

**THE EFFECTIVE FUNCTIONING OF A SCHOOL GOVERNING
BODY: A CASE STUDY IN SELECTED SCHOOLS**

by

ROSINA MAHLANGU

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The Researcher

Dedication:

To my teachers, mentors, family and friends

DECLARATION

“I declare that the Master’s dissertation, which I hereby submit for the degree MEd with specialisation in Education Management at the University of South Africa, is my own work and has not been previously submitted by me for a degree at another university.”

SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to investigate the functioning of the SGB's in public primary schools. For this purpose, the researcher collected data from both past and recent literature and three public primary schools in the Ekurhuleni South district in Gauteng regarding how effectively SGB's are functioning. Observations of the proceedings were undertaken during SGB several meetings. Unstructured interviews, with a small purposive sample of informants, supplemented the data obtained from the observations. All the data collected in this way were analysed, discussed and synthesised.

The major findings of this study are: The efforts made by the DoE to provide training; this was regarded as inadequate to address the complex problems experienced by SGB's.

It is therefore recommended that the DoE should provide more intensified SGB developmental training programmes for SGB's and that further research be undertaken regarding the effectiveness of SGB's in public primary schools in South Africa.

Key terms:

SGBs, effective functioning, public schools, parent and educator components, the SASA (RSA, 1996a), governance and management, participation.

ACRONYMS

AO-Afrikaanse Ouervereniging

DoE -Department of Education

GDE- Gauteng Department of Education

HOD - Head of Department [School level]

LOLT- Language of Learning and Teaching

LTSM –Learning and Teaching Systematic Materials

NAPTOSA National Professional Teachers’ Association of South Africa

PTA - Parent Teacher Association

PTSA - Parent Teacher Student Association

RDP Reconstruction and Development Programme

SASA -South African Schools Act

SGB - School Governing Body

SMT - School Management Team

SRC - School Representative Council

TAO-Transvaalse Afrikaanse Ouervereniging

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTORY BACKGROUND

1.1 INTRODUCTION

South Africa is currently undergoing a process of change from a segregated education system, to a more democratic system of education. One of the exciting developments in the new education dispensation is that the South African Schools Act (RSA, 1996a) the SASA, mandated the establishment of the democratic school governance in all schools to ensure active participation of stakeholders to help to bring about a culture of teaching and learning in schools. In South Africa, the SASA (RSA, 1996a) is the pivotal document that deals with school governing bodies (SGBs of public, private and independent schools (Bisschoff & Phakoa, 1999:89). Amongst other things, learners were also granted representation in the SGBs because of their role in the anti-apartheid struggle against apartheid. Through the School Representative Councils (SRCs) learners managed to dominate the schools to a significant extent (Heystek, 2001:207-210).

In South Africa most public schools are faced with the legacy of an under- and uneducated majority of black parents because of the imbalances of the past. Therefore, in 1996, after the establishment of SGBs via the SASA (RSA, 1996a) a national sense of urgency was needed to offer more effective training of SGB members to ensure the smooth functioning of all SGBs. Since most of the SGB members would be performing their functions for the first time, capacity-building programmes for SGB members was a priority (RSA, 1996c:265). Since it was expected that these bodies would not immediately function as intended by the SASA (RSA, 1996a), the Provincial and National authorities were expected to train SGBs (van Deventer & Kruger, 2003:265).

Mabaso and Themane (2002:11) indicate that the South African Schools Act describes ideals for stakeholders; participation in school governance, which now faces a difficult challenge at post- apartheid institutions. Under the old dispensation, school governance used to be characterised by authoritarian and exclusives practices. Now the new policy requires broad participation stakeholders in the life of the school through the medium of the SGB.

When Minister Sibusu Bhengu came to office as the first Minister of Education after the 1994 elections, he was faced with many challenges, came prepared to re-invent the wheel and immediately appointed a committee to review school organisation, governance and funding with a wide consultation to draw up education proposals (Financial Mail, 1994:22).

Heystek (2004: 308-310) states that the uncertainty about the exact function of both the principal and the parents is another contradictory factor to the malfunctioning of the dysfunctional schools and negates the whole idea of the self-managing schools. The legislated functions of the SGB as established in section 20 and 21 of the SASSA (RSA, 1996a) do not provide enough clarity for those in the power to manage and govern effectively.

Mabaso and Themane (2002:12) indicated that the problem with the stakeholders' participation in school governance is by no means unique to developing countries like South Africa. Jones (1998:329) reports that in the United Kingdom, SGBs have been given more power and influence than ever before and that these bodies are even required to be involved in making important decision(s) that impact on the quality of education. He adds that this has not been easy, as one of the challenges has been lack of preparation for new governors before they start with their work. The author also refers to New Zealand, which has one of the challenges of what Sallis (1998) refers to as 'sam participation' due to the fact that decisions are taken at a higher level of governance while the stakeholders are expected to simply endorse those decisions.

In African countries such as Tanzania, broad participation in school governance is often encouraged in national policies on education. However, according to Sumra (1997:17), the challenge that confronts Tanzanians, is the lack of parental participation in school governance, but what are the roots of such problems in school governance and democratic participation in the South African context?

Although the investigations in the present study are about how effectively the SGBs function; the literature study undertaken reveals that there are many schools with a good working relationship and where trust and support ensure effective education. On the other hand, the working relations between principals and SGBs in public schools in South Africa are not always conducive to effective education. This was confirmed by a principal who remarked, 'I

would like to do the work myself, rather than to wait and expect that the SGB must do it. I know that nothing will happen' (Heystek, 2004:309).

In South Africa, the previous research indicates that there is a need for further investigation about the functions of the SGBs and little information about how to overcome challenges with respect to stakeholder participation in school governance (Mabaso & Themane, 2003:113). Thus, it is in this context that the present study was undertaken to investigate the functions of SGBs in South African schools further.

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

During the apartheid era, schools were managed by committees and boards, as advocated by the National Department of Education (DoE). This educational policy did not advocate stakeholder participation. The committees were dominated by school principals, who reported directly to the government bureaucracy. The exclusion of the stakeholders created a fertile ground for the broader political struggle for a more inclusive system of governance in the 1980s; initiatives were taken to establish a more inclusive and participative structure (Mabaso & Themane, 2002: 11).

Another weakness of the past education system was that parents of learners at traditionally black schools were not involved in the education of their children. Even though it is not clear whether apartheid was to blame in this instance, the fact is that historically, black parents felt that the education of their children should be left in the hands of the teachers. Teachers were seen to be highly educated; therefore, it was believed that they knew what was best for the children in their care. However, this perception is changing and the SASA (RSA, 1996a) is apparently trying to speed up the process by encouraging parents to take responsibility for their children's education (Bisschoff & Phakoa, 1999:93).

The April 1994 elections marked a significant shift in policy development. The installation and establishment of a legitimate, non-racial and democratic National Ministry of Education opened the way for the enactment of the official policies and acts. These acts were decisive in character and made explicit choices. For example, they focussed on special issues and areas such as school governance (Sayed & Carrim, 1997:92).

From the outset, it was clear that school governance was a politically volatile issue; hence, the SASA (RSA, 1996a) created a framework that gives people a role in the governance and development of schools as the state cannot do everything for the schools. The Department of Education (DoE) also stipulated that all stakeholders must be included in the decision-making activities as members of the community are often in the best position to know what a school really needs and what its problems are (Black Sash Education & Training Unit, 2004:1).

It is important to note that the DoE (2003:2) promoted the new deal for democratic governance, based on the partnership between local school communities and the uniform provincial department norms.

In 2000 the former Minister of Education, Kadar Asmal, stated that the purpose of the SGBs is to promote the best interests of the school. Therefore, the SGBs should take 'ownership' of the schools and should become the centre of the community life. He added that the SGB is the only structure that can make this a reality. The former Minister further highlighted that ownership is subject to the SGB policies and laws regulating the power of the SGBs as stipulated in Section 20 of the SASA (RSA, 1996a). These are important responsibilities that stress the important role SGBs have to play in the running of the school. It needs to be stressed that these responsibilities are by no means token functions. In his speech, the former Minister also indicated that SGBs should be trained so that they can become sufficiently proficient to perform their roles and carry out their responsibilities. In addition, the former Minister underlined the fact that many SGBs in disadvantaged areas are not operating effectively and this should be a major concern for every community in which the schools are situated. Parents, led by the SGB, must exercise their responsibilities and become a link between schools and communities, more especially so in poor communities. The former minister referred to the fact that the SGBs are ineffective or hinder good governance as a result of infighting between members and because they have personal agendas that have led to the deterioration of SGBs. He advocated that SGB members should be committed to their functions to overcome the temporary lack of skills amongst themselves and advised that the requisite skills should be developed through participation (Asmal, 2000: 2-5).

At the first cabinet meeting of President Thabo Mbeki's Government in 2000, the President announced that the national education leadership was unanimous that the South African education system had major weaknesses and carried deadly baggage from the past. A large

part of education is considered to be seriously dysfunctional, however, it is an exaggeration to say that it is in crisis at all levels. The most troubling features, to mention only a few, are the failures regarding governance and management, as well as the poor quality of learning in much of the system. The issue of ineffective functioning of the SGBs is untenable especially in cases where members collude with the management of the school at the expense of the school or their roles are subverted into mere formalism; thereby hampering the good governance of the school. Thus, the government is aware that many SGBs, particularly in the rural and less advantaged urban areas, have difficulty in fulfilling their functions (Asmal, 1999:1-3).

According to Squelch (2001:138), a pressing problem in many schools is that the SGBs do not have a clear understanding of their roles, duties and responsibilities. Moreover, many governors, especially parent governors, do not have the necessary capacity to fulfil their duties. Thus, in these schools, the SGBs are not functioning as required by the law..

One of the main functions of the Provincial Department of Education in collaboration with the a national DoE was to develop and capacitate a number of governing bodies through training programmes introduced between 1997 and 1998 for the newly elected member of SGBs. Some of the training programmes were conducted by the DoE and by non-government organisations (NGOs) employed by the Provincial Department of Education through funding from the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) and other donor- funded programmes (Asmal, 2000:1-2).

Beckman and Visser (1999:157) point out that capacity training for SGBs should be in line with sections 19 (1) and (2) of the SASA (RSA, 1996a). It is the duty of the Provincial Head of Department (HOD) concerned to ensure that such programmes are launched and it is also the HOD's responsibility to ensure that principals and other department officials give the SGBs all the reasonable assistance they need. However, if funds are not available, as required in terms of section 19 (1), no programmes need to be launched.

The National Association of School Governing Bodies was established in January 2001. The DoE supported this initiative as a forum for sharing information on good governance practices and the department undertook to create a trust fund to enable the smooth running of the association (DoE, 2000b: 4).

1.3 MOTIVATION FOR THE RESEARCH

The continuous malfunctioning, incompetence and incapacity of the SGB in District 6C, Gauteng, inspired the researcher to conduct the current study. The researcher's interest lies in examining the functioning of a SGB at three public primary schools to determine whether SGBs need effectiveness training after they have been elected and before they can commence with their required functions and how good governance can improve the standard of education in the country.

The researcher is an educator who has been active in the profession for more than fifteen years and has been a member of the School Management Team (SMT) as Head of a Department, for more than seven years. Her interest was also aroused by the deterioration in the running of public schools, especially black public schools where SGBs play a major role in school governance.

The phenomenon posed a challenge to the researcher to investigate the functioning of SGBs in public schools. SGBs are elected democratically and, therefore, the members should have a picture of governance objectives in mind. However, since members of SGBs have insufficient governance skills, this may lead to deterioration in the running of public schools.

The current South African dispensation introduced structures, marking a transition from the values of apartheid education to a new democratic education system that encourages the participation of different stakeholders in the education of their children with the aim of producing skilled and competent South African citizens who contribute positively to their communities.

The idea that the allocated functions in public schools are the responsibility of the SGBs is under spotlight in this study. The SASA (RSA, 1996a) does not accommodate the challenges faced by parents in the majority of public schools because of their illiteracy and lack of competence. It is obviously extremely difficult for them to meet the needs and demands of democratic education in South Africa. Van Wyk (2004: 52) suggests that the following questions should be answered in this regard:

Do the stipulated functions and allocated functions for the SGBs designated by the government and /or the DoE; develop confidence in members of SGBs, so that they can assume their full responsibilities in governance?

