack of synergy between internal and external accountability systems	94
5.5.2 Secondary schools within the district have different accountability systems	94
5.5.3 Grade Twelve results are used to determine the effectiveness and efficiency of a secondary school	95
5.6 Proposals	95
5.6.1 Synergy between the internal and external accountability systems	96
5.6.2 Integration of planning at all levels	96
5.6.3 Possible development of a universal accountability model for the district	97
5.7 Conclusion	97
6 BIBLIOGRAPHY	99
APPENDIX A	104
APPENDIX B	110
APPENDIX C	111

CHAPTER 1

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Section 29(1) of the Bill of Rights as contained in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 108 of 1996 (hereafter referred to as “ the Constitution”) states that: “Everyone has the right – (a) to a basic education, including adult basic education; and (b) to further education, which the state, through reasonable measures, must make progressively available and accessible.” This obligation has resulted in increased government spending on the education system, prompting local authorities, citizens and interested parties to question the effectiveness and efficiency of the public schooling system, especially secondary schools. The study therefore investigates the public accountability system in secondary schools, in particular its implications for public administrators. While the study is limited geographically, to the Johannesburg North District, it is intended that the findings will be applicable to other Districts of the province of Gauteng.

This chapter presents the background to and motivation for the study, as well as the research problem and purpose. The choice of research design is explained and limitations acknowledged.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM

At the time of this study the researcher had been principal of a secondary school in the Johannesburg North District for over five years. The school had been considered dysfunctional and underperforming for many years, an observation based primarily on its poor Grade 12 results. There are diverse and complex criteria used by stakeholders to hold schools and their principals accountable and to make judgements about their effectiveness and efficiency. For instance, according to Immordino (2010:5), ‘efficiency’ involves making the best possible use of the resources available in meeting the needs of the

constituents, whereas 'effectiveness' of a government institution is the degree to which it meets the perceived need for services at an acceptable level of quality. In adhering to chapter 10, section 195 (1b) of the Constitution, that "Efficient, economic and effective use of public resources must be promoted", it would be necessary for secondary schools to be scrutinised in terms of their ability to meet the expectations of the government, parents, learners and teachers.

According to Bloch (2009:58), the great majority of South African schools are dysfunctional in that they are not fulfilling their primary goal of producing meaningful outcomes. These schools are commonly found in townships and rural areas, predominantly attended by learners of relatively poor socio-economic status. The researcher is currently a principal of one such school. To some stakeholders, the functionality of a school is measured by the percentage of passes by grade twelve learners, to others it is the quality of the passes, regardless of grades, and the distinctions attained by the school, while to others it is merely about the ability of learners to read, write and use the English language fluently. However, the expectations are measured, it is important to understand the general perceptions as to the reasons behind the failure. This is central to the process of public accountability.

School principals are entrusted with public resources, whether human or physical, for which they need to account publicly, so it is in their interest to understand the criteria by which government institutions hold them accountable for the delivery of services. The main service expected of a school is learning, but measurement of this is in itself problematic. The concept needs to be clearly understood and agreed upon, but numerous definitions exist. For instance, in writing about problems in schools in the United States of America (USA) in the nineteen eighties, Delattre (1988:12) wrote that:

... the gravity of these problems persists even though the media and others often leap from one concern to another. If educational institutions try to keep up with whatever happens to occupy centre stage, their responses are bound to be hasty, episodic and short-lived. Yet the learning of students is supposed to stand the test of time and serve them as a foundation, if it is to be durable learning, it cannot consist of superficial responses to the fashions of the moment.

From this statement, it is evident that whilst learning is the main purpose of educational institutions there is vagueness as to the standards by which it is measured.

In subsequent decades the debate has polarised around learning as passive acquisition of knowledge and learning as the active construction of knowledge and development of critical skills. In particular, the spread of outcomes-based education (OBE) has been met with a need to develop new ways of assessing achievement in the various learning areas, but in South Africa problems have arisen with teachers not being familiar with, or adequately trained in, the concepts behind it. The debate has come to encompass the general role and quality of teachers, including their qualifications, levels of commitment to the profession, and approaches to discipline. However, invariably the standards of measurement for all of these factors are ambiguous, unclear and vague.

A study by Qwase (2009:2) of problems facing the South African schooling system included, but was not limited to, weak management by principals and school management teams. However, in holding principals accountable for the efficiency and effectiveness of public schools, stakeholders often use more than one set of standards. For example, Fullan (2007:18) has warned that as the role of the principal as a key change agent is being recognised at all levels, more expectations are being added but few responsibilities taken away. More disturbingly, there is little direct support being offered, and hence the channels of accountability, between the public, government and schools, are blurred and ambiguous.

Systems for public accountability have not been clearly defined either in the Constitution or in the South African Schools Act, 84 of 1996, consequently those that do exist have been used in a biased manner by parents, learners and District officials. With it being unclear who must account to whom, the questions arise: Who wields more authority: the principal or the School Governing Body? Who evaluates and holds a principal accountable for the effectiveness and efficiency of the school? Which standards are used for holding the principals accountable for the effectiveness and efficiency of their schools?

Goetz and Jenkins (2005:3) pose five fundamental questions to be asked when seeking to understand the reality of accountability: (i) Who is seeking accountability? (ii) From whom is accountability sought? (iii) Where (in which forums and over what extent of geographical coverage) is accountability being sought? (iv) How (through what means) are the powerful being held to account? (v) For what (which actions, and against which norms) is accountability being sought? This research was designed to find answers to these questions, with particular emphasis on question four: Through what means are the powerful being held to account?

1.3 RESEARCH PROBLEM

That the government is intent on improving the quality of education in the country may be evident in the relatively large portion of the budget allocated to the education sector. However, any vision of improving the education system cannot be realised if principals of secondary schools are not held accountable for their efficiency and effectiveness. According to Moller (2007:2), in a modern society it is reasonable that stakeholders have details about curricular processes, such as what the curriculum demands from the learners, and reports of educational results. It is evident that principals are key drivers of their schools, with the success or failure often attributed to the quality of their leadership, therefore it is important for South African schools to have a well-defined public accountability system. According to section 16(1) of the South African Schools Act, 84 of 1996 (SASA), the governance of every public school is vested in its governing body, whereas section 16(3) states that, subject to this Act and any applicable provincial law, the professional management must be undertaken by the principal under the authority of the Head of Department (HoD).

In implementing section 16 of SASA, the need for a strong relationship between the professional management and the governance of a public school becomes clear. The problem, however, remains the demarcation of public accountability between these important pillars, namely the principal, School Governing Body (SGB) and the DistrictOffice. Public accountability is understood by many to be a bottom-up process where the citizenry holds the government accountable for its decisions and actions. In the case of a school as a governmental institution, the question arises as to whether it the principal, a DistrictOffice (as the representative of the government) or the SGB that must account for its effectiveness and efficiency? Layers of accountability may be confusing if a clear public accountability system is not designed for everyone involved to understand. Warman and Meier (in Johnson, 2004:17), using their principal-agent model, found that problems often arise when there are many principals and agents in the accountability system. The principals in this case are those who provide resources to the government institutions, that is the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE), whilst the agents are the

headmasters of the secondary schools, who must account for the public resources entrusted to them.

This study, rather than focused on educational perspectives of school management, analyses how the principals are held to account by those who have an interest in education and the range and diversity of standards used for public accountability. Against this background, and to address the research problem, the following question is posed:

What public accountability system is used in the Johannesburg North District to hold principals of secondary schools accountable and to what extent does the public accountability system influence the effectiveness and efficiency of the schools?

1.4 RESEARCH PURPOSE

In this study, three main issues which are directly linked to public accountability and the effectiveness and efficiency of secondary schools are examined. These issues are:

- The identification and analysis of the public accountability system as applied by the Johannesburg North District to hold secondary schools' principals accountable.
- The measurement and evaluation of effectiveness and efficiency of secondary schools in the chosen District.
- The influence of the public accountability system on the effectiveness and efficiency of public secondary schools.

1.5 THEORETICAL GROUNDING OF THE INVESTIGATION

Whilst a review of the literature suggests that accountability and responsibility are often used synonymously, in distinguishing between the two terms Moller (2008:2) states that the former is mainly located in hierarchical practices of public administration whilst the latter concerns the obligations teachers and school principals (as part of a profession) have

to each other in answering questions about what has happened within one's scope of operation. Blackmore (in Moller, 2008:2) adds that new educational accountability systems have been directed more to regulation and performance than to educational improvement. Gharney (in Younis&Mostafa, 2000:45) define accountability as furnishing (to someone) satisfactory, reliable, verifiable and accessible records, reasons and explanations for the actions of those having custody of authority, human resources, public money and other resources. This definition is supported by McCandles (2008:3), who defines public accountability as the obligation of authorities to explain publicly, fully, and *fairly*, before and after the event, how they are carrying out responsibilities that affect the public in important ways. From my highlighting of the term 'fairly', I place fair standards of accountability at the centre of this study, and as Bovens (2006:8-9) concludes, accountability in a broad sense is an evaluative rather than analytical concept, used to positively qualify a state of affairs or the performance of an actor. It comes close to 'responsiveness' and 'a sense of responsibility', as willingness to act in a transparent, fair, and equitable way.

Accountability includes a school's obligation to society, so it is not just an internal matter. The principal is the key person in responding to community concerns and at the same time proactively telling the school's story to the community. While in the past accountability was a matter less complicated and less public, in today's society it is central to the operation of most public institutions. In an ideal situation where the principals determined the needs of their specific community and met them, the principals would be in a better position to tell the school's story to the community, but in a learning community driven by high-stakes testing it is not possible to do so. In an environment of accountability, comparisons of scores with those of other schools are inevitable and test-driven decisions that have a ripple effect on the community.

Hallinger and Heck (in Cotton, 2003:57) write that although at hortatory level there is little disagreement concerning the belief that principals have an impact on the lives of teachers and students, both the nature and degree of that effect continue to be open to debate. The authors add that the public expect school principals to deliver results, and their scrutiny requires new roles and forms of leadership, coupled with day-to-day management of the school. According to Moller (2007:7), a principal at an upper secondary school must be able to motivate learners and provide a safe and balanced learning environment. It is important to create this foundation for learning by developing accounting systems for

school leadership. The school should not be evaluated based on marks or test scores only, but rather on its success in developing active citizenship, a collaborative attitude, tolerance and creativity. According to Behn (2001:10), accountability for performance ought to cover the expectations of the entire citizenry of principals, teachers and learners in creating an environment conducive to effective teaching and learning.

In the light of these and other arguments it is necessary to conduct an empirical verification of the complexity of formal and informal standards used to measure effective and efficient secondary schools and public accountability. Immordino (2010:4) argues that it is not always easy to measure effectiveness and efficiency of a government institution as both concepts are subjective and depend on the perspective of the group doing the measuring. Section 195(1b) of the Constitution (1996) prescribes that the efficient, economic and effective use of resources, and therefore of governmental institutions, is a constitutional imperative.

According to Kimbrough and Burkett (1990:11), until recently the role of the principal was perceived as that of an administrator, manager and public relations representative, but is now that of an instructional leader. Ultimately, the effectiveness and efficiency is determined by the impact of the principal on learning, but the authors found that the community and school system have their own expectations as to how a principal should behave. Principalship requires someone with sufficient strength of character to be truthful, honest and knowledgeable, and in their view the principal has to possess exceptional personal attributes to succeed in the position. In many instances, the communities have expectations about the character of the principal, which coupled with an ability to live up to them separate good and bad examples. To understand the public accountability system of the Johannesburg North District, the research therefore investigates the explicit and implicit elements of the public accountability system used for measuring effectiveness and efficiency of secondary schools in this District.

It is through such investigation that the dilemma of understanding the location of responsibility and public accountability may be solved. By understanding the public accountability system of the Johannesburg North District, this study differentiates between public accountability as it is understood by the stakeholders in education and the practical reality surrounding it. A study by Bloch (2009:21) found that there are two groups that are most responsible for taking the initiative and showing the way to improvement. The

first group consists of the professionals who make education work and sustain the learning enterprise, namely the minister of basic education, the member of the executive council in the province responsible for education and the officials in the District Offices. The second group comprises the teachers themselves, as professionals who are given the responsibility to ensure that teaching and learning take place in schools. Getting teachers to commit themselves to teaching and learning is a priority if schools are going to work. In the same vein, Bloch (2009:21) acknowledges that education is a broad societal concern, not just of the educationists. It also has an impact on public administrators, which is the principals of secondary schools, since public resources are utilised for funding. From Bloch's findings it is clear that teachers in particular and the society in general are also accountable for efficiency and effectiveness of the school and learner attainment. According to Burgess (1992:7), teachers are responsible not just for their own performance but also, collectively, for that of the whole school.

At this point it is evident that accountability in a school context is broad and complex. Principals have an oversight which is supervisory in nature, and as Burgess (1992:7) argues, the type and form of accountability carried out by the principal is managerial in character, while teachers account professionally. This study will embrace three forms of accountability, namely public, professional and managerial, as these cannot be divorced from the role of the principal as a public official. Since public accountability is in the public interest, a fair and just public accountability system is needed if principals are to be held accountable for the public resources entrusted to them. Equally important is its ability to accommodate both professional accountability and managerial accountability, since principals are professional educators acting in full compliance with the technical rules and practices of the profession, but with added managerial responsibility. The managerial accountability links junior to senior positions, whereas professional accountability is inherited in the profession and therefore the principal will carry a vertical and a horizontal dimension of public accountability. Public accountability becomes vertical when the principal acts as senior (hierarchical) to staff members appointed in junior positions and horizontal when he or she engages with other principals appointed to the same position.

It is interesting to note that these different forms of accountability find expression in Section 195(1) of the Constitution (1996) which states that:

- values enshrined in the Constitution including the promotion and maintenance of such principles as a high standard of professional ethics, an accountable public administration and the fostering of transparency by providing the public with timely, accessible and accurate information.

While there are numerous definitions of accountability, this study aligns itself most closely with the definition by Bovens (2006:9), in which it is regarded as a relationship between an actor and a forum, in which the actor has an obligation to explain and to justify his or her conduct, the forum can pose questions and pass judgement, and the actor may face consequences. This definition is deemed suitable in that the actor can be an individual, such as the principal of a secondary school, and the forum can be a senior person, such as the minister, the media, the local authorities or the general public.

1.6 RESEARCH DESIGN AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

According to Welman and Kruger (2001:46), the research design is a plan according to which participants are identified and information collected. Meanwhile, the research methodology, as described by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2003:77), is the decision about the kind of research to undertake, for example a survey, an experiment, a case study, or action research.

1.6.1 Research design

Since the broad aim of this study is to describe the public accountability system for secondary schools in the Johannesburg North District and its effect on the efficiency and effectiveness on those schools, a qualitative and quantitative research design has been considered as most suitable for this study. According to Welman and Kruger (2001:9), this mixed-methods approach allows the researcher to explore various kinds of unexplained and misunderstood phenomena.

1.6.2 Research methodology

According to Hopkins and Ebbutt (in Cohen et. Al., 2003:226), action research is a form of disciplined inquiry, in which a personal attempt is made to understand, improve and reform practice. It is most appropriate for describing the accountability system and for the empirical investigation of standards used for public accountability and their impact on effectiveness and efficiency of secondary schools of the chosen District. Cohen *et al.* (2003:228) found that one of the principles and characteristics of action research is that it focuses on problems that are of immediate concern to practitioners. Since the researcher is currently a practising principal, this information can be useful to policy developers and other practitioners in the field in that it seeks to understand the merits or shortfalls of the public accountability system, the perceptions of the public and their impact on effective and efficient secondary schools.

1.6.3 Sampling

In selecting the participants a stratified random sampling method will be used, choosing five of the 15 secondary schools in the Johannesburg North District, 30 parents and 30 learners of the greater total, and a number of principals and educators. The homogeneity of the population justifies narrowing the number of participants without compromising the validity of the findings. Welman and Kruger (2001:55) recommend this method in cases where the population is composed of various clearly recognisable, non-overlapping subpopulations that differ from one another mutually in terms of the variable in question. The division of groups is based on a single variable, namely educator or non-educator. Parents and learners form a group of non-educators while educators and principals form a group of educators. Focus groups will then be formed from each of the groups.

1.6.4 Instrumentation

Three data collection strategies will be used, namely unstructured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. The results of observation will be used to compile interview questions that are unstructured and adapted to the study as it progresses. The

interviews will involve each of the abovementioned focus groups. Records or transcripts of interviews will be provided to the focus groups to enhance validity and reliability of the study. Newspaper articles, journal articles and a literature review will be used to cross-reference the information gathered.

1.6.5 Data analysis techniques

The analysis of data will be carried out using a systematic coding, as described in Welman and Kruger (2001:194), with content analysis used to analyse data from qualitative and quantitative research. Transcripts from the interviews conducted with the focus groups about the standards they use to hold principals accountable and to make judgements about effectiveness and efficiency of secondary schools will be analysed.

1.6.6 Presentation of findings

In presenting the results, the study will depict responses drawn from different focus groups involved in this study, namely the principals of secondary schools in the Johannesburg North District, the learners and the parents. Since each of these focus groups may need to provide different responses for analysis, it will be important to present the findings in detail and present them in the form of tables and diagrams, with explanatory keys. These facilitate clearer interpretation and may therefore reduce potential vagueness of the findings.

1.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study has three inherent limitations, namely geographical, hierarchical and chronological, as detailed in this section.

1.7.1 Geographical dimension

The findings should be considered in the light of the limitations inherited in a study of limited scope. The sample is limited in that the Johannesburg North District is one of 15 Districts found in the Gauteng Province, and has 15 secondary schools. The findings of the study may therefore not be suitable for generalisation to other Districts and provinces of South Africa.

1.7.2 Hierarchical dimension

The involvement of the researcher as the principal of a public secondary school within the GDE may influence the findings. In order to limit bias and influence, other principals were included in the focus group, ranging from newly appointed, experienced and retired principals. The researcher is a member of the group, as a participant observer, and as Welman and Kruger (2001:184) state, assumes the roles of the group members in order to personally experience what the group members experience, understand their life-world, see things from their perspective and unravel the meaning and significance that they attach to their life-world, including their own behaviour.

1.7.3 Chronological dimension

The timeframe, starting from 2010 to 2012, may not have been sufficient to cover the depth and breadth of all the issues involved in a public accountability system. In conducting a study of limited scope, researchers may not pay detailed attention to other factors that are important in making the findings. For example, with sufficient time, the motivation levels of the principals, the background of the learners and the support that the parents give to the learners may influence the effectiveness and efficiency of the school. These and other factors may not be analysed in detail in a study of limited scope. In conducting this study, the researcher will focus on the public accountability system as the only variable that may impact on the effectiveness and efficiency of the school. This may limit the reliability of the findings in the sense that other factors are excluded. According to Kemmis and McTaggart (in Cohen *et al.*, 2003:229) action research is open-minded about what counts as evidence. It involves not only keeping accurate records but also collecting and analysing one's own judgements, reactions and impressions. The researcher therefore acknowledges

alack of evidence in the study that may suggest that any public accountability system is subjective.

1.8 OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

In chapter one the reader is given an introduction to the study, background and motivation, the research problem, the purpose, the research design, and limitations to the study. This chapter provided an outline of the research plan.

Chapter two explains and justifies the research methodology, instruments, sampling and data analysis techniques.

Chapter three will provide a literature review, helpful in understanding the concept of public accountability and how it is applied to the public sector. The principles of public accountability and the steps involved in holding someone to account are described.

Chapter four describes the mechanisms of public accountability applicable to the Johannesburg North District.

Chapter five presents the findings of this study and provides an evaluative description of the data gathered. The analysis demonstrates a clear understanding of the formal and informal standards used to hold principals accountable in the Johannesburg North District. This chapter will draw conclusions and make proposals that may be used to enhance the accountability system of the chosen District.

1.9 CONCLUSION

In this chapter it was evident that a fair and just public accountability system is a constitutional requirement. The impact of such systems on the effectiveness and efficiency of the secondary schools remains to be tested as this study unfolds. In chapter two, a more detailed description of the research methodology, the research instruments, the sample and the data analysis techniques will be covered. This will assist in understanding the context within which the research design and methodology have been selected.

CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Against a background to the study, chapter one presented the research problem and design. Chapter two clarifies the research methodology, data collection instruments, sampling method, and data analysis techniques. The study has adopted a mixed qualitative and quantitative research design, appropriate to analysing the public accountability system within the Johannesburg North District.

2.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

In conducting the study a relatively small group consisting of five public secondary schools selected from a cluster of 15 schools, 30 learners and 30 parents were selected randomly. It is envisaged that the findings will contribute to the generation of a model to describe the public accountability system of the relevant District, in line with the definition of a model by Welman and Kruger (2001:11) as a group of logical, related statements presented as an explanation of a phenomenon. This is not to be confused with a hypothesis, which is a tentative assumption or preliminary statement about the relationship between two or more things that needs to be examined. While a hypothesis may be important in explaining the relationship between the public accountability system and the effectiveness and efficiency of a secondary school, the model will explain how school principals are held to account. According to Kerlinger (1979:64), a model is a set of interrelated constructs, definitions, and propositions that presents a systematic view of a phenomenon by specifying relations among its variables in order to explain it. The study will align itself more closely to the definition by Welman and Kruger.

This study is aimed at developing a model based on description of the elements and/or mechanisms of the accountability system of the chosen District. The research is grounded on a notion that human actions are strongly influenced by the settings in which they occur. Qualitative research develops context-bound generalisations while allowing the researcher to understand the phenomenon rather than controlling it, as in the case of quantitative research used in isolation. Even though the public accountability system is a subjective phenomenon, in the sense that it differs from province to province, region to region and District to District, the model thus developed may to a certain extent be generalised to other Districts of the Gauteng Province. According to Merriam (1998:6), in qualitative research design the key concern is the understanding of the phenomenon from the participants' perspective, not from the researcher's perspective. This aspect remains crucial if the study is to be as objective as possible. The chosen mixed research design helped in minimising the interference of the researcher's beliefs, perspectives, and predispositions.

According to Merriam (1998:6), one of the characteristics of qualitative design is that all perspectives are valuable, and the researcher seeks not only the truth or morality but also a detailed understanding of other peoples' perspectives. According to McMillan and Schumacher (1997:17), the role of the qualitative researcher is to emphasise the validity of the research. Qualitative methods also allow researchers to stay close to the empirical world. By observing people in their everyday lives, listening to them talk about what is on their minds, and looking at the documents they produce, the qualitative researcher obtains first-hand knowledge of social life unfiltered through concepts, operational definitions, and rating scales. In qualitative research design, the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis, with data mediated through this human instrument, the researcher, rather than through an inanimate inventory, questionnaire, or computer. In this study the use of a computer will be limited to presentation of the findings, thus enhancing their validity but not impacting on the human elements of collection.

Unstructured interviews, participant observation and document analysis were the main instruments for data collection, and complemented the role of the researcher as the participant in the study while at the same time incorporating an inductive research strategy. In applying a qualitative research design, the researcher could develop concepts, insights,

and understanding from patterns in the data collected, rather than deductively collecting it¹ to assess a preconceived model or models about public accountability systems.

According to Neill (2007:1) the seven most important features of qualitative research are as follows:

- Provision of a complete and detailed description of a phenomenon.
- The researcher may only know roughly in advance what he/she is looking for.
- It is recommended during earlier phases of research projects.
- The design emerges as the study unfolds.
- The researcher is the data-gathering instrument.
- Data collected is in the form of words, pictures or objects.
- The researcher tends to be subjectively immersed in the subject of study.

These and other features assist in understanding the context within which the study is conducted. However, Trochim (2001:157) cautions that in order for the researcher to compile a good study there is a need to use both the quantitative and qualitative measurements. This study mainly relies on qualitative research design during its earlier stages but to a limited extent utilises quantitative methods for analysing data collected. In the following section, the research methodology and methods are analysed.

2.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

Mouly (in Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2003:45) states that research is best conceived as the process of arriving at dependable solutions to problems through the planned and systematic collection, analysis and interpretation of data. In order to arrive at these dependable solutions, techniques and procedures must be applied for data-gathering. These collectively form the methodology of a systematic study, with the comprising range of approaches used to gather data as a basis for inference and interpretation, for explanation and interpretation. Kaplan (in Cohen *et al.*, 2003:45) states that methodology aims to describe and analyse these methods, throwing light on their limitations and resources,

¹Although 'data' is the Latin plural of datum it is generally treated as an uncountable 'mass' noun and so takes a singular verb. Eds (*Concise Oxford English Dictionary*). 2011. Data. Oxford: Stevenson & Waite.

clarifying their presuppositions and consequences, and relating their potentials to the twilight zone at the frontiers of knowledge. In this sense methodology helps one to understand not the outcomes of the study but the process involved in undertaking it.

The research methodology used in this study was action research, which according to Cohen *et al.* (2003:227) may be used in almost any setting where a problem involving people, tasks and procedures requires a solution. Kemmis and McTagger (in Cohen *et al.*, 2003:227) regard it as a form of collective self-reflective inquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own social or educational practices and the situations in which these are carried out. Both definitions suit the purpose of this study and may further provide an adequate solution to the research problem. In understanding the accountability system of the chosen District, it was important for the researcher to participate collaboratively in the action research, with reflections of the day-to-day working experience used to identify strengths or weaknesses of the current system and produce findings of use in improving the system for professional development. Since researchers may use action research to learn and improve their practice through engaging ideas and models, they may develop a better understanding of their situations and arrive at solutions to overcome deficiencies in the chosen phenomenon.

A key feature of action research identified by Kemmis and McTagger (in Cohen *et al.*, 2003:227) is that it is a systematic and collaborative way of collecting evidence on which to base rigorous group reflection. Not simply problem-solving, it also involves problem-posing and is motivated by a quest to improve and understand the world by changing it and learning how to improve it from the effects of the changes made. It is not research of other people but of their own work, designed to help them improve what they do, including how they work with and for others. Finally, it is a systematic and collaborative way of collecting evidence on which to base rigorous group reflection.

In selecting and applying action research, the study sought to provide solutions to a situation which may be problematic, for example, the ambiguous elements of public accountability. Many studies have investigated public accountability systems, for example, that of Dowdle (2006:1-474) which revealed an on-going perception that public accountability in modern-day governance is in 'crisis', caused by globalisation and the increasing power of private economic interests. It is this and other studies about public

accountability systems that prompted the researcher to further analyse and describe the public accountability system of the chosen District.

This study applied such an approach to enhance understanding of the current public accountability system in the Johannesburg North District and therefore the researcher assumed the role of a member of a community of equals (the group of fellow principals). Zuber-Skerritt (in Cohen *et al.*, 2003:232) argues that action research is emancipatory since it aims not only at technical and practical improvement and the participants' better understanding, along with transformation and change within existing boundaries and conditions, but also at changing the system itself or those conditions that impede the desired improvement in the system or the institution. Participation by the researcher in the study may stimulate interest among other participants and therefore contribute to problem-solving as well as problem-posing among participants.

In collecting evidence, a systematic and collaborative manner was applied in that data was collected from principals as they reflected on their day-to-day work experiences. The study was therefore intended to be practical in that its results and insights are not only of theoretical importance to the advancement of knowledge in the field but may also lead to practical improvements during and after the research process. The participative and collaborative nature of action research enabled the researcher not to be considered as an outside expert conducting an inquiry with subjects or variables, but as a co-worker conducting research with and for people concerned with the practical problem and its actual improvement (Zuber-Skerritt, 1991:14).

Welman and Kruger (2001:190) write that action researchers do not finalise the research design in advance but consistently follow it up to the end of the research project. It evolves as the project progresses (see features of qualitative research in section 2.2, above). A cyclical progression through phases of tentative planning, acting, observation, reflection on and evaluation of the preliminary results may be distinguished as the study unfolds. The evaluation of the preliminary results in turn provides feedback for the following phase of a cycle, which explains the continual review of the qualitative research design. Miller and Whicker (1999:190) state that action research is a strategy that studies action with the goals of making that action more effective and efficient, empowering those involved and developing scientific knowledge. In order for this study to meet these goals it adhered to a qualitative research design which allowed it to evolve as it progressed. This is mainly

because in action research methods are not finalised, refined or standardised. According to Zuber-Skerrit (1991:15), the importance of the action research is a critical (and self-critical) collaborative enquiry by reflective practitioners. It is countable and makes the results of their enquiry public, as the researcher self-evaluates practice and engages in participative problem-solving and continuing professional development. Action research was the central research methodology for this study since it was a self-evaluating exercise. Most importantly, the study envisaged problem-solving and poses a problem for professional development, also the main purpose of undertaking an action research.

2.4 SAMPLING

Since the large size of the population usually makes it impractical and uneconomical to involve all members in most research projects it is important to select a sample that will represent it. The sample enables the researcher to obtain data from only a number and thus save time, but it is important that the researcher first obtain clarity about the population, or units of analysis, to which the research hypotheses apply (Welman & Kruger, 2001:46-47), and so minimise sampling error. Mugo (2006:1) defines sampling as the act, process, or technique of selecting a suitable sample, or a representative part of a population for the purpose of determining parameters or characteristics of the whole population, whilst for Trochim (2001:41) it is a process of selecting units (for example people and organisations) from a population of interest, so that by studying the sample one may fairly generalise the results. Webster (in Mugo, 2006:1) concurs in describing a sample as a finite part of a statistical population whose properties are studied to gain information about the whole, whereas the population is a group of individual persons, objects or items from which samples are taken for measurement. It is therefore clear that sampling is a careful act of identifying objects, items or people who represent a larger population in terms of some characteristics.

Although it is important to understand the sampling process, this should be coupled with the description of the purpose of the sample, its method and size. Since qualitative researchers aim to gather an in-depth understanding of human behaviour and the reasons that govern it, their methods are to investigate the *why* and *how* of the decision-making, not

just *what, where* and *when*. Hence, smaller but focused samples are more often needed than the larger (Trochim, 2001:51). Because most qualitative research does not involve making statistical generalisations, sample size and sampling may not be issues in explaining what is undertaken. Conversely, in quantitative research, sample size and sampling considerations are usually made with the goal of making statistical generalisations and inferences from a representative statistical sample (*Thefreelibrary*, online). According to Cohen *et al.* (2003:93), the sample size may also be determined to some extent by the style of the research. With a qualitative style it is more likely that the sample size will be small. Other factors that may also constrain the sample size include the cost in terms of time, money, stress, administrative support, the number of researchers, and resources. The sample size for this study was constrained by the number of secondary schools chosen.

Byrne (2001:1) writes that while quantitative data and findings have been criticised for being reductionist and removed from human experience, in contrast, qualitative methods seek to represent holism and provide contextual knowledge of the phenomenon being studied. Byrne argues that one goal of qualitative research is to increase the understanding of a phenomenon as opposed to generalising data extrapolated from the sample to the population at large. Rather than having a quantitative research outcome of generalised findings, the qualitative researcher's responsibility includes providing enough description about the context of the sample for others to adequately judge whether the findings apply to their own situations. Chapter three will provide the context within which secondary schools in the Johannesburg North District operate and are held accountable, to enable others to compare the findings of this study to their contexts.

Even though this study has adopted a qualitative research design it is envisaged that its findings may be generalised to other Districts of Gauteng Province, by carefully considering the sampling method and size for this study. When considering the homogeneity of the secondary schools in the Johannesburg North district, a sample size of five secondary schools from the population of 15 was considered representative. Cohen *et al.* (2003:95) write that homogeneity in the population allows for a relatively smaller sample to be selected on a basis. Through reflection on principals' day-to-day experiences it is relatively difficult to make generalisations about the accountability systems and its impact on effectiveness and efficiency of a school, primarily because they differ from one principal to another.

Guba and Lincoln (1994:105-117) state that qualitative researchers should make sampling decisions such as how many interviews, focus groups and sets of observations to conduct, and how long each should be. These should not be automatic but rather result from adequate reflection of the study and sample size. In interviewing principals, thirty minutes per questionnaire (see Appendix: A) was considered adequate, but less for interviewing learners and parents since the number of follow-up questions was limited. Mcmillan and Schumacher (1997:401) identified five guidelines as they pertain to determining the sample size. These guidelines as they pertain to the study are described in sections 2.4.1 to 2.4.5.

2.4.1 Purpose of the study

One purpose of this study is to understand the accountability system of secondary schools in the Johannesburg North District from the identified sample size and its impact on the efficiency and effectiveness of secondary schools in the mentioned District. With the chosen sample size it was considered possible to fulfil a second purpose, namely to develop a model. Studies of this nature may not require a large sample since that might have homogenous characteristics.

2.4.2 Focus of the study

Since the focus of this study is to analyse the public accountability system of the chosen District in order to develop a model that describes the impact of the accountability systems to the effectiveness and efficiency of a secondary school, interviews, data analysis and focus groups were deemed suitable for the relatively smaller sample size. For studies in which interviews are utilised, large sample sizes may be time-consuming and informants difficult to access.

2.4.3 Primary data-collection strategy

It may be possible for qualitative researchers to decide on the number of days in the field either for observation or interview before the start of the research project. Since the primary data-collection strategy for this study included interviews, focus groups and document analysis (see section 1.6.4), a relatively small sample size was used. This also made it possible to return to the participants more often as the study progressed.

2.4.4 Availability of informants

In some research projects it is difficult for the researcher to locate and access the informants, however in this study they were principals, learners and parents with whom the researcher was in regular contact. As the study progressed, access improved owing to compliance with research ethics, notably permission from the GDE to conduct the study which allowed for a smaller sample size, just five schools, to be accessed.

2.4.5 Redundancy of information

One of the important considerations for the study is to consider whether adding more informants or returning to the field would yield any new data. By choosing a relatively small sample size with common characteristics, redundancy of information was eliminated.

In selecting a sampling method, it is important to ensure that every member of the population has an equal chance of being selected as this enhances validity. In this study the most appropriate method was probability sampling, defined by Trochim (2001:50) as any method that utilises some form of random selection. Cohen *et al.* (2003:99) state that it allows for the sample to be drawn from the wider population with equal chance of being selected, and thus enhances the representativeness of the population. For Welman and Kruger (2001:47), representativeness is achieved when the sample has similar properties to the population from which it was drawn, and the researcher can determine the probability that any element or member of the population will be included in the sample. Each unit in the population has a chance of being included greater than zero and that can be calculated (O'Sullivan, Rassel & Berner, 2008:137).

A stratified sample was also used, which, according to Miller and Whicker (1999:104), requires the researcher, prior to data collection, to compile a list of the theoretical population and knowing at least one variable about each unit on that list. It was important to study the topic not in isolation but as different elements, such as the stakeholders involved, their role in the accountability system and the rewarding and/or punishment methods employed. The method involves dividing the population into homogenous subgroups and then taking a simple random sample from each subgroup (Trochim, 2001:51). By definition, it is derived from the simple random sampling method in which each member of the population has the same chance of being included and each

sample of a particular size has the same probability of being chosen (Welman&Kruger, 2001:53). O'Sullivan *et al.* (2008:141) state that such sampling adequately represents selected groups in the population and is used if a group of particular interest is a relatively small proportion of the population, or if they plan to compare groups. It assumes some knowledge of the population characteristics. Since the GDE consists of 15 Districts with a large number of primary and secondary schools, parents and learners, it would have been uneconomical and time-consuming to involve all of them, but all had an equal chance of being selected. By subdividing the population into subgroups the researcher organised the frame into separate strata (O'Sullivan *et al.*, 2008:141), with separate random samples then drawn from each. According to Trochim, (2001:51), stratified random sampling assures that the researcher will be able to represent not only the overall population but also key subgroups, especially small minority groups. It will generally have more statistical precision than simple random sampling if the strata or groups are homogenous, and the researcher will have enough cases from each to make meaningful inferences.

2.5 DATA COLLECTION

As researchers are often not in direct contact with the sample of the study, data collection methods are useful in bridging this gap. Unstructured interviews, direct observation and documents analysis were the three methods used to collect data while the study unfolded. Direct observation was made of routine functions while the researcher interacted with other principals in cluster meetings, these being groupings within the same area. Normally the principals are supervised by one Institutional and Development Support Officer (IDSO), who serves as a link between each school and the District Office. For Graziano and Raulin (2004:135) the major goal of qualitative research methods is to describe and analyse the functioning in everyday settings, ranging from informal conversations among friends to courtroom proceedings. In this regard data collection may not be limited to cluster meetings but can also take place during other functions, for example the award ceremonies of the District.

2.5.1 Unstructured interviews

Unlike structured interviews, in which a standard set of questions is posed to all interviewees, unstructured interviews comprise questions that need not be standardised and may vary slightly from one interviewee to another. They can take the form of in-depth interviews, which in this study included both individual and group interviews. An advantage of using personal interviews is that they allow the researcher to cover more ground than if a respondent were completing a survey or a questionnaire. Disadvantages include the expense and possible intimidation or discomfort felt by some in sharing details with the researcher. O'Sullivan *et al.* (2008:194) state that effective interviewing requires practice and careful preparation since specific populations may present special challenges, so the questions asked, their wording, and order may vary. The interviewer may change questions and their order during the interview, depending on the responses. In this study, in-depth interviews were used for individual interviews since focus groups supplemented data gathered in them. According to O'Sullivan *et al.* (2008:194), both individual and group interviews help to develop and test hypotheses, and to identify appropriate measures, especially in programme evaluations. The use of unstructured interviews was helpful in evaluating the accountability system of the Johannesburg North District. Frequently principals have little time to reflect on their day-to-day work and by interviewing other principals the data gathered by direct observation and unstructured interviews should be made more meaningful.

2.5.2 Direct observation

Graziano and Raulin (2004:32) define observation as the process of using one's senses to recognise and record factual events, whilst for Miller and Whicker (1999:192) it entails the systematic noting and recording of events, behaviour and artefacts in the social setting chosen for the study. Qualitative research draws the researcher into the phenomenological complexity of participants' worlds, in which situations unfold, and connections, causes and correlations can be observed as they occur over time. The qualitative researcher seeks to catch the dynamic nature of events, to seek intentionality, and to seek large trends and patterns over time (Cohen *et al.*, 2003:306). This study used direct observation, which according to Johnson (2002:79) allows the researcher to record data on actual behaviour rather than self-reported behaviour or perceptions. It is often a quick way to gather data and is real-time rather than retrospective. Cohen *et al.* (2003:306) make a distinction between

the participant, the participant-as-observer and the complete observer, a continuum along which the researcher moves from complete participation to complete detachment. The mid-points of this continuum strive to balance involvement with detachment, closeness with distance, familiarity with strangeness. The role of a complete observer is typified in the one-way mirror, the video cassette, the audio-cassette and the photograph, whilst a complete participation method involves the researcher taking on membership roles. Miller and Whicker (1999:192) write that the important point in this regard is not a rigid classification but a clear understanding of his or her position and possible bias because of that position. Being currently employed as a principal of a secondary school who accounts and hold others accountable, the researcher in this study played the role of a participant-as-observer. In order for the researcher to clearly define his role in this study, the participant observation and semi-structured observations are intended to be used.

According to Martella, Nelson and Marchand-Martella (1999:284), the observation method, like the sample size, is determined by the purpose of the study. In describing the elements and degree of public accountability by the principals of secondary schools in the Johannesburg North District, the role of the researcher was that of a participant observing within the practise of public administration and management. Trochim (2001:159) draws a distinction between direct observation and participant observation in a number of ways. Firstly, a direct observer does not typically try to become a participant in the context, but he or she does strive to be as unobtrusive as possible so as not to influence the observations. Secondly, direct observation suggests a more detached perspective, with the researcher watching rather than taking part. Consequently, technology can be a useful part of direct observation. For example, the use of a camera and tape recorder may be useful. Thirdly, direct observation tends to be more focused than participant observation. The researcher is observing certain sampled situations or people rather than trying to become immersed in the entire context. Finally, direct observation tends not to take as long as participant observation.

2.5.3 Document analysis

According to Corbin and Strauss (2008, in Bowen, 2009:27-40) document analysis is a systematic procedure for receiving or evaluating both printed and electronic material. It requires that data be examined and interpreted in order to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge. Documents contain text and images that have been recorded without a researcher's input. In this study, these include agendas of principals' meetings, attendance registers, circulars, minutes of meetings, memoranda, and event programmes. The document analysis allowed the study to complement the data collected through unstructured interviews and the other instruments (see section 1.6).

2.6 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

Once the decision on how to measure the research variables is made the next step is to determine how the data will be analysed statistically. Statistics represent a powerful tool for organising and understanding data, without which little could be learned from most studies (Graziano & Raulin, 2004:96). Although this study is qualitative in nature, some measure of statistics was necessary to give a particular meaning to the data thus collected. According to Trochim (2001:154-155), all qualitative data can be coded quantitatively, in that it can be assigned meaningful numerical values that can then be manipulated numerically or quantitatively to help the researcher achieve greater insight into the meaning.

Data analysis provides feedback on the tenability or untenability of the originally formulated research hypotheses, and consequently on the model, to determine whether it is supported or refuted (Welman & Kruger, 2001:194). This study does not intend to prove or refute a particular theory but seeks to develop a model about the public accountability system of the chosen District.

According to O'Sullivan *et al.* (2008:200), the analysis of data from focus groups and in-depth interviews should also be driven by the purpose of the study and research question. The intention is to clarify and state the objectives and ask questions to obtain information

according to the purpose of the study. The questions elicit the material that will be analysed; hence clear and well-stated questions will make data analysis easier. Graziano and Raulin (2004:44) argue that data should be analysed and then interpreted. In

interpreting data, the researcher analyses findings of, firstly, how they help to answer the research question and, secondly, how this answer contributes to the knowledge in the field. The interpretation helps to relate the findings not only to the original questions but also to other concepts and findings in the field. This stage is the reverse side of the problem–definition phase. When the researcher defines the problem, theories are used as guides to important questions. The answers that are generated to these questions are then used to determine how accurately their theories predict new observations.

In analysing the data collected in this study, a systematic method of coding was carried through content analysis, which entailed examining the contents of the data systematically to record the relative incidence of themes and of the ways in which these were portrayed. According to Trochim (2001:165), content analysis on the one hand, is the analysis of text documents, the purpose of which is to identify patterns in them. Thematic analysis, on the other hand, entails identification of themes or major ideas in a document or set of documents. The text can include notes from focus groups, from in-depth interviews or from observation. In this study the researcher included analysis of the themes from memos and circulars from the GDE. Trochim (2001:165) adds that the use of content analysis is unobtrusive and, depending on whether automated methods exist, can be a relatively rapid method for analysing large amounts of text. Since this study has a limited scope, accurate analysis of data is crucial for the validity of the results and findings.

Cohen *et al.* (2003:77) write that the planning of data analysis will need to consider what to do with data when it has been collected, how it will be processed and analysed and how the results of the analysis will be verified, cross-checked and validated? They caution that the criteria for deciding which forms of data analysis to undertake are governed both by fitness for purpose and legitimacy. The form of data analysis must be appropriate for the particular type. For the purpose of this study, the categories of units of analysis were reclassified into mutually exclusive categories. Principals, parents and learners formed three separate categories wherein the elements and degree of accountability as experienced by each group were measured. Welman and Kruger (2001:202) refer to this method as ‘nominal measurement’, and when applying it all of those in a particular category are viewed as alike (or nearly alike) with respect to the attribute being measured, while those in different categories are different from that attribute. In nominal measurement, the numerical values that may be given to each category of participants may not imply any form of ordering. According to Graziano and Raulin (2004:80), nominal scales are the

lowest level of measurement, that is those that least match the number system, for example, a category that may be named 'number3' is no more important than one that has been named 'number 1'. Nominal scales are therefore naming scales, and their only property is identity, for example, categories of participants.

According to Trochim (2001:92), the findings of the study must be reliable, that is they may be repeated and consistent. One factor that may constrain reliability is the measurement error that is any influence on an observed score not related to what the study may be attempting to measure. Graziano and Raulin (2004:83) found that the measurement error distorts the scores so that the observations do not accurately reflect reality. Alternatively, a measurement error can reduce the observed strength of a relationship between variables, giving the impression that the two are less related than they actually are.

2.7 VALIDITY OF RESULTS

In conducting any systematic study it is important to ensure that the independent variable is the only variable responsible for the changes in dependent variable. In this study the public accountability system was the only variable to have an influence on the effectiveness and efficiency of public secondary schools in the Johannesburg North District. Graziano and Raulin (2004:182) write that internal validity is a major concern to the researcher because it lies at the centre of experimentation: the demonstration of causality. Guba and Lincoln (1994:105-117) proposed four criteria for judging the soundness of the qualitative research and explicitly offered these as alternatives to a more traditional quantitatively orientated criterion. They felt that they better reflected the underlying assumptions involved in much qualitative research:

i) *Credibility* involves establishing that the results of qualitative research are credible or believable from the perspective of the participant in the research. From this perspective, the purpose of the research is to describe or understand the phenomenon of interest from the participants' perspectives, they being the only ones who can legitimately judge the credibility of the results.

ii) *Transferability* refers to the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be generalised or transferred to other contexts or settings. From a qualitative perspective transferability is primarily the responsibility of the one doing the generalising. The qualitative researcher can enhance transferability by thoroughly describing the research context and assumptions central to the research. The person who wishes to transfer the results to a different context is then responsible for making a judgement of how sensible the transfer is.

iii) *Dependability* emphasises the need for the researcher to account for the ever-changing context within which research occurs. The researcher is responsible for describing the changes that occur in the setting and how these affect the way the researcher approached the study.

iv) *Confirmability* refers to the degree to which the results could be confirmed or corroborated by others. Strategies for enhancing confirmability include documenting the procedures for checking and rechecking the data throughout the study.

While there are many general control procedures for internal validity, in this study the use of objective measures in particular has been found to be the most appropriate. A measure is objective when it is based on empirically observable and specified events about which two or more people can easily agree (Graziano & Raulin, 2004:199). The broad translation of effectiveness and efficiency were gauged against learner attainment in each school, policies of the school, teacher scores in performance appraisals, and the involvement of parents.

According to Trochim (2001:157), good research is a combination of both quantitative and qualitative measurements. All numerical information involves numerous judgements about what the number means, but quantitative and qualitative data is at some level inseparable. Neither exists in isolation or can either be considered totally apart from the other. In this study, data was collected by using qualitative methods; however the data analysis and interpretation involved some statistical translations, the mode and the frequency. A good study should have some qualities of external validity as this enhances the credibility of the results and ensures that a further study can be carried out to expand the scope of the findings. Trochim (2001:43) suggests one way to improve external validity namely to conduct the study in a variety of places, with different people, and at different times. While this approach is ideal for a full dissertation it was difficult for a study with limited scope to

be repeated in order to test the transferability of its findings. However, a good foundation has been laid for further investigation into the accountability systems within the education system by developing a model about one.

2.8 PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

In order to present results, as stated above, histograms, bar graphs and/or pie charts were used. According to O'Sullivan *et al.* (2008:318), bar graphs are a particularly effective and simple way to present data. A bar graph shows the variable along one axis and frequency of cases along the other, with the length of the bar indicating the number of cases possessing each value of the variable. Bar graphs are also used to present percentage distributions for variables. For O'Sullivan *et al.* (1995:319), a histogram is a bar graph made by plotting frequency of occurrence against the values obtained for interval- and ratio-level variables. Here the width of the bar also portrays information, so that the width and length are related. Each column of the histogram represents a range of values, and the columns adjoin one another because the range of values is continuous.

Even though histograms, bar diagrams and pie charts may be used to depict the same information, a pie chart can more effectively illustrate the relationship of parts to the whole and allows the reader more readily to see the relative sizes of various categories. Pie graphs in essence are used to enhance presentations (O' Sullivan *et al.*, 1995:323).

Graziano and Raulin (2004:101) found that most people find graphic representations easier to understand than other statistical procedures. Tables and graphs are supplements to other statistical procedures. Since frequencies are easily presented by histogram or frequency polygons, it should be easy for the reader to recognise areas of development or improvement. This will align the study towards its purpose since results gained through action research can be used to plan, implement, review and evaluate an intervention designed to improve practice or solve problems.

2.8.1 Report writing

Report writing is crucial for any meaningful and systematic study since it communicates the findings of the study. It is therefore important that a simple, clear yet informative

report be drawn up. This may ensure that the reader gets the impression of the researcher about the phenomenon of interest while at the same time enabling the practitioners to improve their practice. According to Trochim (2001:318-319), some key topics and subtopics that can enhance the appearance of the study are suggested, such as the introduction, methods, results and conclusions, abstract, and reference sections. Greater attention to report writing will be given in chapter five of this study.

2.9 COMMUNICATION OF FINDINGS

By presenting full accounts of research rationales, procedures, findings and interpretations, the researcher is making work available for others to evaluate. Each finished project can serve as the basis for further questions and further empirical research (Graziano&Rualin, 2004:45). This study was conducted in partial fulfilment for the requirements of a master's degree in Public Management. However, its results will be available to the participants for their perusal and evaluation.

2.10 CONCLUSION

This chapter has described the research design and research methodology with elaboration on the reasons for their choice. It also outlined data collection methods and data analysis techniques. The measures taken to control validity of results were analysed and the methods of presenting results described. Chapter three comprises a review of literature of relevance to the study.

CHAPTER 3

PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY: AN OVERVIEW

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The preceding two chapters were dedicated to the background of the study and the research methodology. Since the concepts of accountability and public accountability systems are crucial to this study they warrant clarification and comprehensive analysis, in terms of their contribution to the framework and how they are applied in the field of public administration and management. The need for public accountability systems in public institutions, specifically the secondary schools in the Johannesburg North District, is also analysed. This chapter also explores the principles of public accountability with a view to describing the public accountability system of the chosen District. The levels of public accountability are also important in understanding the role of public officials, such as principals of secondary schools. Inter alia, different types of public accountability systems are described so as to align the study to its purpose.

3.2 CONCEPT CLARIFICATION

This section will clarify three terms as they are often referred to in this chapter and the rest of this study, namely *public*, *accountability* and *public accountability systems*.

3.2.1 Public

The term 'public' can be defined as that which relates to the community in general or in which the community has an interest, which in this study is the administration and good governance of public schools, and what may be in the interest of parents, teachers, learners and other stakeholders. Therefore, those who are charged with the administration and management of public schools may have a duty to answer publicly about the intentions, decisions and results of their actions. Principals of secondary schools may be required to measure the efficiency and effectiveness of teaching and learning and regularly report to the public on the goals and the progress of the schools they are in charge of. According to Hix (in Harlow, 2002:25), the following features may assist in describing the term 'public':

- a stable and clearly-defined set of rules for collective decision-making and rules governing relations between and within public institutions;
- a civic society, allowing citizens and social groups to achieve objectives through the political system;
- a significant impact on resource allocation and the distribution of social goods and values;
- a continuous interaction or feedback between the political outputs leading to change and innovation.

Bovens (2005:9) poses an important question about the term public, namely what is “public” about public accountability? He states that public accountability implies the rendering of account for matters of public interest, for example the accounting that is performed with a view to the judgement to be passed by the citizens.

3.2.2 Public accountability

According to Epstein and Birchard (1991:6), the job of building institutions that are accountable is the task of management, even though such institutions call for a cast of skilful characters, much direction and backstage support and a set of rigorous practices, strong leadership, and robust management and accounting systems. According to Hill, Lake and Ceilo (2002:3), most public officials know the performance goals for their government institutions but the expectations and oversight processes regarding public accountability have not been properly clarified. As a result, implicit political accountability may overtake public accountability.

In literature, the term ‘accountability’ has been analysed by many authors and researchers and the views of some will now be analysed from a public educational perspective. According to Hill, Lake and Ceilo (2002:5), accountability is frequently used in connection with public education but seldom carefully defined. The authors found that in most settings, accountability is the relationship between a principal (a person who needs a task done and can pay to get it done) and an agent, who accepts responsibility for accomplishing the task in return for some form of remuneration. On one hand, accountability is defined as the obligation of public officials (headmasters included) to explain publicly, fully and fairly, before and after the fact, how they are carrying out responsibilities that affect the public in important ways (accountabilitycircle.org). Public accountability may therefore involve explaining publicly, adequately, before the fact, the

intentions of and the reasoning behind performance standards. It is the obligation to demonstrate and take responsibility for performance in the light of commitments and expected outcomes. Since public accountability may be in the interest of the public, it should be viewed as a societal imperative to which a political oversight may be necessary to enhance public accountability. On the other hand, Bovens, Schillemans and Hart (2008:225-242) define accountability as the relationship between an actor and a forum in which the actor has an obligation to explain and justify his or her conduct. The forum can pose questions and pass judgement, and the actor may face consequences or be rewarded.

Hill *et al.* (2002:6) contend the identity of the agent and forum where a school setting is in question. Even though it may be relatively easy to consider the head of the school as the agent acting on behalf of the forum, the question would then be who employs the head of the school. Is the head of the school performing duties on behalf of the parents, or the learners, or rather on behalf of the District officials? The answer to this question may assist in understanding the nature of accountability that is associated with the roles and responsibilities of the head of the school. The ambiguity that emanates from the multiple interest groups in the public education setting may tend to distort the location of the accountability. For example, it is not easy to understand who has the legitimate authority to hold the head of the school accountable for the effectiveness and efficiency of the school. In an attempt to clarify some of these questions, Hill *et al.* (2002:6) state that the model of democratic accountability holds that a public school is a subordinate unit in the public administration that executes policies enacted by elected officials. Under this model, elected officials are the principals (the employers of the heads of the school for whom a service is rendered in return for the compensation), for whom the public administration, and ultimately the school as a unit of that public administration act as agents.

According to Oliver (in Harlow, 2002:9), public accountability entails being liable to give an account or explanation of actions and, where appropriate, to suffer the consequences, take the blame or undertake to put matters right if it should appear that errors have been made. This definition overlaps with the one given by Hood (in Harlow, 2002:9), who defines public accountability as the periodic checking and examination of the activities of public officials by external actors possessing formal or constitutional authority to investigate, censure and in some cases punish. These two definitions have three common elements, namely the explanation or giving of an account, blame and censure, and redress. These concur with a definition of holding to account (accountabilitycircle.org) as obtaining

from the authorities specific public explanations at the time needed, validating the reporting for its fairness and doing something sensible and fair about explanations given in good faith. Oliver and Hood (in Harlow, 2009:16) view public accountability as retrospective with some extent of externality. It is retrospective in that it deals with past events. It may also be seen as having some element of authority, which means that external actors are asserting rights of superior authority over those who are accountable, including the right to impose sanctions.

According to Martin, Overholt and Urban (1976:30), numerous attempts have been made to define the term 'accountability' and there is much confusion over it, stemming from the way it has become intertwined with concepts such as behavioural objectives, performance contracting, achievement testing, and competency-based education, all of which have in common their ability to be measured objectively by standardised, quantitative techniques. This particular notion of accountability may be criticised for leading to a narrow definition of public education in which that which cannot be measured is ignored. Firstly, a curriculum that is devoted only to measurable objectives may well ignore areas that emphasise thought processes or aesthetic qualities which are difficult or impossible to measure. A second objection is that while measures may distinguish between those leaders who have performed well and those who have not, standardised measures may not say anything about how or why. Accountability may then be understood as a system for rewarding or sanctioning secondary school principals for the performance of learners and teachers based on some standardised measures of learning. However, standardised measures may be incomplete or invalid as a basis for evaluating the principals themselves.

For the purpose of this study, the principal of a secondary school may assume the role of an actor, for example by providing leadership and managerial expertise, whereas the parents, learners and District officials may respectively represent the forum that seeks answers (accountability) for the intents, decisions and results emanating from the management and administration of a secondary school. For the purpose of this study the term public accountability refers but is not limited to the principal of a secondary school who may in his/her capacity render an account for the decisions, intents and results of his/her actions emanating from the management and administration of a public secondary school. For example, curriculum delivery, learner progress, financial management of the school and/or the physical assets of a school, to mention but a few, are all matters for

which an account may be given in a fashion which is reasonable, fair and in good faith, and enables stakeholders to make sensible decisions.

According to accountabilitycircle.org, a distinction should be made between accountability and responsibility, with the latter requiring taking control of one's area of function. For example, a responsible principal may delegate and evaluate the performance of his/her staff, but this is not the same as public accountability. Therefore, responsibility may mean that what should happen does happen and vice versa. Public accountability may mean forcing out information that the stakeholders need to make sensible decisions and is therefore associated more with reporting and information dissemination by one person who has authority to the persons without equal authority.

According to Dive (2008:11), accountability stems from the tasks inherent in a role, which may indicate what the public official in that position has the authority to do. Success in carrying out those tasks inherent in a role may lead to reward and recognition from the person or persons who set up the role in the first place. Conversely, failure to deliver what is specified in the role may lead to some sort of sanction. In an attempt to describe accountability, Dive (2008:12) listed the following characteristics:

- a statement of personal promise, both to oneself and to the people around to deliver specific defined results;
- for results, activities alone are not enough;
- results requires room for personal judgement and decision-making;
- it is neither shared (cannot be delegated) nor conditional;
- it is meaningless without consequences (rewards, sanctions).

According to Bovens (in Bovens *et al.* 2008:225-242), there are three components that may enable the public accountability system between the actor (the principal) and the forum to be operational. Firstly, the actor should be obliged to inform the forum about his/her conduct; secondly, there should be an opportunity for the actor to explain and justify his/her conduct in the course of the interaction; and thirdly, both parties to the system should know that the forum or some third party is able not only to pass judgements but also present the actor with salient consequences. In other words, the principal of a school must be in a position to account for the administration and management of a school in a manner that will enable the stakeholders to make a decision about the effectiveness and efficiency of a school. At the same time, parents, learners and local District officials

must be in a position to hold the principal to account for actions deemed unsatisfactory. This may, for example, be in the form of reporting dissatisfaction with the DistrictOffice or any other office that has authority to reprimand the principal.

In addition to the above statement by Bovens, Fearon (in Phillip, 2009:28-53) states that a person may be deemed accountable if two conditions are met. Firstly, if there is an understanding that a person is obliged to act in some way on behalf of another person or institution. Secondly, if the other person or institution is empowered by some formal institutional authority or perhaps other informal rules to sanction or reward the other person for the activities or performance in this capacity.

In the case of public education, principals may be acting on behalf of the Basic Education Department, which may delegate the authority to the school principal to manage, administer, take decisions and execute functions on its behalf. The state as the employer therefore may have the authority to reward or sanction the school principal for the performance rendered. In holding principals to account, a well-defined and well-articulated public accountability system may be crucial.

3.2.3 Public accountability system

A system refers to the set of things working together as a mechanism or network. It follows that, in a public accountability system, role players may interact with each other in an orderly fashion, leading to a series of activities that have a connection to each other. In leadership roles publicaccountability is the acknowledgement and assumption of responsibility for actions, products, decisions, and policies, including administration, governance, and implementation within the scope of the role or employment position and encompassing the obligation to report, explain and be answerable for the resulting consequences (www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Accountability). It may therefore be concluded that the public accountability system is an account of therelationship between the actor and the forum. Dive (2008:203) found that if there is no valid accountability system the assessment of leadership may be unreliable. It is therefore critical that behaviour should be linked to apublic accountability system that may serve as an instrument for the measurement of performance.

3.3 MODELS OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY

In an attempt to further describe the concept of public accountability, the use of models may be important. According to Scott (1994:149) there are six models of educational accountability which may be used in an attempt to further clarify the concept of public accountability, namely the central control model (which is contractual and employer dominant); the self-accounting model (which is contractual, professional dominant); the consumerist model (which is contractual, consumer dominant); the chain of responsibility model (which is responsive, employer dominant); the professional model (which is responsive, professional dominant); and the partnership model (which is responsive, partnership dominant). The following section describes these models in greater detail.

3.3.1 Central control model

The central control model lays stress on teachers who are employees with a contract of employment and therefore under the obligation to demonstrate that they are doing what they are paid to do. According to this model, schools should publish a detailed analysis of their examination results for the benefit of prospective parents. Since educators may be accountable to the general public, who pay for the education through taxes, for the achievement of pre-specified objectives by the learners this achievement is assessed on the basis of test scores obtained by the learners (Scott, 1994:150).