If one takes the high level of illiteracy in South Africa into account. do SGB members have knowledge of the act? If not, how do they govern schools without much knowledge since most SGB members do not have their own copies of the Act, despite being required to govern schools based on and guided by the act.

The main issue this researcher seeks to address is whether SGBs can make a positive contribution to school governance and management. The researcher also wishes to investigate the challenges that may be faced by skilled school principals where the parents are illiterate (especially in rural areas). How does such a principal share critical information with parents, especially when such information is negative?

The researcher intends to investigate the level of understanding of the terms used in the Act by parents. Another capacity of the SGBs of the self-managing schools concerned and any capacity building programme is of considerable relevance to this study. Parental involvement in the former state-aided schools is well established; however, the same cannot be said of the vast majority of black schools in the country (Visser, 1997:634).

Tremendous changes resulting from the democratisation of South African schools challenges parents in public schools in many different ways, especially since the SASA (RSA, 1996a) may be described as an ambitious attempt to promote parental participation in public school governance on a scale not previously known in South Africa. The partnership ideal is sound and reasonable and should result in the successful governance of the school.

The researcher desires to investigate the topic further since the present applicable provisions in the SASA (RSA, 1996a) do not present a coherent, comprehensive and systematic set of principles that clarify and remove any doubt regarding the functions and capacity of the SGB. An important problem in this regard is that the functions and capacity of the SGB and the school are not always clearly differentiated.

1.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Merriam (1998:56) says that “a problem” in the conventional sense is a matter involving doubt, uncertainty or difficulty. A person with a problem will usually seek a solution, some clarity or decision; so too a problem statement is made with the purpose of obtaining further information on and greater understanding of the topic or also for seeking a solution to the problem identified. A research problem emanates from previous research or theory in an area or current social and political issues. Merriam (1998:58) believes that the things you are curious about, then, form the core of the problem or problem statement, often followed by a set of research questions. These questions reflect the researcher’s thinking on the most significant factors to study. They guide the inquiries and determine how data are to be collected. Merriam (1998:60) indicates further that in qualitative research these questions highlight areas of inquiry, to note in the field during observations or which questions to ask in an interview.

In this study, the researcher translated her curiosity into a problem that could be addressed through research of this nature. Hence, the study is relevant and provides constructive answers to the main problem that will be studied, namely that SGBs are not functioning effectively in public primary schools.

The main research question that arises from the problem statement is: How can the SGBs function in an effective manner in public primary schools?

From the main question, the following sub-questions can be deduced:

What is the role of school governing bodies in public schools?

What are the factors that prevent the effective functioning of SGBs?

What are the factors that contribute to the effective functioning of a SGB?

How important is teamwork for SGBs?

How important is training for SGB members before the assumption of duties?

To what extent should the SGB be involved in the governance of the school to ensure school effectiveness?

These sub-questions provide viable guidance in planning and conducting the investigation and assist in finding answers to the main question.

1.5 AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

The aims of the present study are to:

Give detailed practical information about the role of SGBs in public schools.

Determine the factors that prevent the SGB from functioning effectively.

Discuss in detail the factors that contribute to the effective functioning of a SGB.

Explore the issue of training before the assumption of duties.

Examine the issue of teamwork.

Make recommendations to improve the involvement and effectiveness of the SGBs in public school governance.

1.6 DEFINITION OF TERMS

In order to ensure clarity of meaning, the following key terms used in this study are defined:

Case study

According to Mothata, Lemmer, Mda and Pretorius (2000:23), a qualitative detailed examination of one setting, one subject, one single depository of document or one particular event, may be termed a case study.

Capacity building

Capacity building may be seen as the introductory or continuing training provided to governors of public schools in term of Section 19 (2) of the SASA (RSA, 1996a). It also refer to the assistance and training provided to those governors who performed similar functions in the past, but who need to be informed specifically about the provision of the SASA (RSA, 1996a: 14; Beckmann and Visser, 1999:157).

Public school.

The Government Gazette (RSA, 1995:15) describes a public school as an ordinary public school or a public school for learners with special needs. Sayed and Carrim (1997:4) refer to a public school as a school under the control of nine departments. Mothata et al (2000:133) define the term 'public school' as a school maintained largely through funds made available by the MEC of Education in a province, in terms of section 2 of the SASA (RSA,1996a) for the purpose of public schools.

School governing body

According to Mothata et al (2000:152) the term 'school governing body' refers to a democratically elected body charged with the governance of a public school. Thus, the SGB is the official mouthpiece of the parents of the learners, the educators and the learners of the school on all matters other than those relating to the professional, administration and management of the school.

Stakeholders and development plan

This implies that the governance structures and legitimate stakeholders should be granted the right to participate (Sayed & Carrim, 1997:95).

Reconstruction and Development Programme

According to the Unisa Guide (1998: 10), the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) is an integrated, coherent socio-economic policy framework and is an inclusive approach to developing and implementing policy. The RDP is unique to South African political history.

1.7 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study critically examines the (mal) functioning of the SGB in a public primary school as a case study. The research will focus on parents, teachers and non-teaching staff members of

the SGB, and the principal as an *ex-officio* member, as the lack of skills of parents and the poor teamwork amongst members of the SGBs, which impact negatively on the running of the school.

1.8 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is a qualitative study that involves observations, interviews with approximately ten members from each school and a literature study by the researcher to obtain reliable and in depth information about the topic under investigation.

A detailed explanation of the methodology, rationale for the choice of methodology and design are presented in Chapter 3. A basic overview will be presented in this chapter. The study reflects a qualitative research design. The researcher will rely on the qualitative approaches of data gathering, such as observations, interviews and literature reviews to provide an in-depth understanding of what is studied.

1.8.1 Research methods

The study relies on primarily observations. The researcher is always present on site observing participants' actions, conversing formally and informally with participants and also examining documents that form part of the context. Observations will be used to obtain first hand accounts of the situation under study and concrete, accurate and detailed notes will be made and will later be used as a reference.

Although the research will rely on observations for data, interviews will supplement the observations to provide holistic interpretations of the phenomenon being investigated. The purpose is to uncover concrete extra information about the topic under study and to strengthen and supplement the observations, literature reviews and the study. Unstructured interviews involving all SGB members, identified as relevant to the study in each school, including the principals as *ex-officio* members, will be held. It has been found that conversations before and after meetings yield important data. Therefore, a tape recorder and video tape recorder will be utilised to record the information obtained from the observations and interviews. The place for the interviews will be convenient for the participants.

The functioning of the SGBs is currently being debated and studied quite extensively and a study of relevant literature as well as study of documents published by the Department of Education will be undertaken in this regard. In addition, acts and regulations related to governance in public primary schools will be studied. In addition, media publications or unpublished articles at the researcher's disposal will also be consulted. Governance in public primary schools is a politically-sensitive matter and the researcher as part of the School Management Team (SMT) may not agree with some of the opinions and the approaches expressed in the literature, given South Africa's past (apartheid) education system in schools. Nevertheless, the researcher will endeavour to maintain a stance of disciplined subjectivity, to avoid bias and errors during the data collection process. At a later stage, the collected data will be transformed into a coherent narrative essay and be presented as findings, conclusions and recommendations. This investigation will hopefully contribute to the understanding of the research topic and provide new insights and information on the effective governance of SGBs.

1.8.2 Sampling procedures

Different sampling procedures can be utilised in any investigation of this nature. In this study, purposeful sampling will be utilised. The researcher will purposefully conduct the study in three public primary schools falling under the Ekurhuleni South (East Rand Area) of the Gauteng Province. These schools will consist of two black schools in a black township and one school in a white suburb where English is the medium of instruction. In each school, a small sample of about ten SGB members will be selected for the interviews. The informants will be chosen because they are likely to be knowledgeable about the phenomenon being studied and the communities in which the schools are situated and because they play an important role in their respective SGBs. The researcher will be concerned with evidence since it is primary and fertile information for this study.

The researcher is a Head of Department (HOD) in one of the schools under investigation and she will spend considerable time on the sites to make observations and to conduct interviews with the informants. Access to the sites has been granted in a formal written letter.

1.8.3 Reliability and validity of research

Reliability in qualitative research refers to the consistency of the researcher's interactive style, data recording, data analysis and interpretation of participants' meaning from the data (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993:385). Validity is generally defined as the trustworthiness of the facts, drawn from collected data, which has always been a concern in educational research (Le Compte, Milroy and Pressle, 1993: 644). Two types of validity will be discussed in Chapter 3.

1.8.3.1 Reliability

In this study, the researcher will strive to ensure that what is recorded is what has actually occurred in the settings. Furthermore, she will be careful during the selection of informants and data, the analysis of data and the noting of verbatim accounts of conversations and transcripts as well as with the use of quotes from documents that will illustrate participants' meaning.

1.8.3.2 Validity

There are two types of validity: internal and external validity. The internal validity entails that the interpretation of the phenomenon and the concepts must have mutual meanings between the participants and the researcher, while external validity entails the degree to which results can be generalised (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993: 39).

In this study, the researcher will investigate the truth and the fundamentally accurate interpretation of the phenomenon studied by firstly establishing an atmosphere of trust and comprehension with the informants to encourage them to share information and views regarding the topic under investigation voluntarily, using their own mother tongues on certain occasions. Where necessary, their responses will be translated. In this study, data will be collected for a period of one year by means of the appropriate approaches mentioned in section 1.8.

1.8.4 Limitations of research

The research is limited to three public primary schools that offer grades one to seven and where the medium of instruction is English. The researcher decided to restrict the research to these schools for logistical reasons and because it was felt that these schools were rich in information.

1.8.5 Presentation of data

In qualitative research there are no prescribed arrangements regarding the presentation of data. In this study, the data will be interrelated to form a well rounded whole. Every chapter will start with an introduction to link the section with the previous sections and discuss findings in logical sub-sections. The study will summarise and discuss the findings in sub-sections, make recommendations and include a list of resources.

1.9 OUTLINE OF STUDY

The outline of this study is as follows:

The first chapter is the introduction to the research, through which the reader is exposed to the following: The problem statement, the aims and objectives of the study, the definition of terms and research methodology used and an overview of the study plan.

The second chapter will focus on a literature review that deals with the background, description and history of SGBs in South Africa. In addition, an exposition of the effective functioning of a SGB will be given as well as factors leading to the ineffective governance of SGBs will be examined, such as a lack of capacity and disempowerment, fear and illiteracy.

The third chapter is the research design used to determine the effectiveness of SGBs. Various methods will be utilised such as case studies, observations and interviews, after which the collected data will be analysed and interpreted in an attempt to answer the research questions.

Chapter 4 will present the findings obtained from the collected data regarding the effectiveness of SGBs as well as the analysis and interpretation of the empirical data.

Chapter 5 will contain a summary and limitations of the research, as well as the conclusion drawn from the findings and recommendations regarding how SGBs can improve their effectiveness. In addition, recommendations for future research will be given.

1.10 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In this chapter, an overview of the functioning of SGBs in public primary schools in South Africa was given. The DoE introduced SGBs to promote parental participation in the education of their children. This research emanates from the realisation that the SGBs are confronted with the task of performing their functions more effectively. The primary purpose of this research is to determine the factors that prevent the SGB from functioning effectively and make recommendations to improve the involvement and effectiveness of the SGBs in public school governance in previously disadvantaged schools.

In the next chapter, an overview of SGBs and their prescribed functions in public primary schools will be presented.

CHAPTER 2

THE EFFECTIVE FUNCTIONING OF SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES: A LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, a literature study regarding the effectiveness of school governing bodies will be undertaken pertaining to the following aspects:

The history of school governing structures in South Africa in terms of statutory and non- statutory bodies.

The introduction of school governing bodies after democratisation.

The reality with regard to the functioning of school governing bodies with reference to the election of SGBs.

- Functioning of SGBs.
- Allocated functions of SGBs.
- Status of minors regarding the SGBs of public schools.
- Money and other property of the schools.
- Financial organisation
- Annual budgets
- School fees at public schools
- Section 21 public schools
- Funding of non-section 21 schools
- Financial records and statements at public schools
- Withdrawal of the functions of SGBs.

Concerns with regard to the functioning of school governing bodies, governance in public schools; governing bodies serving one or two public schools, the governance and professional management of public schools, enhancement of the capacity of governing bodies and what is needed to enable governors to perform their duties optimally.

These aspects will form the basis of an exposition of concerns regarding the effective functioning of the SGBs in public schools.