3.3.2 Self-accounting model

The self-accounting model involves schools and teachers monitoring their own activities in an attempt to satisfy the requirements of contractual accountability while holding onto as much professional autonomy as possible and avoiding increased governmental control of public education. The critics to this model may cite its domination by self-interest (Scott, 1994:150).

3.3.3 Consumerist model

The consumerist model introduces the mechanisms of the free-market in the place of central or professional control as the primary means of enforcing educational

accountability. It is based on a belief that if schools no longer have clientele (learners) they will have an incentive to compete with other schools which will in turn push up educational standards. The model posits that parents can influence the character of the school by exercising their choice. Individual parents who are dissatisfied with the educational provision at one school may transfer their learners to another. This model is criticised for the social and economic inequality it may create. For example, parents with a better income may afford to transfer their children to a more expensive one with better educational standards (Scott, 1994:151).

3.3.4 Chain of responsibility model

The chain of responsibility model is a form of responsive accountability based on an acknowledgement of the complexity of the relationship between the employer, the practitioner and client in the field of public education and an acknowledgement that different types of educational decisions may reasonably be considered the domain of different groups. The model has two main features, the first of which is that an initial distinction be made between those who make educational decisions and those whose wishes, interests, requirements or opinions are merely taken into account by decision makers. The second is that the various groups of decision makers, who consist of different categories of elected representatives and their employees, are ranked in a chain extending from Parliament to the National Department, to local District Offices, to school principals, to school governors, to school management teams through to assistant teachers. The SGB in the middle of the chain may have a monitoring role over the individual principal of a school (Scott, 1994:151-152).

3.3.5 Professional model

The professional model avoids the problem of hierarchy of interests by leaving educational decisions, except on matters on which they are contractually accountable, to the judgement of the professional educators or of the school itself. According to this model, professional educators seek to retain control over educational decisions which affect themselves, and see themselves as the arbiter when faced with conflicting demands from different interested parties. Since the professional status of educators may require them to take account of all the expectations, wishes and criticisms emanating from those with a legitimate interest in the particular educational practice, so they claim the right to make

final judgements and to define the boundaries of their own accountability. Educators may base this right on their professional training and expertise, on standards to which they have implicitly committed themselves when entering the profession, as well as on the professional autonomy that educators have traditionally been allowed in this country (Scott, 1994:153). In addition to this description, Kogan (1986:41) states that the responsively accountable school may enter into free and open communication with a variety of interest groups about the aims and nature of the education it provides. Such school may work through a dialogue rather than authority and may operate at the local rather than the more remote decentralised level of state. This model may be contrasted with the control or productivity model, where the accounting is done by some external monitoring agency.

3.3.6 Partnership model

The partnership model combines two main principles, the first of which is that the responsibility for educational decisions should not lie with one dominant group, but with a partnership of all those directly affected by a particular decision or with a legitimate interest in it. The second principle is that all the parties to the partnership are not merely consulted before decisions are taken but have a share in the actual decision-making, either directly or through their representatives. Therefore, there are likely to be three stages in decision-making in this model: firstly, the pooling of ideas and critical discussion of options; secondly the negotiation through argument and compromise of whatever can satisfy most people as being the most rational, or, failing that, the most reasonable solution; and thirdly, the acceptance of the obligation to abide by and help carry through the decisions reached in this democratic manner. In this regard this model provides a different approach to accountability from the chain of responsibility and professional models. In it, each member of the partnership is accountable to the other members in being under an obligation to take into account their views and interests, but not accountable to any outside interest group (Scott, 1994:153-154).

3.4 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

According to Martin, Overholt and Urban (1976:8-9), the concept of accountability can be traced back to behaviourists and functionalists who share a number of positivist or quasi-positivist assumptions. Among these assumptions are:

- Abbelief in external forms of determinism, usually termed ‘environmental’ by behaviourists and ‘cultural’ by functionalists.
- Abbelief that overt behaviour is an observable, testable phenomenon which can be adequately ‘captured’ by operational definitions, and quantified.
- Afaith not in the possibility but actuality of a stable, commonly shared observation language of behaviour, combined with the notion that any behaviour or non-behavioural language which cannot be translated into this observation language can be dismissed as unscientific.
- Abbelief that the society can be improved through behavioural science and technology.

These and other assumptions are usually translated directly into pedagogical language by the advocates of accountability. Assumption 1 becomes the proposition that learning can be adequately defined as change in behaviour. Assumption 2 becomes the proposition that learning viewed as change in behaviour has been rendered observable and thus testable through the observation and measurement of behavioural performances. Assumption 3 translates into the proposition that all of the above should be stated in a common observation language. Therefore, educational curricula should have a combination of clearly stated behavioural, competence and/or performance-based objectives which properly entail both content and the method of instruction. The emphasis shifts from input to output, defined as overt performances. The fourth assumption is reflected in the notion that methods and curricula are to be related to behavioural or performance objectives as means relate to ends.

Martin *et al.* (1976:10) state that behind their differences, functionalists, behaviourists, and accountabilists share a central reference to relations among actual, empirically given social phenomena, whether they be institutions, groups, roles, individuals, or component elements of behaviour. These relationships are claimed to be either directly observable or capable of abstraction from observation through direct induction. Thus, when a functionalist uses the term ‘social structure’, a behaviourist talks about contingencies of reinforcement, or when an accountabilist describes learning, all may be referring directly

and without mediation to the observed institution of a given social or behavioural state of affairs at a given time. According to Dive (2008:203), distinction should be made between competency, skills and behaviour, and analysis of these terms may be important in understanding how they are linked to accountability.

Competencies may be broadly defined as the differentiators that indicate those managerial leaders who are most likely to be successfully held to account. They consist of behaviour that may be aligned to levels of accountability within the scope of operation by the public officials. While most competency models are a mixture of behaviours and skills, skills may relate to how the job is done in a technical sense, and they describe the ability to perform the task and are therefore limited to assessing performance at a particular level of accountability. Behaviour may relate to what is required to execute accountabilities or make decisions. The mentioned three concepts are interlinked and influence public accountability. According to Arnall and Wincott (2002:81), the concept of accountability can be traced back to the emergence of transparency, openness and efficiency, all of which are based on the principle of democracy.

Transparency and openness may mean public access to information held by the administrators and accountability therefore may be viewed as the mechanism for transparency which enables civil society to participate in authorities' decision-making. According to Epstein and Birchard (1999:11), transparency or transparent-management may open the way to good governance, which is necessary in generating ideas and sparking innovations to effective and efficient administration and management.

3.5 PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY

A principle can be described as the general law that is used as a basis for a model. Since this study intends developing a model about public accountability systems it is important to analyse the principles. There are twelve principles of accountability described as follows, accountability, precautionary, coherence in assigned authority, duties and accountabilities, identifying direct mind, self-informing duty, answering for precautions taken, intentions disclosure, corporate answering for fairness, performance disclosure, answering by those

who are responsible, validation of answering and wages of abdication (www.accountabilitycircle.org).

3.5.1 Accountability

According to this principle every responsibility that affects the public as a group in important ways carries the obligation to answer publicly for the discharge of the responsibility. For example, matters of learner attainment and school finances may be some of the matters for which principals must be able to account publicly.

3.5.2 Precautionary

This principle requires public officials to demonstrate, through validated public answering, that what they intend will not lead to harm or unfairness to those they are charged with managing. For example, a decision to increase school fees must be accompanied by an explanation as to why it is necessary to do so.

3.5.3 Coherence in assigned authority, duties and accountabilities

Authority, duties and answering must be in balance. In other words, where authority is granted through legislation it must have the answering requirement. Those assigned with duties through legislation must have the necessary authority to carry them out.

3.5.4 Identifying direct mind

In order to make accountability effective, those who are holding others to account must indicate to the public officials what a government, corporation or institution intends to do, and what it actually does or fails to do. Before holding public officials to account, a clear “statement of intent” is made known about what the institution must strive to achieve.

3.5.5 Self-informing duty

The self-informing principle implies that the public officials will know reasonably well what information they need for their duties, how to obtain it and to a certain extent validate it. Public officials will not use whatever information they get without validating it.

3.5.6 Answering for precautions taken

For the responsibilities that the public officials control they answer publicly for the extent to which they apply the precautionary principle in their own decision-making. This includes answering for obtaining reasonable assurance that it is safe or fair to proceed before doing so, and for what precautionary action they took if the assurance of safety or fairness is uncertain.

3.5.7 Intentions disclosure

Public officials, such as the principals of secondary schools, with authority and who intend taking action that would affect the public in important ways may state publicly the outcomes they wish to bring about, for whom, and why they think the outcomes they intend are desirable and fair. The disclosure of intentions may assist the school community in making informed decisions about the school.

3.5.8 Corporate answering for fairness

It may be reasonable that the public officials should publicly explain how they are serving the public interest when their intentions for corporate action could be reasonably deemed to affect the public in important ways, such as in matters of safety, health, and social justice, as well as environmental impact.

3.5.9 Performance disclosure

Again, it may be reasonable to expect public officials to report promptly the results of their actions, why the results were not as envisaged if that is the case, the learning they gained from the experience and how they applied it. Performance reporting is within the control of public officials who are accountable and it includes reporting about how external constraints are being dealt with.

3.5.10 Answering by those who are responsible

According to this principle, those with responsibilities do the answering, not someone else, such as subordinates or external examiners, auditors, inspectors, inquiry commissioners, ombudsmen or others.

3.5.11 Validation of answering

With this principle, answering for intentions and reasoning and for results and learning is validated by knowledgeable public interest organisations or professional practitioners or both.

3.5.12 Wages of abdication

According to this principle, if citizens abdicate (fail to carry out a duty) their responsibility to install public answering standards and be held fairly to account, they promote the abuse of authority and thus tacitly reduce their civic competence. Public accountability therefore enhances the chances of good governance and absence thereof may lead to doubts about good governance.

These principles of public accountability may assist in guiding and creating the framework within which a fair public accountability system may take place.

3.6 APPROACHES TO PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY

An approach may describe as a way of dealing with something. In analysing public accountability it may be important to explore different approaches through which it may be dealt with. Swift (2008:3) distinguished between two approaches to public accountability, namely, the long and the short route. These two approaches may assist in explaining the role of each stakeholder within the public accountability system.

3.6.1 Long route to the public accountability system

The long route to the public accountability system involves accountability by the principal and/or teachers to the parents and the District officials. In this regard the educator accounts to the school principal, for example by explaining learner academic and extra-mural progress, who in turn may be accountable to the local District officials. Local District officials in turn may be accountable to senior officials who may account to ministers who may as well account to Parliament. The long route to the public accountability system may therefore extend beyond the school boundaries and has more stakeholders involved in the system. It is also known as external accountability (Swift: 3).

3.6.2 Short route to the public accountability system

The short route is one in which the school principal and educators may be directly accountable to their clients, the learners and the school community. In this regard, accountability may be confined by the role-players found within the school and is known as internal accountability. In analysing public accountability, no distinction will be drawn between the long and short route to public accountability. This may be necessary to deal with the overlap between the two routes or external and internal public accountability. Since public accountability may take place within and outside the school boundaries, drawing a distinction between these two approaches may prove artificial. For example, accountability for learner progress may be informed by the account rendered by educators to the principal, who may in return give an account to other stakeholders outside the school (Swift: 3).

This study attempts to embrace both approaches to public accountability systems. For example, Schedler and Adams (in Swift, 2008) define public accountability as a process of reporting on and justifying action taken on duties and obligations, by an “agent” (or an actor) taking on those duties, to the “principal” (or the forum) who assign the duties while backed by sanctions or rewards. The definition provided by these authors makes no distinction between long and short routes to public accountability. It is also important to note that this definition emphasises the existence of two things within the public accountability system, namely the existence of the “principal” or “forum” on the one hand, and the existence of an “agent” or “actor” (see section 3.2.2 above) on the other. The latter must account to the principal. In this sense accountability may be seen as being a phenomenon which may take place within and outside the school.

While the approaches to the public accountability systems are important in understanding the foundations of public accountability, it may also be important to link them with different types of public accountability as this may be informative on how public accountability takes on different forms. In the section that follows, different types of public accountability systems will be described.

3.7 TYPES OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

Public accountability is a legitimate concept that may assist in instilling good governance in public institutions. As such, the need for public accountability will be analysed in succeeding sections of this chapter (see section 3.9). Since public accountability takes place in different contexts and settings it may differ from one context to another. The understanding of different types of public accountability systems may enable the study to develop a model that is more reliable. On the web page www.dictionary.sensagent.com/accountability/en-en/, eight different types of public accountability are stated, listed as follows.

3.7.1 Political accountability

Political accountability is the accountability of the government, public officials and politicians to the public and to legislative bodies such as Parliament. Even though public accountability is not in essence a political imperative it is mainly influenced by the political climate of each country, region or District. In cases where government is lax, measures to hold its public officials accountable may be lacking, whereas if the government is exercising stringent measures the opposite may be true. According to Hill *et al.* (2002:8), though elected officials such as members of executive councils in the provinces are the representatives of the people who vote them into office, the policies they make about public schools may not reliably reflect the needs of schools and children. The problem in this regard may emanate from the personal weaknesses of public representatives or the fact that the policies enacted by public representatives may apply to all public schools whereas the needs of learners are diverse. School principals may be bound to comply and account for the policies administered by their respective District Offices.

3.7.2 Ethical accountability

Ethics are the moral principles that govern a person's behaviour, and ethical accountability is the practice of improving overall personal and organisational performance by developing and promoting responsible tools and professional expertise, and by advocating an effective and enabling environment for people and public institutions to embrace the culture of sustainable development. According to Smith (in Epstein, Kirk & Hanson, 2006:4), people are expected to have the virtues of prudence, justice, temperance, decency, modesty and moderation, and should be scrupulous and never either hurt or offend. Since this moral philosophy cannot always be relied upon, some form of mechanism or system is needed to regulate the performance of public officials. Since ethical accountability has more to do with morals it may be not be in a form of rules or regulations.

3.7.3 Administrative accountability

Internal rules and norms, as well as some independent commission are mechanisms to hold accountable public officials within the administration of government. These are the rules, policies, and procedures that are applicable within the sphere of the public official (www.dictionary.sensagent.com/accountability/en-en/).

3.7.4 Market accountability

This type of accountability may be used to assess the responsiveness of service providers to a body of their clients. Market accountability has to do with customer satisfaction about the service or product that a public official or public institution offers to its clients (dictionary.sensagent.com/accountability/en-en/). For example, schools may analyse the reaction of the learners and parents to the standard of education that the school offers. In many instances it may be difficult to draw a line between each type of accountability since they tend to overlap and complement each other. Accountability may occur without the public official being aware of it, unless it is embedded in the administrative system. How good or bad the public accountability system is in the chosen District will become evident in chapter four.

3.7.5 Direct accountability

Direct accountability may be synonymous with management accountability and typically involves authority to manage a team, deciding who joins the team, what work they will do, how they will be rewarded for that work, how they will be trained and developed, on what basis and when they will be the team (Dive, 2008:14). If this authority is effectively discharged the team members will enjoy the benefits of positive accountability and true empowerment.

3.7.6 Indirect accountability

Indirect accountability is more associated with the jobs that derive their legitimacy from indirect authority. Such jobs are known as support jobs, and although not required on the spine of accountability they do add value to accountability. Since support jobs add value to the operation of the institution, they cannot be regarded as second-class roles. They influence how activities and work-processes and people are brought together to ensure a state of equilibrium. The support jobs therefore help ensure that the line-accountable managers are able to manage their work effectively, thereby improving their accountability levels (Dive, 2008:14).

3.7.7 Positive accountability

Positive accountability occurs when one is answerable to another for the provision of work, husbanding resources and the delivery of a service, product or set of results that can be measured in terms of quantity, quality, cost and time (Dive, 2008:14). In this sense, accountability implies freedom to do something and moves beyond the mere absence of interference or coercion, implying a definite sphere within which an individual can act to get things done. Therefore, such a person is free to make a positive contribution to their institutions. Positive accountability operates at all levels of the institution, whatever their size and mission.

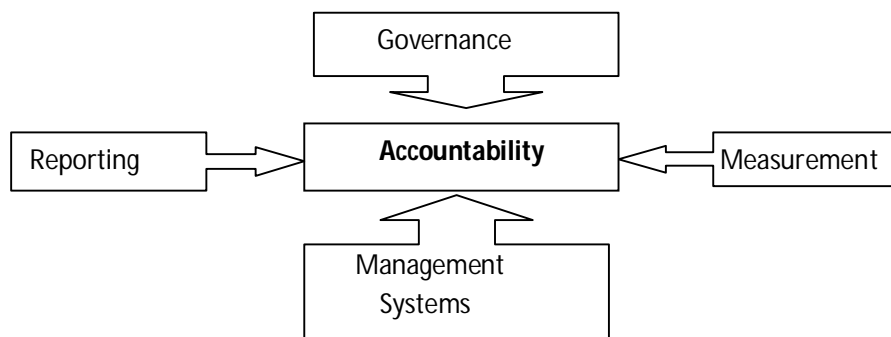
3.7.8 Negative accountability

According to Dive (2008:13), negative accountability occurs when there is interference with or blocking of the free exercise of positive action. In this regard, managers must ensure that the people they lead are free from unnecessary interference from their work since this may hamper the productivity of talented people. In the next section common elements of the public accountability systems will be analysed.

3.8 COMMON ELEMENTS OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

According to Epstein and Birchard (1999:8) public accountability may have four common elements which are governance, measurement, management systems and reporting.

In Figure 3.1: The elements of accountability. Source: adapted from Epstein and Birchard, (1999:8)



The four additional features which state that:

- the system-based public accountability system often requires data on a number of different indicators,
- it states who accounts and to whom,
- it clearly states for what the account must be rendered and
- it describes the processes involved in rendering the account. The mentioned features will be analysed briefly in the following sections.

will also be described in the following section.

3.8.1 Governance

Governance can be described as the process through which an institution implements measures that will reassure the external stakeholders that the governing component has processes in place to ask the right questions and monitor management (Epstein and Birchard ,1999:8). In the event of a school the SGB may implement processes to hold the school management to account for the activities and/or effectiveness and efficiency of teaching and learning. Epstein and Birchard (1999:52) furtherstate that good governance practices may reassure external stakeholders that, among other things, the institution is not experiencing an accountability crisis.

3.8.2 Measurement

Measurement in the management environment may be described as management by numbers. When a measurement system is implemented, financial numbers are supplemented bynon-financial numbers. Financial and non-financial variables may connect in a complex chain of cause and effect,with performance measured by empowering units or teams and individuals to execute the strategy and tactics in order to enhance accountability. In this regard, measures may be used by the governing component as the basis for decision-making (Epstein and Birchard,1999:8).

3.8.3 Management systems

In using the management system as an element of the accountability system, an institution must have a system that ensures signals given at the head of the public institution flow to each extremity and back again. Such institutions may emphasise the use of control systems as part of the accountability system.

3.8.4 Reporting

Reporting may be viewed as an element of public accountability in which a communication-centred approach is adopted with greater transparency to enhance the accountability system. Such institutions may find that disseminating the numbers that demonstrate their performance helps them to gain an edge on others. Secondary schools that have efficient and effective reporting systems may find imperative the issuing of report cards as informative tools about the academic progress of learners.According to

Horsch (1997:1), four additional features may be present in most public accountability systems:

i) A system-based accountability system often requires data on a number of different indicators

According to Horsch(1997:1) data may be used to indicate whether the performance by the public official meets the required standards. For example, the GDE Circular 25 of 2008 states, among other things, that a principal of a secondary school must prepare and submit to the HoDan annual report on the school's academic performance in relation to the minimum outcomes, standards, procedures for assessment and the effective use of available resources during the previous year, by 30 January of each year. According to Brizius and Campbell (in Horsch, 1997:1), an indicator may be anything that provides evidence that a certain condition exists or certain results have or have not been achieved. Indicators enable decision-makers to assess progress towards the achievement of intended outputs, outcomes, goals, and objectives.

ii) A public accountability system states who accounts and to whom

The public accountability system must be clear in terms of who must account and to whom the account must be rendered. This may be made possible through a well-defined and comprehensive accountability system.

iii) A public accountability system clearly states for what the account must be rendered

The basis for accountability must be known by all stakeholders involved. For example, the Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM) outlines the job description of a principal as follows:

- to be responsible for the professional management of the public school;
- to give proper instructions and guidelines for timetabling admission and placement of learners;
- to have various kinds of school accounts and records properly kept and to make the use of funds for benefit of learners in consultation with appropriate structures;
- to provide professional leadership within the school; and
- to guide, supervise and offer professional advice on the work and performance of all in the school and, where necessary, to discuss and write or countersign reports on

teaching, support, non-teaching and other staff.

iv) A public accountability system describes the processes involved in rendering the account

It is important for a system to spell out the format under which accountability is expected to take place. It may be in report writing, presentations or a combination of methods.

3.9 THE NEED FOR PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

Gradually and increasingly, the need for public accountability is becoming an important instrument for effectiveness and efficiency in both the public and private sector. This may be so because of the democratisation of many governments as well as the need to deal with the scourge of corruption that has been at the centre of many uprisings evidenced recently. According to the web page (www.accountabilitycircle.org), public accountability systems are desirable for the following reasons:

i) Public accountability systems provide effective processes to prevent possible adverse intentions of public officials leading to harm

Through the public accountability system, public officials are expected to state publicly what they specifically plan to achieve and their intended performance standards for the achievement. This may provide the citizens with an opportunity to evaluate the performance of public officials.

ii) Public accountability systems provides the right understanding of matters

Through public accountability systems the citizens are afforded the opportunity to assess the performance of the public officials and make judgements whether their actions are in the public interest or not.

iii) Public accountability systems impose a self-regulating influence on public officials with regard to decision-making.

A self-regulating force requires that public officials explain, publicly, fully and fairly what they intend to do and why they intend taking certain decisions. In this regard, decision-making by public officials is open to scrutiny and influence. Inadequate measures for public accountability or lack thereof have been at the centre of many riots and pickets around the country, in which the communities have demanded accountability for the delivery of basic services. If citizens acting as concerned members of the community do their civic duty, to hold public officials accountable, it may often lead to unpleasant situations.

Dive (2008:12) found that public accountability may be important for the following reasons:

- lack of true accountability may cause excessive cost, both economic and psychological, and demotivation;
- it enables public officials who are in leadership positions to take those decisions that the people who report to them cannot take;
- it may assist in avoiding compression, that is when two or more layers of people are working in the same decision-making zone or level of accountability; and

it may lead to empowerment, which means that the job may call for something of value additional to the work of others by the person at the higher level, enabling

- leaders to achieve more than they would otherwise.

Epstein and Birchard (1999:14) found that accountable public institutions may position themselves to:

- improve decision-making: by being accountable, a wealth of information on performance (which informs decision-making) is generated with facts rather than intuition, since people both inside and outside the institution can make contributions that may further the strategy of the institution;
- accelerate learning: the accountable institution installs feedback systems that enable it to learn from people across the institution;
- execute strategy: the accountable institution communicates each strategy and tactic

with specific measures that may align direction in a way that written objectives cannot. The measures may then give public officials a “reading” on whether the strategy is working or not;

- empower the troops: as management articulates what it wants with concreteness of quantitative measure, educators and learners may have guidance as they figure out how to deliver it;
- communicate the story: the accountable secondary school may communicate its story with credible quantitative and qualitative data. As principals communicate performance transparently, parents and learners may have fewer reasons to criticise its performance; and
- inspire loyalty: the accountable school may market its value through reliable performance measures; this in turn may inspire the loyalty of all stakeholders involved.

3.10 PROBLEMS OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY

Although public accountability can be traced back several centuries its true meaning and implementation remains problematic. According to Scott (1994:45), factors may be biographical, such as background, experience, expectations, ideology and goals; interactional, such as school, departmental processes of negotiation and review; or contextual, such as arrangement of resources. According to Hill *et al.* (2002:8), principals and educators often complain that elected officials such as councillors may constantly impose new rules in response to political and legislative negotiations, forcing constant reallocation of school resources and adjustment of teaching practices. At the same time, parents may also complain that a political set of rules make schools unresponsive and unable to adjust to the needs of individual learners. Martin, Overholt and Urban (1976:49) argue that accountability, both in its historical and contemporary forms, is an issue that has its roots in political and economic policies. If this argument is correct then the question would be: How can principals of secondary schools deal with the politico-economic accountability movement? Clear and unambiguous public accountability systems are vital

in providing a framework within which school authorities, who are often vulnerable to practices of elected public officials can operate.

From further analysis of public accountability problems, Martin *et al.* (1976:3) found that in the United States of America public accountability tends to limit itself to what can be observed and measured, such as competence and performance-based results. Quantitative data is often used to hold public officials in leadership position accountable, and in affirming this approach Epstein and Birchard (1999:5) state that the true test of an accountable public institution is whether it is able to measure its performance quantitatively and report publicly to audiences inside and outside. They add that “anything less than hard numbers, broadly disclosed, reveals an organisation that may be hesitant to commit to full accountability.”

According to Kogan (1986:16), public accountability has policy problems that make implementation challenging for public education. Firstly, whilst education is financed through public taxes it is offered in institutions that are to an extent closed to public scrutiny and difficult to supervise from the outside. For example, parents may not have a direct influence on teaching and learning unless the authorities, particularly principals and school management teams, volunteer useful information. In this regard Becher (in Kogan, 1986:49) concluded that giving parents information only may not allow them too much authority and influence, and might even reduce their influence. Those in authority may not provide evidence on personnel, curriculum, teaching process, progress of individual pupils, or general performance. Even in instances when it is forthcoming it may need interpretation for it to be meaningful. Secondly, regarding the location of accountability, the question arises as to who has the authority to hold educators accountable. Principals of secondary schools may not have adequate authority to hold educators to account since such authority is vested somewhere with the District Office, the provincial office or even the national office. It is common to find public accountability having too many layers of hierarchy, and as Dive (2008:8) argues, it is at times made difficult by the institutional design. Too many layers of accountability may lead to conflict and perplexed roles. Kogan (1986:49) found that the analysis of accountability may not solve the policy problems, therefore in this study the focus is rather on understanding the public accountability systems of the chosen District.

In addition to these problems, Dive (2008:21) states that accountability may pose problems in cases in which:

- there are many jobs without an apparent purpose that may impair the person in that 'non-job' from being able to lead effectively. In such public cases it may be impossible to assess the true impact of the public officials.
- faulty institutional design is evident, for example, where there are too many levels of authority in the hierarchy.
- there is a lack of timely and appropriate decisions.
- there is duplication of work.
- there is a culture of long and excessive hours at work.
- managers are working in the team members' decision space.
- top management thinks there is a capability problem.

3.11 ACCOUNTABILITY, EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY OF A PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOL

According to Epstein and Birchard (1995:5), traditional practices for measuring, managing and accounting for the performance of a public institution are no longer enough. These and other methods, such as reporting and auditing, may not be adequate in assisting public officials to compete effectively in a global public sector. As such, public accountability is vital as it enables principals to make and execute decisions that could not otherwise be made by their subordinates. The ability to improve decision-making unfolds new possibilities that enable a secondary school to measure its performance, report it internally and externally, and strive for effectiveness and efficiency. It may be evident that the accountable top management may serve as a springboard for the effectiveness and efficiency of all educators and learners. According to Dive (2008:48), the accountable and effective organisational structure may provide the context for effective operation and the foundation for both leadership and staff development.

3.12 PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY, ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND THE LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

Public accountability entails access to information held by public bodies such as secondary schools. In this regard the stakeholders are in a position to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of public institutions. Therefore, access to information is in any public accountability system. Access to information held by public bodies finds expression in the Promotion of Access to Information Act 2 of 2000. Sections 7 and 32 contained in the Constitution states that:

7. Rights

1. This Bill of Rights is a cornerstone of democracy in South Africa. It enshrines the rights of all people in our country and affirms the democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom.
2. The state must respect, protect, promote and fulfil the rights in the Bill of Rights.
3. The rights in the Bill of Rights are subject to the limitations contained or referred to in section 36, or elsewhere in the Bill.

32. Access to information

1. Everyone has the right of access to
 - a. any information held by the state; and
 - b. any information that is held by another person and that is required for the exercise or protection of any rights.
2. National legislation must be enacted to give effect to this right, and may provide for reasonable measures to alleviate the administrative and financial burden on the state.

The Protection of State Information Bill, 2010 Section (6)(a) states that, unless restricted by law or by justifiable public or private considerations, state information should be available and accessible to all persons. This should be read in conjunction with section

6(d) which upholds the free flow of information promotes, responsiveness, informed debate, accountability and good governance. Section 6 includes the following:

- (b) information that is accessible to all is the basis of a transparent, open and democratic society;
- (c) access to information is a basic human right, accessible information promotes human dignity, freedom and the achievement of equality;
- (e) the free flow of information can promote safety and security,
- (f) accessible information builds knowledge and understanding, and promotes creativity, education, research, the exchange of ideas and economic growth;
- (g) some confidentiality and secrecy is however vital to save lives, to enhance and protect the freedom and security of persons, bring criminals to justice, protect the national security and to engage in effective government and diplomacy.

It is vital in a democratic society to analyse the ways by which public institutions implement transparency, openness, and access to information. In analysing the accountability systems and their legitimacy in the European Union (EU), Arnall and Wincott (2002:86) found that after the enactment of regulations the question remained as to what needed to be done afterwards to promote public access to documents. In South Africa, it will be interesting to witness the effects of the proposed Protection of State Information Bill once it becomes law. Will it enhance or hinder public accountability? Will there be synergy between the Bill and the Constitution? Since the Constitution has already enshrined the rights of society to public access to documents, which piece of legislation will take precedence?

3.13 CONCLUSION

From detailed analysis of the concept 'public accountability' it is evident that it can be traced back many centuries, with the democratisation of most countries having created a need for practical steps towards its implementation. In analysing the accountability system of the secondary schools in the Johannesburg North District it was important to describe and link the concept of a public accountability system to its definition, its approaches, and models, as well as to the legislative framework that guides it. The major findings from this chapter

on public accountability are that it emanates from the roles and responsibilities that the heads of schools assume because of their assigned authority. The inherent obligation to account may not then be delegated to juniors since it is an inherent job requirement. Public accountability therefore entails being answerable to the stakeholders, such as parents, learners and District officials, about the decisions and actions of the public officials. The accountability system then becomes a vehicle or framework within which the public officials may answer publicly about their decisions or actions.

Such a framework gains its structure through the models of accountability which serve as a device to define and shape public accountability, while allowing public officials the autonomy to choose from different models available. In addition, the principles of public accountability serve as the guideline towards a fair and reasonable public accountability. The principles are essential in ensuring that the public officials execute their obligation to answer publicly for the realisation of good governance. The role players are thus also guided by the approaches to public accountability, depending on whether a long or the short route has been adopted.

In chapter four, data will be analysed using the suggested instruments outlined in chapter one (section 1.6.5). This will also serve as a foundation for developing a model of relevance to the organisation of Johannesburg North District.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In chapter three the literature on public accountability systems was reviewed, giving a broader understanding of the concept and its significance for public administration and management. An understanding of concepts regularly referred to in this study, such as public accountability, its historical background and necessity for it was established as a framework for analysis. In this chapter the data gained from the principals, parents and learners of secondary schools in Johannesburg North District will be presented and analysed in order to make logical deductions. For ease of reference and to enhance comprehension of data that is raw and mostly consists of figures (see section 2.8), tables and graphs will be used.

4.2 QUESTIONNAIRES AS DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT

The data was collected using a questionnaire, which according to Scott and Marshall (2009:621) is a document that contains all the questions required for a survey. The design prompted and probed the respondents' recollections of events that may not always be recent, and shaped the entire interview so that it became a pleasant and interesting experience for them. The questionnaire was preferred as it elicited the responses about the four common elements of the public accountability system, namely governance, measurement, management systems and reporting. Closed and open-ended questions were used to collect data about the relevance of the elements of the accountability system. The keys ranged from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*. In analysing the data the number of similar responses were counted and converted into a percentage for each question.

4.3 PRESENTATION OF DATA

In conducting this study, representative groups of the community included five secondary school principals, 42 parents and 30 learners. Of the 42 parents, nine had children in grade 10 and in grade 11. A total of 19 parents had children in grade 8 and the remaining 14 parents had children in grade 9. Of the 30 learners, 18 were in grade 12 and were serving as members of the Representative Council of Learners (RCL) or had once participated in the RCL as members. The remaining 12 learners were either in Grade 8 or 9.

4.3.1 Data obtained from principals

The questionnaire used to collect data from principals had four sections. In section A the personal details of the principals was collected. In section B, the questions sought to evaluate the time that they spent directly or indirectly on the accountability system, therefore its elements were divided into small groupings, namely its effectiveness and efficiency in the secondary schools, as collected in section C. In section D the views of the principals with regard to the application of the public accountability systems in the Johannesburg North District were collected. The sequence that starts from the principals, parents and learners will be followed in presenting the data in the following sections.

4.3.1.1 *Personal information of the principals*

The data collected from the five principals indicate that 20% had 1-3 years of working experience, 20% had 3-6 years, and 60% had 9 or more. The working experience as principals (stated referred to), was over and above the minimum requirement of seven years teaching experience. Since the requirements for the appointment of a school principal state that the incumbent must have at least seven years of working experience as an educator, head of department or deputy principal, therefore, the study regards the data obtained from the principals as reliable and suitable for logical deductions because of adequate experience they have gathered while occupying junior positions. In terms of core functions, 60% were involved in the administration of the school and curriculum management. About 40% were mainly carrying out other duties, such as the admission of learners and the finances.

4.3.1.2 *The amount of time spent by principals on each element of the accountability system*

In section B of the questionnaire, the time spent by the principals in each element of public accountability is presented in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1: Time spent by principals in any of the aspects of accountability

No.	Aspect	Seldom		Daily		Once a week		Once a month		Some-times	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	Time spent on recording and reporting	0	0	1	20	2	40	2	40	0	0
2	Time spent on assessing learner progress	0	0	1	20	2	40	2	40	0	0
3	Time spent dealing with staff	0	0	4	80	1	20	0	0	0	0
4	Time spent dealing with District officials	0	0	2	40	3	60	0	0	0	0
5	Time spent dealing with parents	0	0	5	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
6	Time spent on finance and budgeting	0	0	0	0	2	40	2	40	1	20
7	Time spent on physical amenities	0	0	1	20	4	80	0	0	0	0
8	Time spent on extra-curricular programmes	0	0	1	20	4	80	0	0	0	0
9	Time spent on professional development	0	0	2	40	2	40	0	0	1	20
10	Time spent on safety and security	0	0	4	80	1	20	0	0	0	0
11	Time spent ensuring good teaching and learning	0	0	3	60	2	40	0	0	0	0
	TOTALS		0		44		42		11		3

According to Table 4.1, about 20% of the principals spent their time on a daily basis recording and reporting information. This may imply that although reporting and recording of data is important for accountability only a small percentage spent time doing so. In chapter three (see section 3.8.4) it was stated that reporting enhances a communication-centred approach which filters down to greater transparency and more accountability by principals. In order to increase accountability by principals, therefore, the accountability system must serve as a guideline towards effective accountability.

On the theme of assessing the academic progress of learners the data indicates that their achievement is a crucial element of accountability for principals since all were involved in it. In chapter three (section 3.8.5) it was stated that according to the Gauteng Department of Education Circular 25 of 2008 the principals of secondary schools are required to prepare and submit an annual report in respect of academic performance in relation to the minimum outcomes, standards, procedures for assessment and the effective use of available resources at a stipulated date. The findings of this study may therefore confirm compliance of the principals to the policy guidelines for accountability.

Some of the functions involved in dealing with staff may involve assessing the educator's readiness for the lessons, availability of resources required by them for effective teaching and learning, and creating a positive teaching and learning environment. In dealing with staff, 80% of the principals were doing so on a daily basis and the remaining 20% at least once a week. This indicates that the principals in the chosen District regard themselves as the most important element in accountability. In order to account properly they are more involved with the work of the educators as this may influence academic achievement.

The hierarchy of positions of the personnel employed at the District Office consist of the senior education specialist, the deputy chief education specialists, the chief education specialists and the District director. Among these District officials there is Institutional Development and Support Officers (IDSOs) assigned to each school, serving as liaison officers between the school and the District Office. Most if not all of the matters that may impact on accountability are addressed through the IDSO. In dealing with the District officials, 40% of principals were spending time on a daily basis dealing with the District officials, the other 60% at least once a week. The role of the District officials in holding the schools accountable cannot be overemphasised. From the data, the District officials, irrespective of the hierarchy, were in constant communication with the schools. In chapter three (see section 3.8.6) it was stated that one of the requirements of the public accountability system is to define clearly where to account, who must do so, and to whom the account is to be rendered. The District Office under study had a clear structure that sets out for principals how accountability must take place.

Principals also directly or indirectly account to the parents of the learners attending their schools. The South African Schools Act in Section 84(1) defines a parent as the person legally entitled to the custody of a learner, or who undertakes to fulfil the obligations. In

dealing with parents, principals often explain to them the child's academic performance, extra-mural performance and general conduct. All principals (100%) responded that they spent their time dealing with parents on a daily basis. In chapter three (see section 3.5.8) it was stated that one of the principles of accountability is that of corporate answering for fairness, and that this requires principals to explain publicly how they are serving the public interest. The data collected suggests that principals regarded parents as the most important stakeholders to whom they must render account, probably because of the authority granted to them by the South African Schools Act.

Public finances and budgeting for maximum benefit of the school is another important area of accountability. At least 40% of principals spent time on finance and budgeting at least once a week, another 40% at least once a month and the remaining 20% sometimes. Even though the school finances are in the public interest the data does not indicate that the District has measures to hold principals accountable for them. In holding principals accountable for school finances the public may rely on the execution of administrative rules, policies and procedures (see section 3.7.3).

In terms of the physical amenities at least 20% of principals were spending their time on a daily basis on this, the remaining 80% once a week. Physical amenities mainly refer to the school infrastructure and general outlook or maintenance of the school buildings. This may be important for the creation of a positive teaching and learning environment and therefore principals need to spend reasonable time on it, and so be ready to account for it.

Responding to questions on extra-curricular programmes, such as cultural activities and sports, at least 20% of principals were spending their time on a daily basis and the remaining 80% of principals at least once a week. The extra-curricular activities are integrated in the school curriculum through subjects such as life orientation. It is clear from the data that principals are ready to account for the total development of learners in their schools in that at least once a week they involved themselves in this crucial aspect.

On the theme of personal and professional development, at least 40% of principals were spending time on it on a daily basis, another 40% at least once a week and the remaining 20% sometimes. The programmes that involve professional development include Integrated Quality Management Systems (IQMS), attendance of learning area meetings as well as furthering of studies with institutions of higher learning. From the data it was not clear whether they were spending time on personal professional development or that of

other staff members, but it is important to note that this aspect of accountability was not being neglected by the principals or the District.

Data collected on safety and security indicated that 80% of principals were spending time on it on a daily basis, the remaining 20% at least once a week. One of the functions of the principal is to ensure the safety of learners, the staff and the property of the school. Even though this function may be deemed as auxiliary to the core function of ensuring effective teaching and learning, it remains an important element of the public accountability system. In chapter three specific reference was made to indirect accountability (section 3.7.6), which is associated with those functions that derive their legitimacy from indirect authority, such as the police and other law enforcement institutions. The data indicates that the principals were involved in the safety and security of learners, the staff and the property of the school, even though this aspect may be an indirect form of accountability.

The last aspect of section B was the time spent by principals in ensuring that good teaching and learning strategies were in place. From the responses, 60% of principals were spending time on a daily basis ensuring good teaching and learning, the other 40% at least once a week. Good teaching and learning can be regarded as one of the core functions of the principal and therefore attracts attention in the form of political, ethical as well as administrative accountability. These and other forms of accountability were described in the previous chapter (sections 3.7.1 to 3.7.4) and they assist in understanding the complexity of the accountability system in which public schools operate. The data obtained from the principals indicates that they are keen to account for teaching and learning. The majority (60%) ensured that they became involved in ensuring good teaching and learning on a daily basis.