2.2 THE HISTORY OF SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY STRUCTURES IN SOUTH AFRICA

2.2.1 Introduction

The ideal of having a democratic education system in South Africa has a long history. It started with the first slaves under colonial masters in the 17th century and in the early 1980s, it became intense and bitter when the students protested against the Apartheid government (Sayed & Carrim, 1997:91).

Before the 1994 elections, parents were involved in schools under certain structures. Many parents were willing to participate and indicated a need to contribute constructively to school activities. During those years, parental participation in educational matters was largely sporadic and localised (Van der Westhuizen, 1995: 425).

In South Africa, there were structures with general educational management and administrative functions, called statutory and non-statutory bodies respectively. Such structures became involved in education in order to make a special contribution to education (Van Schalkwyk, 1990: 75).

2.2.2 Statutory bodies

Statutory bodies were local management bodies that worked with the principals and selected parents to control and manage certain activities in educational institutions. In most countries, this type of parent body was known as a school committee, governing body, advisory council or management council (Van Schalkwyk, 1990: 88 & 150).

2.2.2.1 School board

A school board was a legal entity and was empowered to take action as both plaintiff and defendant. At district level, it was regarded as a management body, consisting of six, nine or

twelve members, representing various institutions. Unfortunately, a school board had no power with regard to the professional work of institutions or with regard to the appointment and conditions of service of educators (Van Schalkwyk, 1990:88).

An administrator appointed the members of the school board. Amongst other things, this body was responsible for provisional maintenance and for administrative functions with regard to provincial educational institutions at the local level. It also assisted the Education Department with regard to administrative work at the local level (Van der Westhuizen, 1995: 426; 431).

2.2.2.2 Local management council

A management council was a local management body. In most countries, management councils were known as school committees, governing bodies, advisory councils or management councils. Management council representatives were parents from the community chosen by the principal of the institution to serve on behalf of the parents in that particular school. (Van Schalkwyk, 1990:88, 150).

A management council had to liaise between nurturing the educational interests of the family and the planned and organised educational activities of the school. Parents, entitled to be involved in the functioning of the school, determined the direction and the spirit of a school (Van der Westhuizen, 1995: 525).

A management council together with the principal of the educational institution and the parents' representatives controlled and managed the activities of the educational institution. They were the mouthpieces of parents with regard to the physical and material matters of the institution. Furthermore, they were responsible for certain duties such as the provision and maintenance of school grounds, buildings, and equipment and made recommendations to the school board. They collected funds and exercised control over such funds. In addition, the management council reported directly to the school board on matters concerning the school. Like the school board, they were not directly concerned with the professional activities of the institution, but could report and make recommendations to the director of education via the school board. Finally, they carried out all the duties entrusted to them by the education authorities (Van Schalkwyk, 1990:88-89). Dekker and Lemmer (1993:161) note that the

management council was responsible for the maintenance of the school grounds, buildings, furniture and equipment and made recommendations in this regard to the school board. The primary aim of this new development was to enable parents to have a greater say in the education of their children. The school principal was no longer an ex-officio secretary and was replaced by elected members of the council (Educamus, 1988:5).

2.2.3 Non-statutory bodies

Apart from the above-mentioned link structures, in South Africa there were also non-statutory bodies. These bodies were free and autonomous associations or committees that were established by their own members and at their own initiative. Their fundamental aim was to promote parental interest and involvement in formal education (Van Schalkwyk, 1990: 149-150). These bodies such as parent-teacher-student associations, parent-teacher associations and parent associations in addition to the statutory bodies, served as links between the school and the community (Dekker & Van Schalkwyk, 1995:484).

2.2.3.1 Parent-Teacher-Student Associations

According to Dekker and Van Schalkwyk (1995:484), the Education and Training Act of 1979 recognised active parental involvement through a Parent-Teacher-Student Association (PTSA) or the local committees or councils.

Sithole (1994:2) indicates that a PTSA, as the name indicates, was a representative body of school governance comprising parents, teachers and students of a particular secondary school. At primary school level, the body was called a Parent-Teacher-Association (PTA); the student component was excluded presumably because students at that level were too young to be involved.

The demand for democracy and participation in South African education manifested itself concretely in the 1980s with the emergence of the PTSAs. The PTSAs reflected the belief in community participation and were viewed as community structures, which gave a political voice to the disenfranchised. They were also viewed as structures contesting the state at that time. The acceptability of these structures by the community was highly contested, because they were perceived as illegitimate structures imposed by the apartheid government on

communities and which had no people representation. During those years, there was a lack of transparency, which stemmed partly from limited information, since these structures were surrounded by sanctions. Where these structures existed, they did not enjoy the full support of the community, despite what had often been the very sincere efforts of the individuals concerned. They consisted of individuals nominated by the minority white state and were consequently viewed by the oppressed community as illegitimate (Sayed & Carrim, 1997:91).

The PTSAs operated parallel to the school management councils. They acted as broad-based representative bodies, which were parallel and alternative structures and attempted to take over both the policymaking (governance) and day-to-day management of the schools. However, they were opposed by the apartheid structures and were unable to function optimally because they originated during the period when the majority of the South Africans were against the anti-apartheid struggle (Van Schalkwyk, 1990:150). Sayed and Carrim (1997:92) assert that the PTSAs were unable to separate governance from administration and management work because they did not possess the required skills to manage the school. This paved the way for the PTSAs to function primarily as structures with the power to determine school policy within a special national framework.

Sithole (1994:2) indicates that the rationale behind the establishment of the PTSAs was the desire to shift the balance of power away from the much-despised school committees to parents, workers, teachers, students and their organisations. The author adds that the PTSAs were seen as instruments through which people's education could be implemented, albeit in a limited form. Therefore, it was recognised in the beginning that as long as the real power still rested with the apartheid state, the people's education would not be achieved on a large scale; the full implementation would have to await the installation of a democratic state.

Members of the PTSAs were not necessarily the parents of pupils enrolled in that particular school. Membership consisted of guardians or other members of the community with a stake in education. They were either elected by the community or seconded by organisations such as civic or existing management councils. They were viewed as the day-to-day organisational machinery, solving daily crises. Generally, their aims and objectives were to further the educational aims of the school within the community; inculcate a democratic approach to decision-making and problem solving; raise funds and monitor the usage of school funds (Sithole, 1994:2-5).

The main purpose of PTSAs was to combine the efforts of the parents and teachers to a very limited extent, collect funds, assist with the transportation of pupils and entertainment (Van Schalkwyk, 1990:150). Although numerous training programmes were organised, the PTSA did not survive as an organisation (Van Schalkwyk, 1990:150).

However, despite many references to parent bodies, which existed in the field of education and training, new structures such as the Reconstruction and Development Plan (RDP) announced the establishment of “structures of institutional governance, which reflected the interest of all stakeholders and the broader community served by the institution.” Though the PTSAs were never mentioned by the RDP, the announcement stressed the significance of inclusive structures of institutional governance, which were still in their embryonic stages (Sithole, 1994: 2-7).

During the period of free political activities, the PTSAs experienced a period of insignificant, non-quantitative and non-qualitative growth. Beside the positive events, which took place between February 1990 and 1994, numerous factors militated against the organisation and the practical operation of the PTSAs. Violence in areas such as Natal and the Witwatersrand, escalated and impacted severely on schooling. Repression in some of the Bantustans increased and students and teachers became prime targets. Shortly after the unbanning of the ANC, the role of mass organisation became unclear. The regime deflected the blame for the education crises away from its own unilateral restructuring exercises to the mass organisations of teachers, students and other education sector organisations and policy development became a major area of contest. At the same time, the donor agencies limited their financial support of education (Sithole, 1994:4).

2.2.3.2 Parent-Teacher- Associations

In most white schools in the Republic of South Africa there were bodies called Parent-Teacher- Associations (PTSAs). They were composed of parents and teachers only. They functioned on the local level only and were not permitted to liaise with the existing coordinating bodies at regional, provincial and national levels. The Parent-Teacher-Association’s main aims were to combine the efforts of both parents and teachers when serving the school. They were not allowed to contribute to the more fundamental matters of

education such as policymaking. Their duties were to collect school funds, assist with entertainment and the transport of pupils, for example (Van Schalkwyk, 1990:150).

2.2.3.3 Parent associations

During the apartheid era, parents organised themselves on a broader basis than on the purely local level, in organisations such as the Afrikaanse Ouervereniging – an association that was established in 1983 by white Afrikaans parent communities in the Republic of South Africa (RSA). This parent association functioned on four levels, namely on the local, provincial and national levels respectively and the federal council of parent associations (Van Schalkwyk, 1990:151).

The local branches of the parent associations functioned as organisational structures in their own right. They organised and managed matters of mutual interest for the local parent community and the school as partners in education. The parent association's responsibility was divided and it also established a working committee for the execution of minor tasks. A number of sub-committees emerged under a working committee whose function was to enable the working committee to cope with various aspects of its tasks (Van Schalkwyk, 1990: 151).

In Pretoria, the Transvaalse Afrikaans Ouervereniging (TAO) was established in November 1998. In accordance with article 6 (h) of the Education Ordinance, the TPA was officially recognised. The PTA's main functions were on the interests of groups on a regional level with parents serving and helping according to their particular interests (Van der Westhuizen, 1995:425)

The regional management structure consisted of representatives from various branches in the relevant regions and each region had to nominate a representative to serve on the head committee of the TAO, following which the head committee nominated representatives on a pro-rata basis to serve on the Afrikaanse Ouervereniging (AO) for education.. The numbers of representatives were as follows: Transvaal (11), the Orange Free State, (3), Natal (2), the Cape Province (5) and Namibia (2). There was also an executive (Van der Westhuizen, 1995:425-426).

The regional committee nominated representatives as executives for the association in the province. The executive had a seat on the teachers' council (if it was recognised). Therefore, from that position, it could advise the director on behalf of the parents, make recommendations, state his/her point of view, suggest amendments and try to have them carried out. As a free and autonomous parent body, it also had the right to discuss any matter concerning formal education with the educational authorities at provincial or regional levels. Furthermore, it created better opportunities for parents to fulfil their roles as partners in education. It also gave guidance concerning educational matters. The parents' association at regional level was a body that negotiated at top level on behalf of the parents, led and advised them and united all parents of the region with regard to formal education of their children. They also managed all the posts, financed them, set up working procedures and controlled all work activities (Van Schalkwyk, 1990: 151-152).

The national committee of the governing body association unified all the provincial bodies; while general co-ordination took place and decisions were made on a national scale. The national parents' association consulted with communities on national level on behalf of all Afrikaans parents. It also looked after the interests of its members when any educational issues were at stake (Van Schalkwyk, 1990:152)

Therefore, the function of the National Head Committee of the AO was to co-ordinate and link the parent activities of the different provinces and Namibia. They also had to negotiate with the authorities to achieve the goals of the parents' association. On the other hand, the goals of the parents' association were to advance Christian National Education, strengthen the Afrikaner culture, language and traditions and to prepare parents for their tasks (Van der Westhuizen, 1995:426).

In July 1987 representatives from the different provinces gathered in Cape Town for the inauguration of the Federasie van Ouerverenigings in Suid-Afrika (the Federal Council of Parent Associations) (Van der Westhuizen, 1995:426). This parent body was composed of all similar associations for parents from various population groups that shared more or less the same points of departure for formal education. The fundamental purpose of the Federation was to act on behalf of the parents in the country concerning the schooling of their children (Van Schalkwyk, 1990: 152). The aim was that the Federation should serve the interests of the provincial parents association (Van der Westhuizen, 1995:426). In the RSA, such a body

was not yet viable because of the heterogeneous nature of the parents' educational ideals and the needs of their children (Van Schalkwyk, 1990: 152).

2.2.4 Conclusion

Statutory bodies were legal bodies and were mandated by the government to perform certain tasks only. Although their main aim was to participate in the education of their children, they were unable to produce a vehicle for parental participation in the education sector. The government elected members of the statutory bodies.

There were also non-statutory body structures in schools that represented parents in the education sector. They performed certain functions at school level. They received training, but did not enjoy enough support from the community because they were viewed as government structures. Hence, the majority representation in South Africa demanded democratically elected representation in education structures. Shortly after the unbanning of certain political parties such as the ANC and near the time of the democratic elections, schools became targets of violence. There was mass action and sanctions were imposed by the government.