4.3.1.3 Views of principals about the importance of the elements of the accountability system

In this section the data collected through section C of the questionnaire is presented, to determine how each of the elements of the accountability system is rated by principals in terms of their importance to the accountability system. In section 4.3.1 of this chapter it was stated that the questionnaire was used to gather data about the views of the principals concerning the role of each element of the accountability system that subsequently have an

impact on the effectiveness and efficiency of a secondary school. The summary of this data is presented in table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2: Data collected from principals about the importance of each element of the accountability system to the effectiveness and efficiency of a secondary school

	Aspect	Never		Some- times		Mostly		Always		Not Sure	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1.	The importance of school policies	0	0	0	0	2	40	2	40	1	20
2.	Importance of strategies for teaching and learning	0	0	0	0	1	20	4	80	0	0
3.	Importance of parents meetings	0	0	0	0	4	80	1	20	0	0
4.	Importance of financial reporting	0	0	1	20	1	20	3	60	0	0
5.	Importance of curriculum planning	0	0	0	0	2	40	3	60	0	0
6.	Importance of resource provision	0	0	1	20	2	40	2	40	0	0
7.	Importance of meeting schedules and deadlines	0	0	1	20	2	40	2	40	0	0
8.	Importance of working hours	0	0	0	0	2	40	3	60	0	0
9.	Importance of the quality of management	0	0	0	0	2	40	3	60	0	0
10.	Importance of unions	0	0	3	60	0	0	1	20	1	20
	TOTALS		0		12		36		48		4

From Table 4.2 (above) it is evident that at least 40% of principals believed that school policies were always important for the accountability system. This indicates that the school policies are not regarded by principals as a critical aspect of accountability, even though they fit well into the system of administrative accountability. Their importance may be underestimated by the principals, who do not view them as an integral part of their daily duties. This aspect requires more emphasis in that policies guide the daily operation of the school. In the previous chapter (section 3.7.7) it was stated that in order for the system to be positive, there must be freedom to act beyond interference or coercion. This may

be interpreted as the necessity for flexibility in allowing for more freedom in developing school policies.

In terms of strategies for good teaching and learning, 80% of principals suggested that these are always important for the effectiveness and the efficiency of a secondary school. The data shows a positive correlation between the time spent by principals on good teaching and learning and how they ranked good teaching and learning. It is clear that they viewed and ranked strategies for good teaching and learning as crucial for accountability and therefore spent more time on them (see Tables 4.1. and 4.2).

The parent meetings were rated by 80% of principals as being mostly important for the effectiveness and efficiency of a secondary school. It must, however, be noted that when asked about the amount of time they spent dealing with parents they said on a daily basis. According to the data there is a positive relationship between the time spent by principals with parents and how they rank the importance of parent meetings. It can be deduced that the parents play a crucial role in holding principals accountable and as a result principals acknowledge them as one of the most important stakeholders in the accountability system.

Financial reporting was regarded by 60% of the principals as always important for the accountability system and for the effectiveness and efficiency of a secondary school. In testing this aspect (see Table 4.1) the response of the principals was that this aspect received sufficient time to be dealt with. The data shows that financial reporting was attended to at least once a week or once a month. The importance of the financial accountability may well be ascribed to the administrative accountability system which details the rules, policies and procedures for accountability (as described in section 3.7.3).

With regard to curriculum planning, 60% of the principals believed that it was always important for the effectiveness and the efficiency of a secondary school and therefore it impacted on the accountability system. Since it is closely related to the provision of quality teaching and learning, principals regarded it as important for accountability. There is a close link between planning for curriculum and the design of good strategies for teaching and learning and as such principals may regard the two aspects as crucial. In Table 4.1 (above) there is an indication that principals spent most of their time developing strategies for good teaching and learning, however, there was a decline in terms of time allocation on this aspect and how they rated it under a different, but similar question. The question was the time spent dealing with staff. In this regard only 20% of the principals spent time

once a week dealing with staff as opposed to 40% of the principals who spent time ensuring good teaching and learning.

Responses to the question on resource provision indicated that at least 40% of the principals suggested that it was always important. It is not clear why the responses declined in rating its importance since this aspect can be linked to planning for curriculum and developing good strategies for teaching and learning. This was viewed by principals as crucial for accountability. In most instances the resources are provided to schools by District Offices and this suggests that principals do not expect to account for the provision of resources to schools. Accountability in this case may be channelled to the District.

In terms of meeting schedules and deadlines, at least 40% of the principals believed that this was always important for the accountability system and the effectiveness and efficiency of a secondary school. The District officials often used the management plan drawn at District level to hold principals accountable for doing so, which prompted the principals to regard this aspect as crucial for accountability.

On the theme of working hours, 60% of principals suggested that they were always important for the accountability system and subsequently to the effectiveness and the efficiency of a secondary school. The responses can be linked to the many and time-consuming elements of accountability they have to deal with. The longer the working hours the easier it becomes for the school to account because enough time is made available to give attention to most elements of accountability. Longer working hours are therefore deemed important by principals for effective accountability.

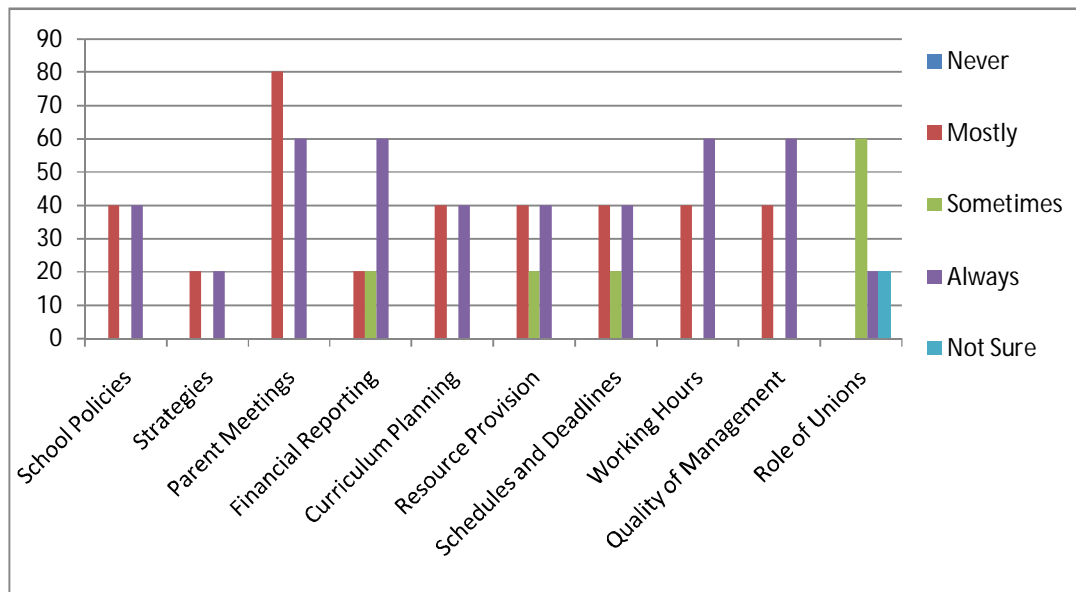
With reference to the quality of management, when principals give account, 60% of principals responded that it was always important in order to render account. It must, however, be noted that in holding the principals accountable, policies, procedures and rules are established by the District Office. In Table 4.1 (above) it was recorded that 40% of the principals spent time on a daily basis and at least once a week on professional skill development. It is not clear whether they spent time on their own professional development or that of the staff but the majority believed that in order to account for the quality of teaching and learning, the quality of management must improve.

The last aspect tested was the role of unions when principals account, with at least 20% of principals indicating that they were always important in the accountability system.

Although they regarded unions as important in the accountability system, however, their role in terms of data was not deemed extremely important in order to account. A very small number of principals believed that the teacher unions had a role in holding them accountable.

In Figure 4.1 (below) the data from Table 4.2 is presented as a column chart. The tall columns signal a higher percentage of the frequency whereas the lower columns may signal a lower percentage of the frequency.

Figure 4.1: Summary of data presented in Table 4.2



4.3.1.4 The views of principals with regard to the application of the accountability system

In section D of the questionnaire the observation was made in terms of how the principals utilised the identified elements of accountability in performing their duties. The purpose was to compare the time that they spent on each element of public accountability and how they would rank the elements of the accountability system in terms of their importance. The data collected was then compared to the ability of the principals to apply some of the elements of public accountability in their practical working environments (as in Table 4.3, below). This was intended to assist in drawing logical deductions about the accountability system of the chosen District.

Table 4.3: Principals views about public accountability

No.	Aspect	Strongly Agree		Agree		Un-decided		Strongly Disagree		Disagree	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	District officials are crucial in holding principals accountable	1	20	3	60	1	20	0	0	0	0
2	Parents have more influence in holding a principal accountable	3	60	2	40	0	0	0	0	0	0
3	School governing bodies hold principals accountable for the management of schools	2	40	3	60	0	0	0	0	0	0
4	The staff and the learners influence the accountability system of the school	1	20	4	80	0	0	0	0	0	0
5	Principals voluntarily account for the management of their schools	0	0	3	60	0	0	1	20	1	20
6	Accounting standards are clear for everyone to understand	3	60	1	20	0	0	1	20	0	0
7	Consequences for not accounting are well communicated	1	20	4	80	0	0	0	0	0	0
8	Schools that have good accounting systems are more effective and efficient	4	80	1	20	0	0	0	0	0	0
9	Accountability ensures good leadership and efficiency of the school	4	80	1	20	0	0	0	0	0	0
10	Accounting is time consuming, unnecessary and an additional burden	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	40	3	60
11	Feedback given during accountability is timeous and helps in improving schools	3	60	2	40	0	0	0	0	0	0
12	Accountability is a responsibility vested with the principal and the management team only	1	20	1	20	1	20	1	20	1	20
14	District Offices use information collected through reports and statistics to improve schools	0	0	4	80	0	0	0	0	1	20
15	Schools that do not have accountability systems are less effective and efficient	3	60	0	0	1	20	1	20	0	0
16	Accountability is a self-reflection exercise that is useful	4	80	1	20	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Average Totals		40		40		4		8		8

From the table it is evident that 60% of principals agreed that the District officials were crucial in holding principals accountable, and at least 60% dealt with them once a week. The conclusion can be drawn that the District officials are indeed involved in holding the

principals accountable from time to time. The data serves to confirm this conclusion that was made in the previous sections of this chapter. A proposal that details the set of guidelines that will govern the interactions between the school principals will be made in the next chapter.

The data indicates that 60% of principals strongly agreed that District officials have more influence in holding a principal of a secondary school accountable. In Table 4.1 it was shown that 60% of principals dealt with parents at least once a week. The involvement of District officials in the accountability system cannot be overemphasised and the principals regard them as a source of information for dealing with matters affecting the school. In return the District officials may regard the principals as directly accountable for the smooth operation of the school. In chapter three (section 3.8.1) it was stated that one of the elements of accountability was governance, described as the process through which the institution implements measures that will reassure the external stakeholders that the governing component has processes in place to ask the right questions and monitor management. This role is performed by the SGBs on behalf of all parents and therefore demands accountability from principals.

At least 20% of principals strongly agreed that the staff and the learners influenced the accountability system of the school. According to the data, principals may not regard the staff and the learners as crucial for accountability, which can be attributed to a hierarchy of positions that bestows authority on the principal to hold the staff and the learners accountable rather than vice versa. In a modern setting the principals exercise their authority through participative management, which also allows other stakeholders to influence the decision-making process.

Another 40% of principals believe that the SGBs hold principals accountable for the management of secondary schools. According to the data there could be conflict over the role the SGBs ought to play and the one they are actually playing. Although an effort is being made by the District Office to train the SGBs there is a trend among parents not to serve the entire term of office as members of it. This then requires that by-elections be conducted, but the new members often do not receive the training.

In terms of the accounting standards set by the District Office, 60% of principals strongly agreed that accounting standards were clear for everyone to understand. The District Office

is instrumental in distributing the circulars and memoranda that seek to guide principals in their daily operations. The data clearly confirm that this practice takes place.

At least 20% of principals strongly agreed that consequences for not accounting are well communicated. The data shows that the District Office may not be keen to implement punitive measures for failing to account. In chapter three (section 3.7.7) it was noted that for accountability to be positive there should be no interference or coercion, but rather individuals must be allowed some space to act with freedom. If there is an element of interference or coercion it will tend to hinder accountability.

At least 80% of principals strongly agreed that schools that have good accountability systems are more effective and efficient. Good accountability systems are the product of the quality of management. As shown in Table 4.2, 60% of principals stated that the quality of management was always important for an effective accountability system, as confirmed in Table 4.3.

The data indicates that 80% of the principals strongly agree that an accountability system ensures good leadership, effectiveness and efficiency of the school. This data correlates with the previous finding, in which 80% of principals stated that schools that have good accounting systems are more effective and efficient.

With regard to the feedback given during the accountability process, 60% of principals strongly agreed that it is timely and helps in improving the schools. This finding may be linked with the 60% of principals in Table 4.1 who spent time once a week dealing with District officials.

At least 20% of principals strongly agreed that accountability is a responsibility vested with the principal and management team only. Accountability should be spread among all the school's stakeholders, therefore it is important to make each one aware of the role he or she can play in ensuring effective accountability.

The data indicates that 60% of principals strongly agree that schools which do not have an accountability system are less effective and efficient. The data confirms a previous finding that schools with accountability systems are more efficient and effective. It may be reasonable that the officials should publicly explain how they are serving the public interest when their intentions for corporate action are reasonably deemed to affect the public in important ways (as stated in section 3.5.8).

Lastly, 80% of principals strongly agreed that accountability is a self-reflection exercise that is useful. The data suggests that principals have faith in the accountability system and will do everything in their authority to be accountable. In support of this finding, the principle of answering by those responsible (see section 3.5.10) state that those with responsibility should do the answering and not someone else, such as a subordinate. Therefore, the principals are to be held responsible for everything that needs to be answered. In essence, accountability cannot be delegated to those who hold positions junior to the principals, therefore it is incumbent upon the District Office to develop a uniform and standardised accountability system for all its schools.

4.3.2 Data obtained from parents

The data collected from the 42 parents whose children attended at least one of the five secondary schools in the Johannesburg North District is presented in Table 4.4 (below). The aim was to test the understanding of the parents relating to the elements of governance, measurement, management systems, reporting and the processes for accountability. When describing these elements in chapter three (see section 3.8.1. to 3.8.4) it was stated that governance is a process through which a public institution implements measures to reassure external stakeholders that the governing component has a process in place to monitor management. Measurement of management was described as management by numbers, wherein performance is measured by empowering units or teams and individuals to execute strategy and tactics that enhance accountability. Management systems were described as the measures that the institution puts in place to ensure a flow of information from senior management to all staff members. Reporting was defined as a communication-centred approach with more emphasis on transparency in order to enhance accountability.

Table 4.4: Data from parents on governance, measurement, management systems, reporting, and the processes of the accountability system

Key: 1= Strongly Disagree; 2= Disagree; 3= Not sure; 4= Agree; 5= Strongly Agree.

N O	ASPECT	1		2		3		4		5	
		No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
	Section A: Governance										
1.	I know the members of the School Governing Body	11	26	1	2	12	29	10	24	8	19
2.	I have been part of the decisions made for this year	9	21	17	40	4	10	8	19	3	07
3.	I understand the roles and responsibilities of the SGB	5	12	2	5	15	36	10	24	5	12
4.	I know the budget of the current year	17	40	7	17	7	17	6	14	4	10
5.	I can volunteer my services in the SGB	4	10	10	24	9	21	10	24	7	17
	Section B: Measurement		22		18		23		21		13
1.	I know the results obtained by the school in the previous year	6	14	7	17	7	17	14	33	9	21
2.	I am informed about the minimum requirements for a pass	2	5	5	12	6	14	17	40	12	29
3.	I have the last academic report card for my child	2	5	3	7	4	10	12	29	21	50
4.	I understand the learning areas my child is doing	0	0	1	2	6	14	15	36	20	48
5.	I understand the recent terminology used for academic performance	0	0	3	7	15	36	13	31	9	21
	Section C: Management systems		5		9		18		34		34
1.	I know the management of the school	5	12	6	14	10	24	12	29	9	21
2.	I understand the learner code of conduct	6	14	3	07	2	05	18	43	13	31
3.	In the absence of the principal, I know who is the next in charge	6	14	4	10	7	17	15	36	10	24

4.	The management team gives direction to teaching and learning	2	5	2	5	8	19	21	50	9	21
5.	Concerns from parents are addressed promptly	2	5	3	7	11	26	16	38	9	21
	Section D: Reporting		10		9		18		39		24
1.	I am informed about the performance of my learner at school	1	2	1	2	1	2	17	40	22	52
2.	I am informed of the extra-curricular activities of my learner	0	0	5	12	5	12	17	40	15	36
3.	The school report learner absenteeism and late coming	2	5	6	14	4	10	13	31	17	40
4.	I have held personal interviews with the educators of my learners	5	12	10	24	2	5	13	31	12	29
5.	The most important academic report is the year-end report	2	5	1	2	3	7	9	21	27	64
	Section E: Processes for accountability		5		11		7		33		44
1.	I know where to report dissatisfaction about the school	3	7	5	12	11	26	11	26	12	29
2.	Opportunities for frank and open discussion exist	3	7	6	14	23	55	6	14	4	10
3.	Information on progress and actions is available	3	7	3	7	12	29	11	14	13	31
4.	School rules are clear and understandable	0	0	4	10	6	14	14	33	18	43
5.	Teaching and learning time is wasted	19	45	12	29	5	12	4	10	2	4
			13		14		28		22		23

4.3.2.1 Data obtained from parents about governance

As shown in Table 4.4, at least 19% of parents strongly agreed that they knew the members of the SGB, the role of which is not clear to the parents. Since it is an elected body of parents whose primary goal is to represent them on matters of governance, their active role

is crucial to the accountability system's effectiveness. This data can be compared with the 13% of parents who were willing to serve as members of the governing bodies. There could be unwillingness by the parents to serve, or ignorance about the role that the SGBs play in enhancing accountability. At least 40% of principals strongly agreed that the governing bodies held the principals accountable for the governance of the school.

Only 7% of parents strongly agreed that they had been part of the decision-making in the secondary schools which their children were attending. The data shows very few parents were involved in decisions that affected the schools. In section 3.2.3 it was stated that if there is no valid accountability system in place the assessment of the leadership may be unreliable. Therefore, if parents are not involved in decision-making they may not be able to adequately assess the role of the public school leadership. This data can be linked with that in the same table, wherein only 12% of parents strongly agreed that they understood the roles and responsibilities of SGBs.

At least 10% of parents strongly agreed that they knew the budget of their schools for the current year. The drawing and adoption of the school budget is a process that involves both the management of the school and the SGBs. Since parents in the District are not part of the decision-making process in the schools it means that the drawing and adoption of the school budget is left in the hands of the management of the school. The intervention of the District officials, in particular the IDSO, is needed as a matter of urgency in this regard.

4.3.2.2 Data obtained from parents about measurement

In terms of the results obtained by the school in the previous year, at least 21% of parents strongly agreed that they knew the senior certificate results that were obtained by the school which their children were attending. Although the senior certificate results are used extensively to hold principals accountable for the management of their schools, parents in the District may not be aware of how schools perform. This aspect may be of concern only to those parents whose children are already at senior certificate level.

Only 29% of parents strongly agreed that they were informed about the minimum requirements for a learner to pass a grade. Even though the professional model of accountability described in chapter three (see section 3.3.5) states that the professional educators may seek to retain control over the educational decisions which affect themselves, learner performance is a matter of public interest and therefore explanations

must be given to interested parties, such as parents. A more concerted effort is needed to involve the parents in the public schools to enhance accountability. It is evident that the parents were not involved in the education of their learners, with only 50% strongly agreeing that they were in possession of the academic report for the previous year, and another 48% strongly agreeing that they understand the learning areas their children were taking. Only 21% of parents strongly agreed that they understood the recently introduced terminology being used to describe the academic performance of a learner. It may be necessary for the District Office to prescribe the items that must always be on the agenda when schools have their parents meetings or staff meetings, to ensure that the parents are empowered to understand their roles in supporting and holding principals accountable.