2.3 THE INTRODUCTION OF SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES AFTER DEMOCRATISATION

2.3.1 Introduction

Given the lack of participation history by communities, especially traditionally black communities in the affairs of education; it was important that structures that would facilitate the effective participation of communities at school level needed to be created. These SGB structures were seen as the first legal structures to be democratically acknowledged, and democratically elected by the parents in the schools in all South African public schools. Another top priority of the South African government was the establishment of capacity building programmes to empower the SGBs to be more effective and efficient. These programmes were to be used as a tool to empower SGBs in management and governance to promote the culture of teaching and learning in public schools.

2.3.2 The place of SGBs in democratic governance

After the introduction of the democratic elections in 1994, the South African government advocated the establishment of governing bodies in every public school for the benefit of the school and its pupils, as well as the community it serves. The notion of grassroots community participation was constituted; the democratisation of education entails that stakeholders must be more actively and effectively involved in the activities of the school. It is a matter of faith that these institutions can deliver what is expected of them, especially in South Africa. At that stage, democracy was in its early stages and the fact that the SGB members were not officially trained, caused considerable doubt concerning the expected delivery by SGB members (Bush & Heystek, 2003: 128).

South Africa has experienced many transformations but the most profound one is the adoption of the new education system based on the fundamental principles of democracy, unity, non-discrimination, equity and equality, which was put in place after the 1994 democratic elections. The major factor in this transformation was that the South African government was committed to the development of a democratic education system that would improve the participation of all stakeholders with an interest in democratic school governance. The rationale was to give all role players in schools an opportunity to participate in the management and governance of the school to establish a better teaching and learning environment. Hence, in the year 1997, official SGBs were established in all public schools (Van Wyk, 2004: 49).

Maile (2002: 326) contends that, in the context of the South African education system, the objectives of reform have been the redress of imbalances created in the previous dispensation and the restoration of the fundamental culture of teaching and learning. In the process of change, traditional practices were replaced by unfamiliar, yet critical and essential elements necessary for the proper management of institutions. The author points out that consequently, the levels of power at school level were affected significantly. There was a shift of emphasis from management to governance. The new framework for governance was built on accountability that was regarded as one of the essential elements of school governance to help strengthen the position of school management by sharing the much contested power without losing it.

The presence of parents and the community in the SGBs may be associated with the past apartheid struggle, which also involved a number of carefully elected parents in educational matters. In contrast to the present regime, the past government made it impossible for all stakeholders to be involved in the education process in the country. Now the emphasis is on the inclusion of all role-players in decision-making procedures at work and in residential areas. This democratic principle is put into practice in schools as well (Heystek, 2001:208 – 209).

When parents become involved in education, children learn more effectively, and schools become more successful. However, effective parental involvement must go beyond the process of parents helping children with their schoolwork. Again, the establishment of the SGBs was a clear expression of the democratic ideal, which gave the local community an opportunity to make important decisions regarding the management and governance of the institution to which they are attached (Bisschoff & Phakoa, 1999: 93)

The Gauteng Department of Education established a provincial governance team to monitor the SGB elections and to ensure that by May 1997, every public school in the province had a governing body. Furthermore, the department of education intended to present capacity-building programmes for the newly elected SGBs and to introduce continuous workshops to train SGB members in the province (see section 2.3.5) (Doom, 1997:6).

2.3.3 Conclusion

School governing bodies were to be established in South Africa in 1997 in all public schools. The parents were expected to become members of the SGBs in order to restore the rights of the democratically elected parent in the education of their children. Again, the emphasis shifted to democratic governance, which was based on accountability in order to strengthen education in public schools and for parents to be involved in decision-making. The Gauteng Education Department introduced a team to monitor the new processes taking place in public schools. Furthermore, capacity-building workshops were introduced in order to support the SGBs.

2.4 REALITIES WITH REGARD TO THE FUNCTIONING OF SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES

2.4.1 Introduction

The government's main obligation immediately after the first democratic elections was the establishment of structures that would allow for democratic participation in the administration and management of schools. Following the history of the lack of participation by the communities, especially traditionally black communities in the affairs of education; it was important that SGB structures be created at public schools.

The school level is arguably the most important and decisive area of governance in a democratic system of education. It is at this level that communities must know that they have a say in the education of their children, that they are given full responsibility in the form of the SGB basic functions and allocated functions. Again, because of government budgetary constraints, the SGBs in public schools are expected to supplement the allocated school funds and it is at this level that the maximum possible participation of different stakeholders should be ensured.

2.4.2 The election of SGBs

One of the most exciting developments after the introduction of the democratic government in 1994 was the establishment of democratically elected SGB members in all public schools in South Africa in 1997. This gave rise to formal recognition of the partnership between schools and other role players in education. The most fundamental need was the idea that different stakeholders should recognise and accept their responsibilities fully in matters pertaining to education, since they are in the best position to determine the educational needs of the school (Van Deventer & Kruger, 2003: 261-262).

Membership of a SGB in a public school consists of elected parents of learners at the school, the principal employed at the school, educators at the school, learners in the school who are in grade eight or higher and co-opted members. Co-opted members are people from the community invited by the SGB to assist in fulfilling its functions (Potgieter, Visser, van der Bank, Mothata & Squelch, 1997:24-260).

Section 30 of the South African Schools Act (RSA, 1996a: 22) indicates that the governing body must elect the following office bearers as members: a chairperson, a treasurer and a secretary. It is important to note that the chairperson should not be a person employed at that particular public school (Section 29 of the South African School's Act) (RSA, 1996a: 22).

Section 30 of the SASA (RSA, 1996a: 22), gives guidelines regarding the functions that a SGB should perform regarding the appointment of an executive committee as well as the terms of office of members.

According to the above act, a governing body may:

Establish committees, including an executive committee;

Appoint persons who are not members of the governing body to such committees on the grounds of their expertise, but a member of the governing body must chair each committee.

According to section 31 of the South African School's Act (RSA, 1996a:22) (1) the term of office of members of the governing body other than a learner may not exceed three years. The term of office of an office-bearer of a governing body may not exceed one year.

A member or office-bearer of a governing body may be re-elected or co-opted, as the case may be, after the expiry of his or her term of office.

The perception that parents in a SGB should form a majority stems from the conviction that parents must be actively involved in the education of their children (Bisschoff & Phakoa, 1999:93).

2.4.3 Functions of SGBs

The functions of SGBs are divided into two compulsory functions that must be performed by all SGBs and optional functions that SGBs may perform if they have the requisite skills (Potgieter et al, 1997:35).

Sayed and Carrim (1997:94) indicate that a critical issue is what has been called the “menu mode” of governance. While SGBs have nineteen functions, the provincial member of an executive council may either add more or impose limitations on some, determined by inter alia, capacity or unsatisfactory performance.

A list of the compulsory functions of the SGBs is given here to indicate the extent to which the SGB may be involved in the governance of the school. However, section 20 of the SASA (RSA, 1996a: 14) clearly specifies certain duties of the SGBs. Although a SGB may use its discretion when performing its duties, it is limited regarding the manner in which it performs its duties (Visser, 1997:633).

Section 20 of the South African School’s Act (RSA, 1996a:14) lists the functions of the SGB. According to this section, a SGB must:

Promote the best interests of the school and strive to ensure its development through the provision of quality education for all learners at the school.

Adopt a constitution.

Develop a mission statement for the school.

Adopt a code of conduct for learners at the school.

Support the principal, educators and other staff of the school in the performance of their professional functions.

Determine times of the school day consistent with any applicable conditions of employment of the staff at the school.

Administer and control the school’s property, buildings and the grounds occupied by the school, learners, educators and other staff at the school who render voluntary services to the school.

Encourage parents, learners, educators and other staff at the school to render voluntary services to the school.

Recommend to the Head of the Department the appointment of educators at the school, subject to the Educators Employment Act, 1994 (Proclamation No. 138 of 1994), and the Labour Relations Act, 1995 (Act No 66 of 1995).

Recommend to the Head of Department of non- educator staff at the school, subject to the Public Service Act, 1994 (Proclamation No. 103 of 1994), and the Labour Relations Act, 1995 (Act No.66 of 1995).

At the request of the Head of Department, allow the reasonable use under fair conditions of the facilities of the school for educational programmes nor conducted by the school.

Discharge all other functions imposed upon the governing body by or under this act.

Discharge other functions consistent with this Act as determined by the Minister by notice in the Government Gazette or by the Members of Executive Council by notice in the Provincial Gazette.

The governing body may permit the reasonable use of the facilities of the school for community, social and school fund-raising purposes, subject to such reasonable and equitable conditions as the governing body may determine which may include the charging of a fee or tariff, which accrues to the school.

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

The Extraordinary Provincial Gazette of the Province of Gauteng (1997:15) announces that

...a governing body shall draw up its own constitution and standing orders which shall not be contrary to the Act, these regulations, or any other applicable law, and which shall comply with the minimum requirements established by the Member of Executive Council by notice in the Provincial Gazette.

School safety and security is one of the most challenging and primary roles of the SGBs in public schools. SGBs have a responsibility to ensure a physically safe environment in schools, such as a secured fence, controlled access and secure doors and windows. Furthermore, many schools in South Africa, especially rural schools and schools catering for black learners, are in a state of disrepair and lack the basic resources necessary for a safe and healthy environment. These problems are addressed in the policies, procedures and structures, which are in place and they should be applied by the different stakeholders. It will also be necessary to approach the state for assistance in this regard, since it is ultimately the responsibility of the state to provide and maintain education facilities. Failure to establish safety and security in schools could lead to liability and the SGB may be held liable for any loss or damage that may occur because of their failure to act responsibly (Squelch, 2001:138; 143 &144).

According to Potgieter et al (1997:22), the above does not sufficiently include a full range of the responsibilities of the SGB's, but instead illustrates that parents in most communities will have a greater say in school matters than was the case in the past. In any democratic structure and in all ventures, it is important that the SGB members should act in good faith, that is they must put the interests of the school in general and those of the learners in particular, above their own personal, political, religious and language interests. The author stresses that this applies to their attendance of meetings, their handling of the school finances, the performance of their duties and their conduct at all times. It is important to note that SGB members should be dedicated and committed to their tasks and they should use opportunities that will equip them to become better governors (Beckmann & Visser, 1999:154).

Considering the abovementioned discussion, it is clear that the SGBs must be vigilant and accountable so that the school can develop further. The author stresses that every stakeholder must be prepared to play his or her part actively (Ngidi, 2000:260).

At this point, there are strong arguments that the distribution of power in the South African context needs to be reviewed, because of the intractable problems facing the developing democratic school system and the SGBs in their respective roles as well as their responsibilities (Bush & Heystek, 2003:137).

2.4.4 Allocated functions of SGBs

According to section 21 of the SASA (RSA, 1996a: 16), a governing body may apply in writing to the HOD to be allocated the following functions:

To maintain and improve the school's property, and buildings and grounds occupied by the school, including school hostels, if applicable.

To determine the extra-mural curriculum of the school and the choice of subject options in terms of provincial curriculum policy.

To purchase textbooks, educational materials or equipment for the school.

To pay for services to the school or other functions consistent with this act and any applicable provincial law.

The Head of Department may refuse an application contemplated in subsection (1) only if the governing body concerned does not have the capacity to perform such function effectively.

The Head of Department may approve such application unconditionally or subject to conditions.

The decision of the Head of Department on such application must be conveyed in writing to the governing body concerned, giving reasons.

Any person aggrieved by a decision of the Head of Department in terms of this section may appeal to the Members of the Executive Council.

According to the Provincial Gazette, the members of the Executive Council may determine that some governing bodies may exercise one or more functions without making an application contemplated in subsection (1). If he or she is satisfied that the governing bodies concerned have the capacity to perform such functions effectively and; there is a reasonable and equitable basis for doing so.

The negotiated powers will enable community members with the requisite capacity to assist where there is a need (Pretorius & Lemmer, 1998:23).

The allocated functions depend on the capacity of the governing body of that particular public school. This should be accomplished through capacity training programmes as a form of development for the members of the SGB. Since parental involvement in the former state-aided schools was well established compared to the vast majority of the traditionally black schools in our country, much development was targeted to take place at the latter mentioned schools (Visser, 1997:634).

2.4.5 Status of minors on SGBs of public schools

A member of a SGB who is a minor is not allowed to be engaged on contracts on behalf of the school. A learner on a SGB, who is a minor, may not suffer (experience) liabilities resulting from being a member of the SGB. Importantly, a minor may not vote on the resolutions of SGBs, which impose liabilities on third parties in the school. After the expiry of the term of office, which is one year for the learner office bearers, they may be re-elected or co-opted (Section 32 of the South African School's Act) (RSA, 1996a:22).

Heystek (2001:212 and 217) indicates that the school governing body and the professional management (the principal and top management) are not under any obligation to consult learners or even to take their recommendations and advice into consideration, since the involvement of black learners in the management and governance of schools was in essence politically and economically motivated, rather than educational. On the other hand, in most of the white schools, both the principals and the parents are sufficiently skilled to govern and to manage the schools effectively. However, learners cannot be expected to have radical new ideas or contribute greatly to effective school governance. There are no indications that learners have offered positive new ideas to improve school governance or teaching. Another possibility is that learners have learnt that their ideas are not taken seriously and are thus unwilling to suggest anything new.

Furthermore, research in white schools indicates that learners are not interested in participating in the governance of the school because they are too busy with their own school activities. Heystek (2001:217) adds that the learners are frequently excluded from the meetings, which could create the impression that their contributions are seen as unimportant. However, the SASA (RSA, 1996a) does not permit learner input in matters pertaining to teaching or curriculum matters when they are members of the SGB. Teaching and the curriculum are exclusively the domains of teachers (Heystek, 2001: 218)

The regulations automatically exclude learners from activities such as the appointment of staff members, because it involves contracts, in which learners are not supposed to participate and it is believed that learners cannot exercise better judgement than the parents can. Another contributory factor could be that the youth's lack of experience and skills prevent them from making meaningful contributions to the governance and management of public schools. Although learner representatives on SGBs do not function effectively at present, everybody must contribute positively and make a determined effort to help improve the effectiveness of the structures. The inclusion of learners on SGBs is also viewed as an important learning opportunity for HODs to solve problems in the education system as a whole and also to improve learning conditions at schools. The author also highlights the fact that learners do not make any significant contributions to the governance of schools (Heystek, 2001:221 & 227).

All members may be reimbursed by the SGB (not the state) for the necessary expenses incurred in the performance of their duties. The payment will come from the school coffers (funds). It is imperative that payment should match the expenses incurred (Visser, 1997:635).

2.4.6 School funds and other school property

Every public school owns money and movable property. This property is also referred to as the school assets. This movable property belongs to the school only and may therefore, be used as permitted by the SASA (RSA, 1996a) and any other applicable law. The SGB must take care of, control and protect the school assets with the help of the applicable legal principles regarding the use of school money and other assets or property (Potgieter, et al, 1997:37).

The state is responsible for funding public schools from public revenue on an equitable basis in order to ensure the proper exercise of the rights of learners to education and as a way to redress the past inequalities in education. Therefore, the state must provide sufficient information on an annual basis with regard to the funding of public schools, to enable the public schools to prepare their budget for the following financial year. Considering the funding procedures for every public school, the MEC of a province must determine the norms and minimum standards for the funding of public schools after consultation with the Council of Education Ministers, the Financial and Fiscal Commission and the Minister of Finance (Section 34 of the South African School's Act) (RSA, 1996a: 24)).

Generally, the funds provided by the state are not sufficient to provide education for everyone. One of the sources of income is the money generated through the payment of school fees by parents in public schools (section 2.2.4.5). In addition, the SGBs are expected to use their talents to devise plans and to carry out projects to generate further funds for the schools. This can be done by approaching people in business to sponsor items or events for or at the school or to pay for certain expenses. In addition, community members may be asked to donate money or other items to the school. All this money may be collected under the umbrella of fund-raising. The SGB may use school buildings or grounds in reasonable manner to obtain further income for the school. However, the state cannot expect all parents to contribute money to the school or to make equal contributions to the running of the school due to the widespread incidence of poverty in our country, as well as differences in income

among parents. As a result, parents who can afford it will have to pay school fees, while poorer parents will not be required to pay school fees or will have to pay less (Potgieter *et al*, 1997:37-40)

The SGB of a public school is responsible for establishing a school fund and administering it in accordance with the stipulations of the HOD. It is essential that the money received by a public school, including school fees and voluntary contributions must be paid into the school fund. In this regard, the SGB must open and maintain a bank account. Donations received by a public school must be administered in accordance with the conditions of such donations, bequests or trusts.. All the assets acquired by a public school remain the property of the school. It is important to note that school funds must be utilised for educational purposes for that particular school. Funds can also be utilised for educational purposes in connection with another public school with the consent or the agreement of the HOD (Section 37 of the South African School's Act,) (RSA, 1996a: 24).

According to (Potgieter *et al*, 1997: 45), the SGB will have to open and maintain a bank account in the name of the school at any registered bank. All the money that belongs to the school must be paid into the bank account of the school. Nobody may keep the school money under his or her personal control unless it is for immediate use for approved expenditure. Furthermore, nobody may deposit the school money into any bank account other than the one that exists in the name of the school. A further responsibility of an SGB is to look after the movable property of the school. The school fund must be used for educational purposes only for the maximum benefit of the school.

2.4.7 Financial organisation

Like any other country, South Africa is experiencing financial difficulties in the educational sector. School principals are faced with the huge responsibility of ensuring quality teaching and learning environment in schools, while the budgetary provisions for that purpose are reduced steadily. The author indicates further that that there is a strong need for financial management skills in public schools.. It is imperative for both SGB members and the principal to perform their financial tasks with circumspection and thoroughness (Van Deventer & Kruger, 2003:234).

Public school SGBs with the authority vested in them, may establish financial committees as well as sub-committees such as a fundraising committee, a tuck shop committee or a school fee committee as long as the chairpersons of the respective committees are members of the SGB. This may be done using the guidelines in section 30 of the SASA (RSA, 1996). It is important to note that SGBs may delegate the responsibilities of financial management in writing to the finance committee of that particular school. In addition, the SGB has the authority to appoint neutral people (non-SGB members) to serve on these committees (Mestry, 2000:131).

The appointees will be considered based on their capacity or expertise in their particular field or specialised knowledge or skills in school finances. The financial committee should coordinate the various activities of the various sub-committees and have a good communication structure in place. The financial committee must draw up and implement a financial policy that will be used as a guideline to construct and control a budget, monitor and approve all expenditure and ensure that all the necessary procurements are done through the recommended procedures, using the correct quotation and tendering procedures. In cases where SGB members are not literate in financial management or have insufficient knowledge, they should then solicit the services of an expert with sound financial knowledge from the parent community. In addition, there should be regular meetings with the SGB to discuss financial matters and to motivate members to carry out their duties. The SGB must confirm or approve decisions taken by sub-committees with regard to finance.

In sum, the SGB remains responsible for the school funds although most of the financial activities are delegated to a financial committee (Mestry, 2004:131).

2.4.8 Annual budget and school fees at public schools

It is the responsibility of the SGB to prepare an annual budget for the following year according to the guidelines of the MEC, which clearly indicates the estimated income and the expenditure of the school for the next financial year. Parents have the right to consider and approve the budget submitted to them by the SGB. The proposed budget must be presented at a parents' general meeting convened with at least 30-days notice, for consideration and approval by the majority of parents present (section 38 of the South African School's Act), (RSA, 1996a: 24)

When parents are invited to the general meeting, it is advisable for the SGB to include the prepared proposed budget with the invitation, so that the parents can become familiar with the contents of the budget in advance (Potgieter *et al*, 1997:49).

In drawing up a provisional budget (a temporary budget for discussion and further adjustment), the SGB must consider the following matters:

The probable income for the following year.

The money the state will provide.

Income from school fees (at the schools where school fees are charged).

Income from the interest on school funds.

Income from all the other projects or sources.

All the matters on which money will probably have to be spent for educational purposes during the coming year must also be indicated, for example:

- Expenditure on electricity.
- Maintenance of equipment of the school
- Insurance
- Bursaries.

The probable income and expenditure must balance (Potgieter *et al*, 1997:49).

During the meeting, a reasonable amount of time should be given to parents for questions and discussions.. The budget can only be considered by the SGB if the majority of the parents vote in favour of the budget during the meeting. Parents will be given an opportunity to amend the budget presented to them and if agreed by the majority vote, the budget can be adopted. The procedure is not clear in this regard, but if the budget is rejected totally (that is, if there is no compromise on how it must be changed) the SGB will have to draw up a new budget and thereafter, convene another parents' meeting with 30 days notice for the approval of the budget (Visser, 1997:633).

Importantly, the Government Gazette (RSA, 1998b:12) indicates that the SASA (RSA,1996a) imposes a responsibility on all public school governing bodies to do their utmost to improve the quality of education in their schools by raising additional resources to supplement those which the state provides from public funds (section 36). The Government Gazette (1998b:12)

declares that all parents, but particularly those who are not poor or who have good incomes, are encouraged to increase their own direct financial contributions and other contributions to improve the quality of their children's education at public schools. The Act does not interfere unreasonably with parents' discretion under the law regarding how to spend their own resources on their children's education.

It is recommended that school fees may be determined and charged at a public school only if a resolution to do so has been adopted by the majority of the parents at a parents' meeting. The resolution taken should provide the exact amount of fees to be charged and should contain equitable criteria and procedures for the partial or total exclusion of payment by parents who are unable to pay school fees (Visser, 1997:633; and section 39 of the SASA (RSA, 1996a: 26).. In this instance, the SGB of a public school must implement a resolution adopted by the majority of parents concerning the payment of school fees. Section 40 of the SASA (RSA, 1996a: 26: 26) imposes a duty on parents to pay school fees as determined in section 39 of the SASA (RSA, 1996a). It stipulates further that the outstanding fees can be claimed in terms of legal principles and practices (Visser, 1997:635).

Bush and Heystek (2003:132-133) report that one of the universal features in the South African model is the power or the sovereign role of parents in relation to budgeting and school fees. The budget cannot be finalised unless it is approved by the majority of the parents present and voting at such meetings. Parents should also be consulted regarding whether school fees should be charged or not and how much those fees should be. The final decision is made by the parents and not the SGB, although the latter has to provide a viable budget. The authors caution that, the combination of parental sovereignty and positive discrimination may leave governing bodies in the unfortunate position of having an insufficient income to meet their commitments.

All parents in public schools are liable to pay school fees determined in terms of section 39 of the SASA (RSA, 1996a: 26) unless the parent is exempted from payment following the terms of the act. A parent may appeal to the HOD against a decision taken by the SGB with regard to the exemption of fees. The HOD will follow the recommended procedures when dealing with the appeal to safeguard both parents and the SGB. (Section 40 of the South African Schools Act) (RSA, 1996a: 26).

The SGB of a public school may enforce the parents of public schools who are liable to pay school fees to pay school fees based on their request according to the SASA (RSA, 1996) (Section 40 of the SASA (RSA, 1996a: 26)).

2.4.9 Section 21 schools and funding of non-section 21 schools

The HOD will allocate section 21 functions if the school has the required proven capacity to handle money. This will be determined by criteria such as whether the particular school has managed its own funds efficiently and also whether it complies with all the regulations as stipulated in the SASA (RSA,1996a) for example, submitting an audited statement of the school in time (within six months of the end of the financial year). If the school is granted section 21 functions, the provincial department will deposit the school resource allocations directly into the school's bank account. The requirements for the school will be to spend the allocations in the same way as non- section 21 schools, namely 60% on learning support materials; 28% on services and 12% on repairs and maintenance.

School based management has some advantages such as the SGB is in a position to select their own suppliers when purchasing learning support material and if the school is unable to spend all the funds, the SGB may still process the orders for service to be rendered since the money is still in the school bank account. The school is obliged to pay for any service that exceeds its budget. The school is also obliged to pay for water and electricity (Mestry, 2000:130-131).

For non-section 21 schools, the state allocated fund is not paid directly into a public school banking account. The current procedure used by the DoE is as follows: the DoE uses a paper budget. This means that the DoE is solely responsible for determining the amount for the resource allocations and the expenditure of the school. In view of what has been stated above, it is clear that the school will spend the funds according to the DoE guidelines. Funds will be spent on the following: learner support material, educational equipment and curriculum needs- 60%; maintenance of and repairs to buildings -12% and payments for services (municipal) - 28%. In addition, the respective schools may acquire goods and services only from the suppliers selected and authorised by the provincial DoE. The school principal is expected to fill in requisition forms and submit them to the DoE for the payment of the suppliers. The process is characterised by numerous disadvantages such as, schools are unable

to negotiate discounts, better prices or chase inefficient suppliers. The deal is done with recommended suppliers and contracted to the department (DoE), the district office does not have the capacity to process the requisitions in time because of the larger number of schools in the district, and the district office must solve problems encountered by these schools.