4.3.2.3 Data obtained from parents about the management systems

From data on the management of the school, only 21% of parents strongly agreed that they knew the management of the school. Since the school management team make crucial decisions for the school, parents must acquaint themselves with the educators who are in the management of the school. Currently, a very low percentage of parents know the members of the school management team and this can hinder accountability. The understanding of the operations of the school may assist parents to understand the expectations of the schools from them. From the data, only 31% of parents strongly agreed that they understood the learners' code of conduct, indicating that they did not understand the expectations that the school may have of them. In this sense the accountability system may not be clear to the parents and as such allow the principals to choose the areas in which they want to be accountable.

In terms of understanding whether parents knew who is next in charge and would take over in the absence of the principal, only 24% strongly agreed that they did. This confirms a previously discussed finding that parents have little knowledge of the personnel in the school management teams. The traditional education system regarded the principal of a public school as the sole administrator, unlike the current system in basic education which mandates other educators to be in the school management, alongside the principal. As such, the school management team jointly directs teaching and learning at a school.

The data shows that only 21% of parents strongly agreed that the management team gave direction to effective teaching and learning. It becomes even more important to

involve parents in schools so that their concerns can be resolved promptly. Only 21% of parents strongly agreed that the concerns of parents were addressed promptly. The implication may be that parents rarely bring their dissatisfaction to the attention of the management team, hence only a few had their concerns addressed by the schools.

4.3.3.4 Data obtained from parents about reporting

In terms of reporting, 52% of parents strongly agreed that they were informed about the academic performance of their children. This figure is slightly above the 50% of parents who strongly agreed that they were in possession of their children's previous academic reports. There is a dramatic decline in terms of extra-mural activities since only 36% of parents strongly agreed that they knew in which ones their children were participating. When principals render an account to the parents it is expected to include both the academic performance and the extra-mural activities in which learners are involved, therefore it is necessary for the parents to acquaint themselves with both aspects if accountability is to be effective.

Only 40% of parents strongly agreed that the schools their children were attending had reported learner absenteeism to them. In Table 4.1 it was indicated that all principals (100%) spent time on a daily basis dealing with parents. This is an indication that the general conduct of learners is of primary importance to both the principals and the parents. Again, the data indicates that the time spent by the principals with the parents is rather more dedicated to behavioural patterns than academic and extra-mural performance. Interviews with the subject educators may enhance the educator accountability in terms of academic performance of the learners.

The data shows that only 29% of parents strongly agreed that they had attended personal interviews with the educators. In Table 4.3 the views of the principals on who must account to the parents were split between the 20% who strongly agreed that only the principals must account, and another 20% who strongly disagreed that accountability is the role of the principal and school management team only. It is proposed that a model of accountability that will describe who accounts for what must be developed. A surprising trend was that 64% of parents strongly agreed that the most important academic report was the year-end one. This suggests that the most important time principals are accountable to the parents is when a decision about academic progress of the learner has been made.

4.3.2.5 Data obtained from parents about the processes of accountability

In terms of understanding how parents may report their dissatisfaction about the school, only 29% strongly agreed that they knew where to do so. The low percentage who understood the procedures is an indication that they do not have faith in the accountability system of the District. This trend could be attributed to lack of understanding of consequences that may follow should accountability fail. In Table 4.3, about 80% of principals indicated that the consequences for failing to account were clear and well-communicated to them. The same effort must be put in informing parents about the consequences for failing to account, however this must have clear guidelines to avoid the abuse of the system by parents.

Only 10% of parents strongly agreed that opportunities for open and frank discussion existed. In chapter three (see section 3.8.8) it was argued that a good accountability system describes the processes involved in rendering the account. The examples given included the writing of reports, conducting presentations or a combination of methods. The data therefore indicates a serious challenge in terms of how the schools communicate with the parents. It was clear from the above section (4.3.2.1) that a minority of parents (7%) were part of decision-making in schools. There is a need to strengthen the most popular form of communication, the parent meetings.

At least 31% of parents strongly agreed that the information on the academic progress of their children was being given by the schools. In this area parents remain less well-informed about the academic and extra-mural achievements of their children. As shown in Table 4.4, the majority of parents (64%) placed more value on the year-end results than on the term-end results. The conclusion can be drawn, therefore, that schools account more for the end-results and less for the processes involved in the accountability system.

At least 43% of parents strongly agreed that the school rules were clear and understandable. From the table it was clear that 43% agreed that they understood the learners' code of conduct. The data suggest that schools were more concerned about discipline of learners, therefore the time spent by principals with parents can be attributed to the general conduct of learners. Lastly, on a positive note, 45% of parents strongly disagreed that teaching and learning time was wasted, suggesting that parents have faith in

schools and are of the impression that schools can account for the teaching and learning time at their disposal.

4.3.3 Data obtained from learners

As stated in section 4.2 of this chapter, 30 learners selected across the grades were involved in this study. The five most common elements of accountability used to collect data from parents were used to collect data from learners. In Table 4.5 below the data collected from the learners is presented.

Table 4.5: Data obtained from the learners

Key: 1= Strongly Disagree 2= Disagree 3= Not sure 4= Agree 5= Strongly Agree

No.	Section A: Governance	1		2		3		4		5	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1.	I know how the composition of SGB	7	23	8	27	11	37	2	7	2	7
2.	I know learner representatives in the SGB	2	7	6	20	10	33	6	20	5	17
3.	I know the roles and responsibilities of SGB	2	7	4	13	12	40	4	13	6	20
4.	I know the source of income for the school	8	27	7	23	8	27	4	13	3	10
5.	I have influenced decisions made by the school	5	17	9	30	10	33	5	17	1	3
Section B: Measurement			16		23		34		14		11
1.	I know the results obtained by the school last year	1	3	1	3	3	10	9	30	16	53
2.	I understand minimum requirements for a pass	0	0	1	3	3	10	5	17	22	73
3.	I am in possession of my previous academic report	1	3	1	3	6	20	8	27	14	47
4.	I understand level descriptors	0	0	0	0	5	17	11	37	12	40
5.	I know the number of subjects I am doing	1	3	1	3	0	0	3	10	25	83
Section C: Management systems			2		2		11		24		59
1.	I know the HOD in my subject choice	3	10	4	13	5	17	6	20	12	40

2.	I know other members of the SMT	5	17	3	10	10	33	4	13	8	27
3.	I know the learner code of conduct	0	0	2	7	3	10	6	20	19	63
4.	In the absence of the principal I know who is in charge	3	10	0	0	0	0	6	20	21	70
5.	The management team guides teaching and learning	1	3	2	7	4	13	14	47	9	30
Section D: Reporting			8		7		15		24		46
1.	I am informed about actions and activities of the school	1	3	2	7	8	27	9	30	10	33
2.	I know my current level of academic performance	0	0	0	0	1	03	10	25	19	63
3.	Opportunities for open and frank discussion exist	3	10	4	13	6	20	8	27	8	27
4.	I have received feedback about my performance	0	0	0	0	1	03	8	27	20	67
5.	The time taken for feedback is reasonable	2	7	3	10	8	27	8	27	9	30
Section E: Processes for accountability			04		06		16		27		44
1.	In case of dissatisfaction I know where to report	1	3	0	0	4	13	2	7	23	77
2.	School rules are clear and understandable	0	0	0	0	1	3	11	37	17	57
3.	Learners are punished for no reason	1	8	0	0	0	0	1	8	10	83
4.	Late coming and absenteeism is monitored	0	0	0	0	3	25	5	42	4	33
5.	Learners adhere to the code of conduct	1	8	2	17	2	17	5	42	2	17
			5		3		10		27		55

4.3.3.1 Data obtained from learners about governance

From the above table it is evident that only 7% of learners strongly agreed that they knew the composition of the SGB of their respective secondary school, compared to 19% of parents. This reveals that both parents and learners are poorly informed about the composition of SGBs. The intervention of the secondary schools is needed in this area to enhance accountability, since the governing bodies are crucial to the accountability system.

At least 17% of learners strongly agreed that they knew the members of the representative councils of learners, which are supposed to be democratically elected by the learners to

represent them in matters of governance as well as on management issues. The low percentage of learners who knew their representatives is an indication of minimal accountability in the sense that the representative councils for learners must account directly to the learners about decisions that affect them. In order to enhance the recognition of this important stakeholder in the accountability system an effort needs to be made by the school management teams and the SGBs to acknowledge the role of the representative councils for learners.

At least 20% of learners strongly agreed that they knew the roles and responsibilities of the SGB, and only 7% knew and understood its composition. It is therefore not surprising that the majority did not know the roles and responsibilities of SGBs. The implication is that the accountability of the SGBs is lacking, in the sense that learners may not be getting explanations about decisions taken.

In terms of the sources of income for the school, 10% of learners strongly agreed that they knew them. All of the five secondary schools were charging school fees in order to supplement the allocation they received from the Department of Basic Education. In this regard, both the parents and the Department had a vested interest in public education. Therefore, if only 10% of learners understood from where the schools received their income it means that the accountability for public funds may be forsaken. In order to enhance the public accountability for public funds, parents are required to adopt a school budget for each year. From Table 4.4 it was clear that only 17% of parents knew the budget for their schools in each year. There could be a lack of knowledge of procedures that parents may follow in cases where accountability is needed. A detailed system of accountability may assist in outlining the channels that need to be followed.

Lastly, only 3% of learners strongly agreed that they had influenced the decisions made by the school. The learners exercise their influence through the representative councils for learners. However, as shown in Table 4.5, only 17% of learners strongly agreed that they knew the learner representatives in the SGBs. It is evident that learners may not fully understand the potential contribution they can make to the accountability system.

4.3.3.2 Data obtained from learners about measurement

In terms of measurement as the element of accountability, 53% of learners strongly agreed that they knew the results obtained by the school during the previous year. In order to hold

the schools accountable, senior certificate results are normally used as a yardstick. In chapter three (section 3.7.1), political accountability was described as the accountability of the public officials to legislative bodies such as the Parliament. In the same vein, the District Offices hold schools accountable for the senior certificate results. The contents of GDE Circular 25 of 2008 were described in chapter three (section 3.8.4) as the evidence of measures that are in place to demand accountability from schools by the District. It is therefore clear that this area of accountability is popular amongst learners and may influence their choice of schools.

Some 73% of learners strongly agreed that they understood the minimum requirements for a pass. The majority understood how they progressed or not to the next grade. In this regard the learners are in a better position to hold their teachers and the school management accountable for their academic achievement. The assumption can be made that learners regard the year-end results as crucial to their schooling, a claim supported by the 47% of learners who were still in possession of their previous year's academic report during the period of study. Accountability in terms of academic achievement is widely achieved. Only 40% of learners strongly agreed that they knew the level descriptors associated with assessment scores, ranging from level 1 to level 7 with the lowest being 1. The level descriptors and the minimum requirements for a pass go hand-in-hand but learners may not take cognisance of the achievement per subject, being more concerned with the end-result.

The majority, 83% of learners, strongly agreed that they knew the number of subjects they were taking. This aspect was easy for the learners to recall, however there were some who were not sure about the number. The minority were therefore not in a position to account for their own academic achievement.

4.3.3.3 Data obtained from learners about the management systems

With regard to knowing the HoDs for the subjects learners were taking, only 40% strongly agreed that they did. In terms of the school management teams, only 27% of learners strongly agreed that they knew the members of the school management teams. Some 63% strongly agreed that they knew the learner code of conduct. Some 70% strongly agreed that they knew who is in charge of their school in the absence of the principal. Only 30% strongly agreed that the school management teams guided teaching and learning in their secondary schools. From the data it can be concluded that most of the learners do not fully

understand how schools are managed. They may therefore regard the principal as the only person who is managing the school and therefore answerable for any decision taken. This trend may displace their perception of accountability.

4.3.3.4 Data obtained from learners about reporting

In terms of reporting, only 33% of learners strongly agreed that they were informed about the actions and activities of their school. The other 63% strongly agreed that they knew the level of academic performance of their current levels of study. The data indicates that 27% of learners strongly agreed that the opportunities for open and frank discussion existed in their schools. Some 67% strongly agreed that they had received feedback about their academic performance and only 30% strongly agreed that the time taken to give feedback from assessment was fair and reasonable. The data indicates that learners are given feedback, which means that schools account to the learners particularly on matters that affect their learning and teaching.

4.3.3.5 Data obtained from learners about the processes of accountability

In terms of the processes for accountability, 77% of learners strongly agreed that they knew where to report complaints in case of dissatisfaction. On the theme of school rules, 57% strongly agreed that they were clear and understandable. Some 83% strongly agreed that learners were punished for no reason. Only 33% strongly agreed that late coming and absenteeism from school were monitored and 17% strongly agreed that learners adhered to the code of conduct for learners. From the data it is evident that the majority of learners understood the processes involved in holding schools accountable. In chapter three (section 3.8.4) reporting was described as a communication-centered approach and as indicated in the literature review there is a strong link between reporting and accountability. The schools that have in place systems to report may be deemed effective in terms of accountability. The data indicates that the learners in the schools within the District understood the processes involved in holding principals accountable.

4.4 CONCLUSION

In this chapter the data that was collected from most of principals, parents and learners has been presented and analysed. The trends and patterns that emerged from the data reflected that the accountability system of the Johannesburg North District is vital for the effectiveness and efficiency of the secondary schools. It was also found that the accountability system guides the functionality of secondary schools. However, some elements require a more concerted effort in ensuring that they enhance accountability, in particular by principals of secondary schools. One such element is communication, which analysis of the data indicated that even though the stakeholders acknowledge the importance of the accountability system, the knowledge about procedures is lacking. Better communication is vital.

The data collected most of the participants, namely principals, parents and learners, indicated that those secondary schools with an effective and efficient ranking may have a good accountability system in place. In analysing the data there was also an indication that some schools may not have well-developed internal accountability systems in place. These therefore tend to depend on the external forms of accountability, such as memoranda and circulars from the DistrictOffice or the provincial department of education (GDE).

Again, it was clear that the accountability system in the chosen District may lack structure in the sense that the reaction of the principals, parents and learners differ in terms of how each category experience the accountability system. In other words, the participants may have an influence on the selection of those elements within the accountability system they deem more important than others. Therefore, the District may not directly influence the accountability system since different secondary school principals will account differently in every aspect of it. In order to restore the integrity of the system in the District it is important to highlight the challenges facing it.

In chapter five a detailed description of the findings and proposals of this study will be given. Such findings and proposals may assist in guiding future interventions that may have an effect on the accountability system of the Johannesburg North District.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND PROPOSALS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In chapter four the data collected from the participants was presented and analysed. This chapter will provide a brief summary of the study and draw conclusions. Proposals will also be made on possible solutions to the functioning of the prevailing accountability system.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

An effort has been made by the Government of South Africa to hold public officials accountable for the administration and management of all government departments and other state institutions, in particular public schools. In terms of section 59 of the South African Schools Act, 84 of 1996, secondary schools are required to make information available for inspection by any person, insofar as such information is required for the exercise and protection of rights. It is therefore crucial to develop the capacity that may assist the secondary school principals to be accountable. In the literature review (section 3.9) there was evidence of a growing need to be accountable, with accountability as an essential tool for enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of institutions in the public sector. In this regard, the ideal public accountability model should guide the accountability processes and measures across all levels of administration and management within a public institution (see section 3.5).

In this study, the accountability system of the Johannesburg North District has been analysed, and the findings demonstrated a need to improve certain aspects of the accountability system. The improvement is vital for good governance of public institutions, therefore further effort must be made to minimise the challenges and problems

that emanate from implementation of accountability systems. One example of such problems that the public accountability systems are facing (section 3.3.10) relates to policies. This study has therefore attempted to understand and describe the policies, trends and patterns that have an effect on the accountability system and determine how these and other factors consequently influence the functionality of secondary schools in the Johannesburg North District.

In chapter four (section 4.3) the data collected from principals, parents and learners indicated that the policies guiding accountability were vague and not very informative. Further analysis revealed a lack of participation by parents and learners in the administration and management of secondary schools. This trend tends to weaken the accountability system. For example, the data indicated a very low percentage (12%) of parents who understood the roles and responsibilities of the SGBs, which are important in that SGBs represent parents in the secondary school.

It was also found that only 20% of learners understood the roles and responsibilities of the SGBs in the governance of the secondary schools (Tables 4.4 and 4.5). Therefore, the role of parents and learners in monitoring and evaluating the performance of secondary schools is deemed crucial for the functionality of accountability systems. When the data collected from the parents and learners is contrasted with that from principals, 80% of principals indicated that parent meetings were important for accountability systems. However, the role of District officials was also crucial, since 60% of principals spent their time dealing with them on a weekly basis. Therefore, both the parents and the District officials were more influential in holding the principal of a particular secondary school accountable.

In describing the roles of parents and District officials in the accountability system, this study adopted unstructured interviews which were aided by the use of a questionnaire. The suitability of questionnaires as the preferred data collection instrument to probe the responses from the principals, parents and learners was described in chapters one and two (see section 1.6.4 and 2.5 respectively).

5.3 THE NATURE OF STUDY

When conducting the literature review it was evident that good governance practices may reassure external stakeholders that, among other things, the school is not experiencing an accountability crisis. In such schools there are mechanisms to reassure stakeholders that there are processes in place to hold those in authority accountable. This aspect of the accountability crisis was dealt with in chapter three (see section 3.8.1). In order to counteract the adverse effects of the accountability crisis, a communication-centred approach was advocated as a way of enhancing accountability. This approach may improve the extent of transparency and accountability by the principals of secondary schools, as those in which a communication-centred approach is practiced find that the dissemination of numerical data demonstrates their performance relatively easily. Therefore, the responses of principals were probed and compared to the elements which collectively characterise a communication-centred approach to accountability systems (see section 3.8.1 to 3.8.4). These elements are governance, measurement of performance, reporting of information, and the management systems utilised by the public institution.

This has been necessary because of a perceived lack of universal guidelines for principals, parents and learners. The study identified the main challenges of the accountability system and proposed a practical framework which could serve as a pillar to assist in developing a public accountability model that would be simple and easy to understand. The GDE provides broad guidelines for accountability to be implemented by the District Offices, however there was a challenge in terms of interpretation and implementation of those guidelines in that different District Offices interpreted and implemented the guidelines differently. In the same vein, secondary schools within the same District interpreted and implemented guidelines for accountability differently, depending on their interpretation and understanding. This study therefore proposes the streamlining of both the internal and external accountability systems in order to minimise the diversity in interpretation and implementation of guidelines.

Another observation related to the high degree of emphasis placed by secondary school principals on developing good teaching and learning strategies while neglecting the need to be answerable to stakeholders. The data shows that principals were uncertain as to whether accountability should be vested solely with them or should be spread among

all members of the school management team, such as the deputy principals and the HoDs. Only 20% of the principals agreed that accountability should be vested with the principals only, while another 20% were undecided as to where it should be located (see Table 4.3). As a result of this trend there was a need to guide principals in terms of accountability and its location. In chapter three (section 3.8.6) it was stated that a well-functioning accountability model should be developed to show who accounts and to whom the account must be rendered. This study therefore presupposes a balanced accountability system in which a scorecard may be used to assess and monitor the degree of accountability by principals. Such a position is made stronger by all stakeholders recognising and appreciating the need for the accountability system by public officials. This study also investigated the role of the District officials with regard to the accountability system, and distinguished between various forms of accountability (see section 3.7).

5.4 FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

In this section, the data that was collected and analysed in chapter four (section 4.3) will be summarised and the findings presented. In this case the purpose was to analyse the accountability system of secondary schools in the Johannesburg North District. The findings will assist in improving the said accountability system. Throughout this study it was evident that the functional public accountability system will enhance good governance of secondary schools. This aspect is confirmed in chapter four (Table 4.3), with 80% of principals strongly agreeing that secondary schools that have good accountability systems are more effective and efficient than those whose accountability systems are lacking. On the one hand, the proper design, implementation and proper monitoring of the accountability system will increase the probability of ensuring that secondary schools adhere to the principles of good governance, such as the principle of transparency. On the other hand, a lack of proper accountability systems has an adverse effect on secondary schools in that they may lack information that should help stakeholders to assess the degree of accountability.

Since the need for public accountability is a constitutional imperative, it is important to put in place the systems that will enhance public accountability by fostering values such as

transparency and openness. This may be achieved through providing the public with timely, accessible and accurate information. In order to distribute the state resources equitably a functional accountability system is required, since a lack thereof may mean they benefit only a few citizens, while leaving the majority deprived. As a result, the government resources may be diverted into causes and events that are not beneficial to the parents or learners of a particular secondary school. In chapter three (section 3.12) it was stated that public accountability is vital to a democratic society and it provides the public with ways and means of assessing the performance of public secondary schools, particularly in terms of their transparency, openness and accessibility of information.

In this study, three important findings on the accountability system of the Johannesburg North District were made. Firstly, the guidelines for the accountability system are vague or are not interpreted in the same way by the District Offices and secondary schools. Secondly, there is a lack of cohesion between internal and external accountability systems. Thirdly, the communication channels between the various stakeholders who should assist in advocating the accountability system are not adequate. The following section will describe the adverse effects of these findings on the functionality of the accountability system, and subsequently the effectiveness and efficiency of secondary schools in this particular District.

5.4.1 The identification and analysis of the public accountability system as applied in the Johannesburg North District to hold secondary schools' principals accountable

In chapter three (section 3.8.5) it was stated that the GDE Circular 25/2008 requires that all principals prepare and submit to the HoD an annual report on the school's academic performance in relation to minimum outcomes, standards, procedures for assessment and effective use of available resources. This is an example of a set of guidelines that are provided by the GDE for the principals to be accountable. However, the data presented in chapter four (Table 4.1) indicated that fewer principals were spending time on reporting to parents and learners about matters that affect secondary schools. A link between the internal processes of accountability and the external accountability system (designed by the GDE) should thus be improved. In order to achieve this, the role of the District officials should be emphasised to ensure that the accountability system is linked and interwoven. Therefore, there is a need to link the internal and external accountability systems. In this regard, the management team of a particular secondary school must be

informed and well prepared by the District Office in terms of what is required in order to be accountable. The use of circulars and memoranda alone may not be sufficient. These measures may need to be supplemented by more interactive measures such as selecting schools that will be piloted in public accountability. This may involve mentoring of school principals and management teams of secondary schools until they perform at the desired level of competency.

The data collected from the principals indicate that there is no uniform or standardised accountability system for the secondary schools in the Johannesburg North District. Even though circulars and memoranda are issued to schools on a regular basis, the interpretation and implementation thereof depends largely on the management team of a particular secondary school. The situation is also aggravated by non-compliance to those circulars and memoranda. Since there is no uniform accountability system, crucial elements of public accountability are dealt with differently from one secondary school to the other.

The research question that was posed earlier in the study (see section 1.3) is not clearly answered by the prevailing accountability system. The measures that are used to hold principals accountable are vague or unclear and the extent to which the public accountability system of the District Office influences the effectiveness and efficiency of a particular secondary school is not well defined.

5.4.2 The measurement and evaluation of effectiveness and efficiency of secondary schools in the chosen district

Principals of secondary schools have a responsibility to develop internal accountability systems for the secondary schools they manage. In one way or another such systems should align themselves with what is required by the external accountability system as this creates a synergy between them. Internal accountability mainly refers to the system that is designed and implemented by the secondary school on its own, whereas the external accountability system refers to those that are mainly developed and advocated by the District or Provincial office. Therefore, District officials, as an important link between schools and District Offices, should guide and support the principals, parents and learners with regard to the processes of public accountability. The data shows that the role of the District officials in monitoring the functionality of the accountability system is recognised by the principals as an aspect that often enhances good governance. The evidence to this effect is outlined in chapter four (Table 4.3), in which 60% of principals were recorded as

strongly agreeing that the District officials are crucial in holding them accountable. However, only 40% of principals agreed that parents have more influence in holding principals accountable. Accordingly, a conclusion can be drawn that the role of District officials is perceived to have a greater impact on the accountability system than that of parents and learners. On the contrary, principals spend most of their time dealing with parents rather than the District officials (see Figure 4.2), with 80% indicating that parent meetings were more important. A deduction is then made that principals are more accountable to parents than to the District officials and it can be deduced that the role of District officials in enhancing the accountability system is not clear to school principals. Later in this study a proposal that seeks to remedy this particular challenge will be made (see section 5.5.2). Since a higher degree of involvement by the District officials in the life of a secondary school is critical, this study has attempted to analyse their role in helping the schools be accountable.

Generally, the GDE categorises secondary schools that obtained a below 60% pass percentage in grade twelve learners as being underperforming or dysfunctional. It was earlier stated that the pass percentage is used to classify secondary schools, but the identified shortcoming of this practice is that it does not consider the pass percentage of other grades within the school. As a result, some secondary schools are prejudiced by being improperly classified as underperforming or dysfunctional. It is therefore clear that the use of the grade twelve results in isolation is not a sufficient measure of accountability.

5.4.3 The influence of the public accountability system on the effectiveness and efficiency of public secondary schools

The relationship between the public accountability system and the effectiveness and efficiency of a secondary school has been confirmed by the data collected in chapter four (Table 4.3), wherein 80% of principals strongly agreed that schools with good accountability systems are more likely to be effective and efficient. This has been an important finding, since in chapter three (section 3.11) it was stated that an accountable and effective organisational structure provides the context for effective functioning of the public institution, and a foundation for both leadership and staff development. However, the criteria for the measurement of the effectiveness and efficiency of a secondary school in some instances need to be guided by the principles and standards of the particular accountability system. If the accountability system lacks a description of the desired

educational outputs it may not be informative or may not be adhered to by those who are supposed to be accountable. In a public educational setting, the ideal accountability system should be informed by what parents, learners and District officials alike determine as the goals to be achieved (i.e., the improved pass percentage), whether in a short term or long term.

One such goal could be the ability of the public secondary school to serve the needs of the immediate community by producing learners who can be absorbed as suitable students by tertiary institutions or as suitable employees by the labour market. In this study the possible structures in which parents and learners can participate and make inputs were discovered through observation. Such structures include the SGBs, the Local Education and Training Units (LETUs), and the Representative Council for Learners (RCLs). In order to enhance the role of these structures there is a need to articulate clearly the educational outputs for secondary schools and the role that they can play in achieving their goals. This could be achieved through formulating agreed upon inputs that will be followed by all secondary schools in order to ensure that learners can be absorbed as suitable students by the tertiary institutions, or be economically active in the labour market. Since there is a perceived lack of accountability guidelines it can be concluded that the public accountability system of the Johannesburg North District should be modified to guide the role-players to achieve their goals.

The Johannesburg North District currently regards a 60% pass of grade twelve learners as an indication of the efficiency and effectiveness of secondary schools. However, in the literature review four common elements that may be used to determine the efficiency and effectiveness of a secondary school were identified, namely governance, measurement, management systems and reporting (see chapter three, sections 3.8.1 to 3.8.4). Therefore, the absence of proper functioning determinative elements in the Johannesburg North District may suggest a deviation between the literature review and the accountability system. As a result of this absence, an inconsistent accountability system prevails before and after the release of the grade twelve results and subsides soon thereafter. By designing a consistent accountability system, principals, parents and learners may be guided in terms of all aspects being accountable and not only reliant on grade twelve pass percentages. As such, a public accountability system that ignores some of the elements of accountability may not be adequate for holding principals of secondary schools accountable. In order to embrace the findings, the following section draws three crucial proposals to this study.

5.5 PROPOSALS

The three proposals made in this section are based on data analysed in chapter four. The analysis subsequently informed the findings of this study. This study has been cautious not to repeat or restate the proposals of other studies that are relevant to the topic of study.

5.5.1 The identification and analysis of the public accountability system as applied in the Johannesburg North District to hold secondary schools' principals accountable

In conducting this study it was evident that most secondary schools were responding differently to the demands placed on them by the external accountability system. In chapter four (Figure 4.2), 60% of principals deemed the quality of management as important. As the extent of the external system of accountability filters to the schools by means of circulars, memoranda, cluster meetings or the spoken word, the quality of management influences the response of secondary schools. Where the quality of management is good, the response may tend to be proactive rather than reactive. In order to enhance the much needed synergy between internal and external accountability systems, the role of the IDSOs becomes crucial. They may assist the school management teams to develop and align their internal accountability systems to the external accountability system through effective monitoring of elements that have a direct as well as indirect impact on the accountability systems. Examples of the monitoring elements are school policies, strategies for good teaching and learning, prompt financial reporting and the curriculum planning in general. These and other elements of accountability were tested in chapter four (Table 4.2), in which it was revealed that at least 40% of principals regard school policies as important for the accountability system, compared to the 80% who regard strategies for teaching and learning as most important. A conclusion can be drawn from this data that some elements of accountability are regarded as more important than others by the principals and other stakeholders. Therefore the role of IDSOs in monitoring such trends and to facilitate the desired balance between the elements of accountability becomes crucial.

If secondary schools are able to develop and strengthen their own internal accountability systems it could be easier for them to meet the expectations and demands of the external accountability system. This may be achieved through an accountability system that is

guided by principles rather than intuition. The principles of accountability were described in chapter three (see section 3.5).

5.5.2 The measurement and evaluation of effectiveness and efficiency of secondary schools in the chosen district

In acknowledging the broad framework that the GDE has developed by means of circulars and memoranda, planning for accountability systems should involve all role players at District and school level. In order to enhance uniform implementation of the guidelines contained in circulars and memoranda, all role players (such as principals, parents and learners) should be involved in the planning. This can be achieved through consultation with structures that represent such role players as the principals' associations, SGBs, and RCLs. This may bridge the gap between principals, parents and learners while at the same time strengthening the public accountability system. The data indicated that only 7% of schools and only 3% of learners had influenced the decisions made by schools (see Tables 4.4 and 4.5). It is therefore evident that parents and learners are not well informed about the role they can play in holding school principals accountable. As such the school management teams may only account for some aspects while withholding some information that relate to other aspects. Therefore, a model that is comparable to the chain of responsibility model described in chapter three is proposed (see section 3.3.4). Such a model would be characterised by centralised planning across Districts and schools to assist in ensuring a free flow of information among all role players.

5.5.3 The influence of the public accountability system on the effectiveness and efficiency of public secondary schools

In the light of multiple and autonomous secondary schools within the District, the development of a universal accountability system that will describe all critical success factors in the accountability system is needed. Such a model may state and clarify those activities that each management team of a secondary school will need to execute in order to account properly. With the proposed model, a set of standards, procedures, methods, rules or policies for accountability may be outlined. Cloete, Wissink and De Coning (2006:169) describe standards as the criterion against which anything can be measured or compared. Without universal accountability standards there is likelihood that different results may be achieved. This study found that the current accountability system is decentralised to the secondary school level and as such is implemented differently from

one secondary school to the other. Although 60% of principals (see Table 4.3) strongly agree that the accountability standards are clear for everyone to understand, as a result of perceived self-governance that secondary schools have in terms of accountability, the management team of a particular secondary school may design and implement its own model that is unique and different from that of another one. A proposed centralised model of accountability may ensure that the activities of the different secondary schools are streamlined and guided by accountability standards that are similar to accountability systems.

5.6 CONCLUSION

In conducting this study it was evident that the emergence of democracy has made good governance a societal issue. Accountability has increasingly been demanded from public institutions, such as secondary schools. Therefore, the principles of good governance require that the secondary schools develop, implement and monitor viable and sustainable accountability systems. Since one of the objectives of this study has been to identify and analyse the public accountability system of Johannesburg North District, the evidence suggest that the district of study has not succeeded in ensuring that a universal accountability system is implemented by all secondary schools. This tendency has somehow allowed secondary schools to use their own discretion in designing their internal accountability systems. On the one hand, proper communication was seen as the critical aspect in remedying the situation, in the sense that the circulars and memoranda from the District Office were interpreted and implemented differently by the secondary schools. On the other hand, there was a lack of interest shown by parents in ensuring that secondary schools are accountable. Nevertheless, the study found a positive correlation between the functioning of an accountability system and the effectiveness and efficiency of a secondary school. In this regard the study proved its other objective that there is an influence of the public accountability system on the effectiveness and efficiency of secondary schools in the chosen District. Further analysis of data proved that most secondary schools in the Johannesburg North District are willing to account but may lack proper information on the particular requirements. Therefore, their preparations for external accountability were poor and often misguided, however, the measurement and evaluation of effectiveness and

efficiency of secondary schools in the District is largely influenced by the grade twelve results rather than the public accountability system. In this study it was also evident that the streamlining of accountability systems is a necessity.

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APPENDIX A: PRINCIPALS

QUESTIONNAIRE

THE QUESTIONNAIRE IS AIMED AT ASSESSING THE DEGREE OF PRINCIPAL ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE JOHANNESBURG NORTH DISTRICT AND THE EFFECT OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY ON THE EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY OF SECONDARY SCHOOLSIN THE JOHANNESBURG NORTH DISTRICT.

SECTION A: PERSONAL DETAILS

INDICATE THE RELEVANT ANSWER BY PLACING A TICK (✓) AGAINST EACH OF THE CORRECT ANSWER:

A1:POSITION HELD AT THE SCHOOL:

Principal	_____
Deputy Principal	_____
HOD	_____
Subject Head	_____
Educator	_____
Other (specify)	_____

A2. EXPERIENCE IN THE POSITION:

1-3 Years	_____
3-6 Years	_____
6-9 Years	_____
9 and Above	_____
Other (specify)	_____

A3. CORE FUNCTIONS

Administration	_____
Curriculum Management	_____
Administration and Curriculum	_____
Supervision	_____
Other (specify)	_____

SECTION B: ELEMENTS OF THE ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM

INDICATE BY PLACING A TICK (✓) THE ELEMENT YOU DEEM RELEVANT TO YOUR DAY-TO-DAY FUNCTIONING

B1. THE TIME SPENT ON RECORDING AND REPORTING:

Seldom	_____
Daily	_____
Once a week	_____
Once a month	_____
Sometimes	_____

B2. TIME SPENT ON ASSESSING LEARNER PROGRESS:

Seldom	_____
Daily	_____
Once a week	_____
Once a month	_____
Sometimes	_____

B3. TIME SPENT DEALING WITH STAFF

Seldom	_____
Daily	_____
Once a week	_____
Once a month	_____
Sometimes	_____

B4. TIME SPENT DEALING WITH DISTRICT OFFICIALS

Seldom	_____
Daily	_____
Once a week	_____
Once a month	_____
Sometimes	_____

B5. TIME SPENT DEALING WITH PARENTS

Seldom	_____
Daily	_____
Once a week	_____
Once a month	_____
Sometimes	_____

B6. TIME SPENT ON FINANCE AND BUDGETING

Seldom	_____
Daily	_____
Once a week	_____
Once a month	_____
Sometimes	_____

B7. TIME SPENT ON PHYSICAL AMENITIES

Seldom	_____
Daily	_____
Once a week	_____
Once a month	_____
Sometimes	_____

B8. TIME SPENT ON THE EXTRA CURRICULAR PROGRAMME

Seldom	_____
Daily	_____
Once a week	_____
Once a month	_____
Sometimes	_____

B9. TIME SPENT ON PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Seldom _____

Daily _____

Once a week _____

Once a month _____

Sometimes _____

B10. TIME SPENT ON SAFETY AND SECURITY

Seldom _____

Daily _____

Once a week _____

Once a month _____

Sometimes _____

B11. TIME SPENT ON ENSURING GOOD TEACHING AND LEARNING

Seldom _____

Daily _____

Once a week _____

Once a month _____

Sometimes _____

SECTION C: EFFECT OF ACCOUNTABILITY ON THE EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

PLACE A TICK IN A SPACE THAT INDICATES HOW YOU RATE THE IMPORTANCE OF EACH ELEMENT OF ACCOUNTABILITY ON THE EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF YOUR SCHOOL.

		NEVER	MOSTLY	SOMETIMES	ALWAYS	NOT SURE
1.	School policies					
2.	Strategies for good teaching and learning					
3.	Parent meetings					

4.	Financial reporting					
5.	Curriculum planning					
6.	Resource provision					
7.	Meeting schedules and deadlines					
8.	Working hours					
9.	Quality of management					
10.	Unions					

SECTION D: KINDLY PUT A TICK (✓) IN A BOX THAT MOST REPRESENTS YOUR VIEWS

KEY: SA = STRONGLY AGREE
A = AGREE
U = UNDECIDED
SD = STRONGLY DISAGREE
D = DISAGREE

No	Aspect	SA	A	U	SD	D
1.	District officials are crucial in holding principals accountable					
2.	Parents have more influence in holding a principal accountable					
3.	The staff and the learners influence the accountability system of the school					
4.	School governing bodies hold principals accountable for the management of schools					
5.	Principals voluntarily account for the management of their schools					
6.	Accounting standards are clear for everyone to understand					
7.	Consequences for not accounting are well communicated					
8.	Schools that have good accounting systems are more effective and efficient					
9.	Accountability ensures good leadership and efficiency of the school					
10.	Accounting is time consuming, unnecessary and an additional burden					

11.	Feedback given during accountability is timeous and helps in improving the school.					
12.	Accountability is a responsibility vested with the principal and the management team only.					
14.	District Offices use information collected through reports and statistics to improve schools.					
15.	Schools that do not have accountability systems are less effective and efficient.					
16.	Accountability is a self-reflection exercise that is useful					

Thank you for the time taken in doing this exercise, your contribution is so much appreciated.

APPENDIX B: PARENTS

KEYS:

1=Strongly Disagree

2=Disagree

3=Not Sure

4=Agree

5=Strongly Agree

NO	QUESTION	1	2	3	4	5
	Section A: Governance					
1.	I know the members of the School Governing Body					
2.	I have been part of the decisions made for this year					
3.	I understand the roles and responsibilities of the SGB					
4.	I know the budget of the current year					
5.	I volunteer my services in the SGB					
	Section B: Measurement					
1.	I know the results obtained by the school in the previous year					
2.	I am informed about the minimum requirements for a pass					
3.	I have the last academic report card for my child					
4.	I understand the learning areas my child is doing					
5.	I understand the recent terminology used for academic performance					
	Section C: Management systems					
1.	I know the management of the school					
2.	I understand the learner code of conduct					
3.	In the absence of the principal, I know who is the next in charge					
4.	The management team gives direction to teaching and learning					
5.	Concerns from parents are addressed promptly					
	Section D: Reporting					
1.	I am informed about the performance of my learner at school					
2.	I know the extra-curricular activities for my learner					
3.	The school report learner absenteeism and late coming					
4.	I have held personal interviews with the educators of my learners					
5.	The most important academic report is the year-end report					
	Section E: Processes for accountability					
1.	I know where to report dissatisfaction about the school					
2.	Opportunities for frank and open discussion exist					
3.	Information on progress and actions is available					
4.	School rules are clear and understandable					
5.	Teaching and learning time is wasted					

APPENDIX C: LEARNERS

KEYS

1=Strongly Disagree

2=Disagree

3=Not sure

4=Agree

5=Strongly Agree

No	Question	1	2	3	4	5
	Section A: Government					
1.	I know how the SGB is composed					
2.	I know learner representatives in the SGB					
3.	I know the roles and responsibilities of SGB					
4.	I know the source of income for the school					
5.	I have influenced decisions made by the school					
	Section B: Measurement					
1.	I know the results obtained by the school last year					
2.	I understand minimum requirements for a pass					
3.	I am in possession of my previous academic report					
4.	I understand level descriptors					
5.	I know the number of subjects I am doing					
	Section C: Management systems					
1.	I know the HOD in my subject choice					
2.	I know other members of the SMT					
3.	I know the learner code of conduct					
4.	In the absence of the principal I know who is in charge					
5.	The management team guides teaching and learning					
	Section D: Reporting					
1.	I am informed about actions and activities of the school					
2.	I know my current level of academic performance					
3.	Opportunities for open and frank discussion exist					
4.	I have received feedback about my performance					
5.	The time taken for feedback is reasonable					
	Section E: Process for accountability					
1.	In case of dissatisfaction I know where to report					
2.	School rules are clear and understandable					
3.	Learners are punished for no reason					
4.	Late coming and absenteeism is monitored					
5.	Learners adhere to code of conduct					