In cases where the supplier is not in a position to process all requisitions before the end of the year, the respective schools lose their allocation for that particular year, since there is no roll over of the unspent budgeted amounts. This means that if the school does not spend all the funds allocated by the state, the funds will not be carried over to the next financial year. Another problem is poor delivery and if no after-sale service is provided. There are also advantages in being a non-section 21 school in cases where the service provided is more than the required allocated funds by the state; the state will pay for the services. The expenditure is also divided according to the percentage used in section 21 schools (Mestry, 2004:130).

2.4.10 Financial records and statements at public schools

The SGB of a public school must keep records of funds received and the funds spent by the public school and or its assets, liabilities and financial transactions and also within three months of drawing up a financial statement according to the guidelines determined by the MEC (Section 42 of the South African School's Act) (RSA,1996a: 26)).

Mestry (2004:131) points out that according to the SASA (RSA, 1996a), financial records and a registered public accountant and auditor in terms of the public accountant and Audit Acts must audit annual financial statements. A treasurer or designated person/s may also conduct an internal audit during the course of the year. The author adds that although the schools act makes no provision for internal auditing, it is vital that the SGB has an internal auditing mechanism in place. They could appoint a team from the SGB or appoint someone from the community to do regular checks of the school's finance, for example, once a month.

A person who has a personal financial interest in the affairs of the public school may not be appointed for auditing. It is the responsibility of the SGB to submit a copy of the audited financial statement to the HOD within six months of the end of each financial year. In addition, the audited financial statement must be available for inspection (Section 43 of the South African School's Act) (RSA, 1996a:26).

2.4.11 Withdrawal of functions of SGBs

The Head of Department (HOD) may withdraw a SGB's right to perform certain functions after a thorough investigation, which is accompanied by undisputable reasons supporting the ineffectiveness of the SGB concerned. Before the HOD can take legal action, the protocol relevant to the problem must be followed. Any person aggrieved by the HOD's decision may appeal against the action. In the interim, the HOD must appoint personnel to act until an official SGB is appointed (Potgieter et al, 1997: 33). The following points regarding the withdrawal of SGB functions by the HOD must be noted:

The HOD is empowered to withdraw the functions from a SGB based on reasonable grounds. This withdrawal may not take place under subsection (2) unless the HOD has

- Informed the SGB of his /her intention and has reasons for this step.
- Granted the SGB reasonable opportunity to make representation to him or her in relation to such intentions.
- Given due consideration to any such representations received.

In the case of emergency, the HOD may not act in terms of subsection (1).

Without prior consultation with the SGB, and the HOD may therefore:

- Provide the SGB with reasons for his / her actions.
- Create a reasonable opportunity for the SGB to make representation in relation to such actions.
- Duly consider any such representation received

The HOD may suspend or reverse his or her actions in terms of subsection (3) if there are sufficient reasons.

Any person aggrieved by a decision of the HOD in terms of this section may appeal against the decision to the Member of the Executive Council (MEC) (Section 22 of the South African School's Act) (RSA, 1996a:18).

According to section 25 of the South African School's Act (RSA, 1996a:20):

If a governing body has ceased to perform its functions, the Head of Department must appoint sufficient persons to perform those functions for a period not exceeding three months.

The HOD may extend the period referred to in subsection (1), by further periods not exceeding three months each, but the total period may not exceed one year

The HOD must ensure that a governing body is elected in terms of this Act within a year after the appointment of persons contemplated in subsection (1).

A governing body member may withdraw from a meeting of a SGB during the discussions and decision-making on any matters in which they have a personal interest. Nevertheless, it is not clear what the consequences of non-withdrawal will be and whether the decision thus taken will be void (Visser, 1997:635).

2.4.12 Summary

Statutory bodies were legal bodies and were only privileged, by government to perform certain tasks, although the main aim of these bodies was to participate in the education of their children, these bodies were unable to produce the vehicles for parental participation in education. Members of the structures were appointed and elected by the government. PTSAs were structures representing parents in the education of their children. They performed certain functions at school level. Although they received certain training, they did not enjoy enough support from the community because they were viewed as government structures. Hence, majority representation in South Africa demanded democratically elected representation in education structures. Shortly after the unbanning of certain political parties such as the ANC, and near the time of the democratic elections, schools became targets of violence, there was continuous mass action and sanctions were imposed by the government.

School governing bodies were to be established in South Africa in 1997 in all public schools. The parents were expected to become members of the SGBs, in order to restore the rights of parents to be involved in the schools serving their children. In this new millennium, the government introduced basic powers that would be conferred on the SGBs and the possibility of negotiated powers. SGBs are by nature critical structures for the delivery of effective teaching and learning in schools. The various component members therefore need to perform their functions and their roles in a way that promotes the best interests of the child in the school environment. In addition, the government is responsible for funding the learner's education. Discussions and political factors have clearly played a major role in sharing ideas on how the financial policy should be utilised by all public schools. The SGB is responsible

for the financial matters and the principal is an accounting officer for the school finances. The school funds must be used for the school and learners' needs.

2.5. CONCERNS WITH REGARD TO THE FUNCTIONING OF THE SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY

2.5.1 Introduction

There has been a major shift to the self-governance of public schools in South Africa. Self managing is underpinned by the notion of democracy and effectiveness in schools. Power is typically devolved to school SGBs while operational management is the responsibility of the SMTs. The idea of the participation of different stakeholders is welcome in our country in order for the schools to benefit. Capacity building is particularly important for all SGBs in the developing countries, especially in South African public schools. Against this background, the following concerns with regard to the effectiveness of the SGBs, need to be discussed:

These concerns include aspects regarding the following areas:

Governance in public schools.

Governing body serving two or more public schools.

Governance and professional management of public schools.

Enhancement of the capacity of governing bodies.

What is needed to enable governors to perform their duties optimally?

The concerns mentioned above will be discussed in the following sections against the background of the past imbalances and the legacies of the past government that had to be addressed in the present educational situation.

2.5.2 Governance in public schools

School governance is one of the most significant roles of the country's new democratic governance policy, which encourages partnership and active participation in education. The concern was that it must be a genuine partnership between a broad community and a

provincial department of education, in which the education department's role is restricted to a minimum requirement for legal accountability. Although committees have different experience in governance, the department's role in ensuring accountability will be the same from one school to another. The balance of power in decision-making will rest on the SGB's capacity to govern judiciously. Good public school governance requires a flourishing partnership, based on mutual interest and confidence amongst the constituencies, regarding the SGB, which will support the school fully (RSA, 1996c:17-18).

According to Ngidi (2004:260), changes in education governance have taken place worldwide. One of the most important reforms in England and Wales, as well as in South Africa was the devolution of responsibilities to governing bodies and principals under the pressure of public accountability. In other nations' educational systems, similar bodies to English and Welsh school governors existed as mechanisms to ensure school accountability. Following the advent of the Government of National Unity on 27 April 1994, changes in school governance have also taken place in South Africa. Governing bodies have replaced school committees. The South African Schools Act (RSA, 1996a) makes provision for the governance as well as the professional management of public schools. The SGBs had to be established in all public schools in South Africa in 1997. The aim was to increase parental involvement in the schools serving their children, to encourage parents to accept the ownership and responsibility for the schools. However, concerns were raised that as parents were unprepared for this new responsibility, this aim could only be achieved if the provincial educational authorities established training programmes to assist in preparing parents for this new responsibility (Pretorius & Lemmer, 1998:23).

Partnership in education between social structures with an interest in education is important for the effective provision of education and although it was not fully acknowledged in the past by the state, it is extended in the current democratic era (Dekker & Van Schalkwyk, 1995:483). Amongst the most interesting of transformational events, the current government advocated partnerships in public schools, for the school to become the centre of community life. A solution for another of the concerns regarding the fact that certain inherent problems could hamper the formation of a partnership, can be found in introducing regulations that will restrict access to only those who have legitimate business in the school. Furthermore, the principals, as the Department of Education representatives, are expected to spearhead the process of partnership. All this can be achieved by forging a working partnership with the

governing body, so that together, they can be in a position to achieve the vision and mission of the public school jointly in the community (Asmal, 1999:8).

Mabasa and Themane (2002:11) state that in the heat of the political struggle of the 1980s, initiatives taken such as the establishment of Parent-Teacher-Student Associations (see section 2.2.2.2), did not succeed in establishing an inclusive and participatory system. The dream of having an inclusive system was only realised later when the SASA (RSA, 1996a) was passed shortly after the advent of a post - apartheid government in 1994. The task of establishing a new ethos for school governance was by no means an easy one because of the long and entrenched history of undemocratic and exclusionary practices in the school environment.

The Department of Education (DoE) continues to encourage and seek greater parental involvement in the education sector, as this is an indispensable cornerstone for a successful education system. Importantly, since parents are deeply concerned about the education of their children, the new education structure will make it easier for educators to assist parents to play their full partnership role for the benefit of the children (Educamus, 1988:5).

The SGBs are pivotal to the new, democratic model of organisation, governance and funding of schools as indicated in the SASA (RSA, 1996a) in the restructuring of the educational system in South Africa. Concern can be expressed with regard to whether the SGBs really perform their required expected duties or not. Undoubtedly, in some of the provinces the effectiveness of the SGBs has been affected negatively by poor infrastructure, as well as the lack of resources and training. The Teacher (1998:4) allays fears by announcing that many SGBs are operational and their members are profoundly committed to creating a positive attitude and are committed to enhancing the environment that is conducive for the optimal functioning of schools..

It is important to note that governance in schools requires a clear line of demarcation of responsibilities, with a clear and practically defined process and procedures for democratic governance in order to reduce centres of conflict and instead, to encourage smooth and effective school governance (The Teacher, Sept/Oct 1995:3).

The different activities performed by SGBs and SMTs are aimed at supporting the teaching and learning that is taking place in schools. These activities also help to develop and empower both the SMTs and the SGBs with the required skills in order to upgrade the standard of governance in schools. This can also help to manage the existing grey areas. It is also the responsibility of the school principal and the SGB chairperson to manage the relationship between the SGB and the SMT of their particular school (Beckmann & Visser, 1999:155).

2.5.3 SGB serving two or more public schools

The MEC has the authority to determine that the governance of two or more public schools may legally fall under the jurisdiction of a single governing body. The concerns expressed pertained to the practical arrangements that would be appropriate and in the interest of the schools in question. The MEC is legally obliged to follow the correct procedures such as giving notice in the Provincial Gazette of his or her intention to follow a specific course of action. Furthermore, interested parties must be given an opportunity to make written submissions within a period of not less than 30 days and all submissions must be considered (Section 17 of the South African School's Act) (RSA, 1996a:14).

2.5.4 Governance and professional management of public schools

In broad terms, governance may be regarded as the formal system, which is concerned with the exercising of authority by governing body members; whilst professional management (administration) refers to the day-to-day professional activities carried out by the school principal in conjunction with the SMT. These activities are aimed at ensuring that there is a culture of teaching and learning at schools and are also aimed at developing the effectiveness of the SMTs, as well as the proficiency of all the educators involved in managing the school (Beckmann & Visser, 1999:155). Potgieter *et al* (1997:12) point out that the South African Schools Act stipulates that the professional management of a public school must take place under the leadership of the principal under the authority of the HOD. This means that the principal has delegated powers to organise and control teaching and learning at the school effectively. However, the HOD has the power to expect co-operation and compliance from the principal in matters of school management. However, the principals' delegated power is problematic. Botha (2004: 242) argues that there is a need to review the principal's performance using an outside agency since schools do not know whom to turn to for advice.

Bush and Heystek (2003:136) state that the South African Government goes beyond general guidance to make what appears to be a clear statement of the respective roles of the governing body and what is called professional management. The governing body's responsibilities are extensive and appear to exclude only matters relating to teaching and learning during the school day, the purchase of educational supplies and the operational management of personnel and finance. The authors add that the literature shows that in England and Australia, the governing bodies are likely to require substantial support from the principal in carrying out their responsibilities. It is a concern that, given the lack of experience of school-level democracy in South Africa, this is likely to be even more the case for most SGBs of South African schools. What is reassuring though, is the fact that although parents in the Gauteng Province in poor areas are reluctant to undergo training, in rural schools the training of SGBs does make a difference. Therefore, the principal of a township school should welcome orientation training for his/her parent governors to help him/her to understand what their tasks and functions are in the SGBs.

Pretorius and Lemmer (1998:21) point out that education is the shared responsibility between schools, parents, learners (in secondary schools) and members of the community. Governance and management are interrelated, and these two separate functions are both aimed at enabling the school to provide effective education. Governance is widely agreed to be concerned with the formulation and the adoption of policy, whereas management is concerned with the day-to-day delivery of education. Van Wyk (2004:540) comments that the shift to the decentralisation of schools requires the governors, principals and educators to acquire a variety of skills and to become capacitated in order to be able to deal with the complex issues pertaining to their expected tasks or challenges

However, when taken together, the two terms, the 'governance' and 'management' of public schools, refer to the mechanisms that regulate the balance of power in the school decision-making process (Bauch & Goldring, 1998:24). However, problems can arise with the maintenance of the balance of power; and undoubtedly, this is an area of concern for everyone involved.

Constitutional principles for successful and co-operative governance is essential and may be applied to school governance and therefore to the members of the SGB and the activities performed by them. The concern is there that conflict can arise in schools between the

governance and management functions of the school. Therefore, it is of vital importance that the SGB members must strive to accomplish unity and stability in public schools. They must engage in the effective, transparent and accountable governance of their schools. Furthermore, they must exercise co-operative governance characterised by mutual trust that is fostered by encouraging friendly relations, helping and supporting one another, keeping to the agreed procedures and avoiding legal action against one another (Potgieter *et al*, 1997: 19).

Section 16 of the SASA (RSA, 1996a: 14) states that the governance of every public school is vested in its governing body. As such, the SGB stands in a position of trust regarding the school. Subject to this law and any other applicable provincial law, the principal under the authority of the HOD undertakes the professional management of a public school.

There is a concern that notwithstanding the fact that the SASA (RSA, 1996) makes a clear distinction between governance and professional management, the roles and responsibilities of the school governors and the school management team are not always clear-cut. A case in point is that members of the school management team, that is the principal and the deputy principal, serve on the SGB of a public school; therefore, a conflict of interests may arise (Squelch, 2001:140). Baber (1993: 63) argues that there is little attempt to distinguish between the role of a governing body and that of the head teacher. The distinction is undoubtedly poorly defined. The idea of governors being responsible for the internal organisation of a school is extremely vague and none of the training courses, handouts, packs, videos and booklets shed proper light on the topic. Equilibrium is the maintenance of balance between the roles through common sense and good relationships. The concern can be raised that maintaining equilibrium between the SGB and the SMT remains problematic. It is clear that maintaining good relations needs strong and careful supervision by both the principal and the chairperson of the SGB respectively (Beckmann & Visser, 1999:155). It is of crucial importance for the school and the community that there is a good relationship between the SGB and the principal to ensure that an optimal teaching and learning situation is attained in public schools (Heystek, 2004:308).

Undoubtedly, a healthy relationship between the principal and the SGB is very important and essential for the SGBs to be able to help principals, educators and other staff members to carry out their respective professional activities. What is extremely important is that the principal and other officers of the Education Department must give all the necessary

assistance to the governing body in the performance of their activities related to the act (Potgieter *et al*, 1997:13).

Mestry (2004:127) indicates that many educationists have attempted to differentiate between professional management and governance but it is evident that there is an overlap between these two concepts. These grey areas have given rise to many conflicts between principals and parents members of the SGBs. Table 1 below illustrates the differences between professional management and governance.

Table 1: Some of the differences between professional management and Governance

Principal Professional management under the authority of the HOD)	Governing Body Governance
Perform and carry out professional (management) functions Administer and organise day-to-day teaching and learning at the school Perform the departmental responsibilities prescribed by law Organise all the activities which support teaching and learning Manage personnel and finances Decide on the intra-mural curriculum, that is all the activities to assist with teaching and learning during school hours Decide on textbooks, educational materials and equipment to be bought.	Adopt (accept) a constitution, adopt a code of conduct and develop the mission statement of the school Control and maintain school property, buildings and grounds Buy textbooks, educational materials or equipment for the school Supplement the funds supplied by the state to improve the quality of education in the school Start and administer a school fund Open and maintain a bank account for the school Prepare an annual budget, that is planning the school finances for the next year Submit budget to parents and get their approval Ensure that school fees (school funds to be paid by the parents of learners) are collected according to decisions made by stakeholders Keep the financial records of the school

Source Mestry (2004:127)

Therefore, parents must support and not interfere in the professional work of teachers. The principal is the highest authority when it comes to the running of the school and possesses authority that is advantageous for the school. The concern expressed would be that, since principals are given a great deal of power and authority they can be misused if he/she is not a person with high principles. Although responsible principals can make decisions that are advantageous to the school, principals who make irresponsible decisions are sabotaging the national efforts to build a nation based on sound moral ethical values since they have the huge responsibility of ensuring that the school is run effectively and efficiently (DoE, 2000:3). Therefore, Maile (2002:331) argues that it is not enough to simply state that parents are responsible for school governance and that the principal deals with the professional management without clearly demarcating their roles and indicating their meeting points. This will act as a safeguard against any possible misuse or abuse of power.

2.5.5 Enhancement of the capacity of SGBs

Capacity training can be seen as the assistance or introductory course or continuing training provided to the governors (SGBs) of public schools. The purpose of training these governors is to assist the inexperienced governors to perform their required functions with confidence. What is evident is that even those governors who have experience now need to be redeveloped with specific reference to the provision given in the SASA (RSA, 1996a). Apart from the abovementioned factors with regard to the capacity training of the SGBs, another important factor is that capacity training for public school governors is an essential aspect that needs to be kept in mind. Further training is essential to ensure the efficient and effective participation of various stakeholders in the fields of governance and management of schools, to enhance the quality of education provided to learners in the whole country in totality. The education authorities need to train SGB members in order to eliminate potentially severe problems that could defeat the whole purpose of public school SGBs as a democratic mechanism to localise governance (Beckmann & Visser, 1999:158 & 160). Van Wyk (2004: 54) recommends that the training offered to the SGBs should be offered in their mother tongue and not the language that suits the providers.

In addition, they should also be provided with copies of the Schools Act in their own languages. Van Wyk (2004:50) remarks that there is concern on the part of the government that many SGBs, particularly in the rural and less advantaged urban areas, do not have the

required skills and experience to exercise the new powers conferred on them and may have difficulty in fulfilling their functions. Hence, the provincial government is obliged to make funds available to establish programmes to provide introductory training for newly elected SGB members, which will enable them to perform their expected functions more proficiently. They will also provide continuing training for the SGB members, which will develop their ability to perform their functions effectively and give them the advantage of being able to assume additional functions. It is of immediate concern therefore, that the HOD must ensure that principals and other officers of the Education Department render all the required necessary assistance and support to the SGBs in fulfilling their functions (Section 19 of the South African School's Act) (RSA, 1996a). The Black Sash Education and Training Unit (2004:3) recommend that the Provincial Head of Department must set up a programme to provide training for newly elected governing body to help them perform their functions.

According to Beckmann & Visser, (1999:158) training and assistance to SGBs should cover the following legal aspects:

Aspects of the Constitution which impact directly or indirectly on the functioning of governing bodies and on whose achievement in the school setting, SGBs could in turn impact upon.

Aspects of The South African Schools Act (SASA) (RSA, 1996a); in particular those sections which provide directly for particular facets of the functioning of governing bodies. Reference may be made to functions such as:

- Those regarding a code of conduct for learners (section 8).
- Rules for religious observances at a specific school (s).
- A constitution for the governing body (sections 18 and 21(b)).
- A language policy for the school (see section 6).
- An admission policy (section 5(5)); (see also Visser, 1998:487-491), "The admission of learners to public schools: who makes the decisions?"
- The functions to be carried out in terms of sections 20 and 21.
- Financial obligations.

Members of SGBs (the majority of such members hold public office without being employed in the public sector) need to be made aware of the fact that they are not laws unto themselves but that the executive authority associated with their governance functions requires them to honour certain legal provisions and tenets.

Various policies and regulations, for example:

- Regarding norms and standards for a language policy (Notice 1701 in GG 18546 of 1997-12-19) (RSA, 1997).
- Guidelines for codes of conduct (Notice 776 in GG 18900 of 1998-03-15) (RSA, 1998a).
- Norms and standards regarding admission of learners (Notice 2432 in GG of 1998-10-19) that have been published to provide governing bodies and other stakeholders with guidelines and norms regarding certain tasks or functions that they need to perform (RSA, 1998c).

In this regard, it appears that SGBs will need to be sensitised to the fact that they have certain policy-making responsibilities, which requires that they do not merely repeat enabling laws but instead devise strategies to realise the values underpinning such legislation. Further concern is expressed by Bush and Heystek (2003:136), that research done in Gauteng reveals that most SGBs have not been proactive in formulating the necessary policies. Many policies are not in place, including the SGB constitutions because they lack the confidence or skills to do so themselves. Instead, the parents rely on the principal to do the work for them because of their low literacy levels.

Administrative law aspects that inform the implementation of certain of the above mentioned functions (for example, the requirements for valid administrative acts). Therefore, the concern would be the above-mentioned aspects would be really covered in the training of the SGBs in order to improve and develop the SGBs legal practices as far as the functions of the SGBs are concerned in public schools.

Certain province-specific provisions or policies (for example, the Gauteng regulations concerning governing bodies and guidelines regarding the interpretation of what constitutes serious misconduct – see Notice 937 in Provincial Gazette Extraordinary 480 of 1998-04-17).(Beckmann & Visser, 1999: 158)

2.5.6 What is needed to enable governors to perform their duties optimally?

The previous section indicated the legal content that should be incorporated into capacity training and building programmes for governors. The following guidelines are given in this regard:

The programmes must be delivered by a network of providers including special sectors within the provincial education departments themselves or individuals or consortia of service providers under appropriate agencies and the Education Management Development Institution or similar entity within, for example the National Department of Education.

The diversity of schools and governors must be taken into consideration and people must not be coerced to make use of inappropriate training. Assessment procedures must be built into relevant programmes to save money and to avoid the traditional ineffective “shotgun” approaches to training.

.Interpreting services should be available where required.

The development and structure of the material should accommodate all cultural groups using the programmes.

The success of all the programmes should be assessed and the programmes should be refined regularly (Beckman & Visser, 1999:159).

It is essential that the implementation of the above-mentioned strategies should be carried through so that SGBs can function more effectively in future.

2.5.7 Summary

One of the developments after the 1994 election was the establishment of more effective participation of different stakeholders in public schools, under the supervision and guidance of the Department of Education. More direct role of the stakeholders was established. A key factor was the serious concerns about a more practical distinction concerning the roles of the different stakeholders, such as governance in public schools, the governing body serving more or two public schools, the governance and professional management of public school. Lastly, enhancement of the capacity of governing bodies and what is needed to enable governors to perform their duties optimally.

2.6 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, SGBs functioning was outlined and placed within the context of public primary schools. The realities and the concerns about the functions of the SGBs were addressed. This was viewed against the background of the parents of learners of the schools in question, with the inclusion of community participation in education. The research also addressed the necessity of parental involvement in the education of their children. It was also established that a number of factors affects parents' participation negatively. Parents need training so that they can participate more effectively in the SGBs. This will help schools to utilise parents to the advantage of the school.

Problems that hamper the effective functioning of the different stakeholders were looked at. From the discussions, it became clear that though the ineffectiveness of parents in public schools is a universal phenomenon, there are also unique problems pertaining to the proper understanding of the SASA (RSA, 1996a) by the SGBs especially in traditionally black public schools.

In the following chapter, attention will be given to a description of the methodology of the study. This includes the limitations experienced by the researcher, the rationale behind the choice of methods, design of the study and the procedures.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The nature of data gathering in this study was qualitative. This chapter is concerned with a description (written representation) of the methodology and design which were employed to explore the effective functioning of SGBs in public schools. The chapter begins with the theoretical basis of the qualitative methodology, including a rationale of the problem under investigation. This is followed by a description of the design of the study, including the procedures applied during observations, document analysis and the interviewing of informants, data collection, as well as the validity and reliability of this research.

First of all, we shall look at research design which is based on certain aims that need to be realised through this research.

3.2 RESEARCH AIMS

The aim of this research was to investigate the effective functioning of the SGBs in public schools, given the fact that SGBs have an inadequate capacity to function effectively. This research also aimed at exploring the legal governance of SGBs and this aspect was investigated with respect to public schools.

3.3 RESEARCH APPROACH

A number of research questions were formulated or generated from the above statement and from the problem statement in chapter 1 (see section 1.5). These research questions are based on a specific approach, which will be explained in the next section.

‘All research methodology rests upon acceptable principles: the nature of data and the problem for research dictate the research methodology’ (Leedy, 1989:15).

The terms 'quantitative' and 'qualitative' are frequently used to identify different approaches. Educational research involves both approaches. The obvious distinction between quantitative and qualitative is the form of presentation of the data. The nature of the data in turn, dictates the methodology. In qualitative methodology, the data is verbalised whereas, if the data is numerical, the methodology is quantitative. Quantitative research therefore, presents statistical results represented by numbers unlike qualitative research, which presents facts using the narration of words. Data gathering in qualitative research is thus in the form of words rather than numbers (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993:14). The author also adds that an experienced researcher may combine both quantitative and qualitative methodology in a single order to investigate a particular research problem. In the next section, qualitative methodology will be discussed in more detail and methods such as observations, interviews and data analysis will be utilised.

3.3.1 Qualitative methodology – a theoretical basis

According to Wiersma (1991:14), there has been much discussion and a considerable body of literature about the distinction, merits and limitations of qualitative and quantitative research. The author adds further that the distinction is not a dichotomy but a qualitative continuum. For example, ethnographic research, which is certainly placed towards the qualitative end, may involve some quantitative measures. The research method should be directed at meeting the requirements of the study being conducted and the quantitative procedures used should meet that criterion.

Quantitative research is content specific with the researcher's role being one of the inclusions in the situation. Qualitative research is based on the notion of content sensitivity, the belief that the particular physical and social environments have great bearing on human behaviour. Qualitative researchers emphasise holistic interpretations; they perceive facts and values as inextricably linked. Quantitative researchers, on the other hand, look for more context free generalisations. They are much more willing to focus on individual variables and facts, rather than on concentrating on a holistic interpretation. Typically, quantitative researchers strive to separate facts and values (Wiersma, 1991: 14).

Glesne (1999: 4-5) indicates that quantitative methodology characterises the world as made up of observable, measurable facts. In contrast, qualitative methods are generally supported

by an interpretive paradigm, which portray the world in which reality is socially constructed, as complex and ever changing. The ontological belief of interprevists, therefore, is that social realities are constructed by the participants in those social settings. Moreover, qualitative researchers interact and talk with participants about their perceptions. The researchers seeks out a variety of perspectives, they do not try to reduce the multiple interpretations to a single norm.

Le Compte *et al* (1993: 2-7) describe qualitative research as idea driven research. The authors further maintain that to conduct any inquiry of any sort, somebody must have an idea. As the inquiry proceeds, the idea that promotes it should become not only better formed but also better informed. The one critical attribute that both qualitative and quantitative approaches share is that each begins with the idea that reflects human judgment, the severest critics of qualitative research sometimes argue that their research is driven by what appears to be a completely subjective, hopeless human decision about what to study. The author believes that problem setting is the pivotal act in all sciences; this applies to both the social as well as the natural sciences.

On the other hand, McMillan and Schumacher (1993: 372-373), describe qualitative research as a naturalistic inquiry, the use of non-interfering data collection strategies to discover the natural flow of events and how participants interpreted them. Most qualitative research describes and analyses people and also individuals and analyses social actions, beliefs, thoughts and perceptions too. Qualitative researchers collect data by interacting with selected persons in their settings and by obtaining the relevant documentation. This is precisely how data in this investigation was collected. Relevant documentation such as government policy documents issued by the DoE, including the constitution and circulars from the DoE were used in this investigation. These documents will be discussed in chapter 4 of this study. Qualitative research is also concerned with the understanding of social phenomena. Regarding the participant perspective and the understanding is acquired by analysing the diverse contexts of the participants and by narrating the meanings of participants attached to these situations and events. Participants' meaning includes their feelings, beliefs, and thoughts.

Eisner (1991:32-40) outlines the six features of a qualitative study. Here they are briefly discussed in relation to this study:

Qualitative studies should be field focussed. In education, those conducting qualitative research go out to schools, visit classrooms and observe teachers. The researcher observed the SGB members of the three schools in action, watched teachers and community members interact in order to acquire the information needed, conducted, recorded and described the interviews that took place in that particular school and also recorded, described, interpreted and appraised settings as they were.

In qualitative research, the self is considered to be an instrument that engages with the situation and makes sense of it. This is carried out most often without observation schedules; and it is not a matter of observing behaviour, but rather of perceiving its presence and interpreting its significance.

The third feature that makes the study qualitative is its interpretive character.

Interpretive here has two meanings:

- Enquirers try to account for what they have given an account.
- Qualitative enquirers target the underlying aspects of manifested behaviour to ascertain the meaning attached to events by the participants

In this study, the most significant focus is on what the SGBs do and not on what the action means to them.

The fourth feature that qualitative studies display is the use of expressive language.

A fifth feature of qualitative studies is the attention to particulars.

The sixth feature of qualitative studies pertains to the criteria for judging their success.

Qualitative research is valid because of its coherence, insight and the totality of this instrument. In this investigation, there is always room for differences and debate because facts never speak for themselves.

3.3.2 The researcher's stance

In the above discussion, it was indicated that the qualitative researcher collects data by gathering it from carefully selected participants in their settings and by obtaining relevant documentation. The researcher collected data by means of qualitative methods such as

observations, interviews and document analysis, data was collected by interacting with identified informants. This enabled the researcher to gain an understanding of the particulars and the informants' understanding of their topic under investigation from their own perspective.

The researcher was also invited to attend three workshops organised by the DoE at which events she was able to observe the debates and then interact and share viewpoints with delegates regarding the issue under investigation.

In addition, the researcher was invited to attend a workshop in the Teachers Centre in Alberton in November 2006. The workshop organised by the DoE, was about training the incoming-newly elected SGB members to ensure their expected effective functioning in all public schools. As a key instrument in data gathering, the researcher's stance requires a further explanation in terms of disciplined subjectivity, which will be done in the next section.

3.3.3 Disciplined subjectivity

The effectiveness of SGBs in public schools is receiving considerable attention in South Africa today and the researcher does not necessarily have to agree with the views expressed in the SASA (RSA, 1996a). Therefore, it is significant for the researcher to assume a stance of disciplined subjectivity and put himself/herself in the informants' shoes in order to understand the matter under investigation from their point of view. The researcher was also a permanent staff member at one of the schools to which she organised an official visit with the view of observing the meetings held by the SGBs and she also held discussions with participants regarding the issues under investigation.

McMillan and Schumacher (1993: 373 & 374), support the view that a qualitative researcher is concerned with the understanding of a particular phenomenon from the participants' perspective. Understanding is acquired through analysing the many contexts in which the participants function and by recording the participants' interpretation of the particular situations and events in which they find themselves, as well as the meanings they ascribe to them. The participants' meaning includes feelings, beliefs, thoughts and actions. The authors maintain further that qualitative researchers become "immersed" in the situation and the phenomenon studied. They add that the researchers assume an interactive social role in which

they record observations and interactions with participants in many situations. Data collection should be done by a skilled person, using various instruments rather than using only one single instrument.

The researcher's involvement in (some of) the workshops (see section 3.5.2) is aligned to one of Eisner's six features of qualitative study discussed in section 3.3.1, namely that qualitative researchers consider the self as an instrument that engages in the situation and makes sense of it. The researcher reviewed the relevant documents namely, the presentations made during the workshops. In this regard, the researcher's stance regarding presentations made during the workshops required her/him to be objective. Regarding the presentations made during the workshops in this study, the researcher observed the situation, analysing the relevant documents and synthesising the content, while striving to maintain a non-judgmental and impartial attitude, regarding the topic under investigation.

In addition, the researcher assumes different roles, such becoming a researcher through observations and becoming an interviewer of participants in formal and informal conversations.

The researcher also becomes a learner and for that matter, a curious student. In the process, the researcher should avoid assuming the role of an expert or authority to encourage the participants to impart the needed information freely (Eisner, 1991:44).

3.4 DATA COLLECTION

According to Mothata *et al* (2000: 41-42) data refer to information collected through research. A researcher collects data by using recognised methods and presents his/her data (findings) in an organised fashion. The authors add that the nature of the data dictate the methodology. If the data is verbal, the methodology is qualitative; if the data is numerical, the methodology is quantitative.

Three types of data collection techniques were found to be appropriate for this investigation. Firstly, the study is based mainly on observations. Observations were supplemented by semi-structured interviews and lastly, a literature review of the related documents pertaining to the topic under investigation to support the emerging findings from both observations and

interviews was undertaken. To ascertain how effectively the SGBs function in public primary schools, the three types of data collection methods just discussed, can be undertaken by the researcher. In this regard, the following activities might be undertaken, although data collection would not be limited to these activities.

The collection and reviewing of the relevant documents and records related to the factors that can have an effect on the effective functioning of SGBs.

Observation of the interactions between SGB members in three identified schools by the researcher.

Interviewing any available outgoing (ex) SGB members as well as the current SGBs in the three schools.

One of the requirements before any data collection takes place, is to identify the necessary measuring instruments and perhaps to develop others if data is to be in the descriptive narrative format and the researcher must be prepared to take field notes (Wiersma, 1991:11).

Wiersma (1991:84) indicates that when preparing for data collection and during the actual data collection process, the qualitative researcher deals with a host of issues. The researcher must gain access to the sites (identified as the places of data collection) and which may require special arrangements. If the researcher is conducting the study in his/her own situation, access may be automatic and data collection may be unobtrusive.

In this study, the researcher conducted the investigations in her own school and two other schools identified as rich in information. Tentative arrangements to enter the school premises were made in the form of letters that were addressed to the SGBs and the SMTs of each identified school specifically. The letters indicated the dates of the proposed visits, as well as the times, venues and the participants that would be involved.

Next, observations will be discussed in terms of how they relate to this study.

3.4.1 Observations

According to McMillan and Schumacher (1993: 256), the term ‘observation’ is used to describe the data that are collected, regardless of the techniques that are employed in the

study. The authors add that it is a more specific method of collecting information and is very different from interviews or questionnaires. It relies on the researchers seeing and hearing certain phenomena and recording these observations, rather than relying on the subjects' self-report responses to questions or statement.

Furthermore, Merriam (1998:111) describes observations as the major means of collecting data in qualitative research. It offers a firsthand account of the situation under, study, when combined with interviewing and document analysis; it allows for the holistic interpretation of the phenomenon under investigation. The author also indicates that it is the technique of choice when behaviour can be observed firsthand or when people cannot or will not discuss the research topic.

McMillan and Schumacher (1993: 420) describe observations as an active process which include muted cues, facial expressions, gestures, tone of voice and other unverballed social interactions on the part of the subjects which convey a specific meaning.

Observations have been described as the most direct technique for obtaining data. It is not what participants have written about the topic, or what they say they do, instead it reflects their actual performance (Gillman, 2000:46).

Observations are quite unstructured, with the emphasis of falling on capturing the perspective of the individuals under observation and this requires careful listening. Furthermore, it is a continuous process and is not limited to one or two sessions (Wiersma 1991:230). The primary advantage of observations is that the researcher records behaviour as it occurs naturally in real life (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993:257).

In this study, the researcher observed participant interactions in the three schools in their natural settings. In addition, in this study, as is the case with any observational study, the aim is to gather first-hand information about social processes in a naturally occurring context that was carried out in the natural settings of the three schools.

Merriam (1998:95-96) indicates that an investigator might want to gather data through observations for many reasons. As an outsider, an observer will notice phenomena that have become routine to the participants themselves, but may lead to a better understanding of the

context. When gathering data through observations, what the qualitative investigator must bear in mind is that he/she should pay special attention to a few matters to which others ordinarily give only passing attention. At some stage, people might not feel free to talk about or may not even want to discuss certain topics. In studying a small educational unit, for example, the researcher might observe dissension and strife among certain staff members that an interview would not reveal. Observations are also used to triangulate the emerging findings, that is, they are used in conjunction with interviews and document analysis in order to substantiate the findings.

Since carrying out observations is a process and is not limited to one or two sessions, the researcher needs to understand the participants' behaviour and their situation in totality over an extended period. The researcher is a permanent staff member in one of the schools under investigation and also visited other two schools per appointment. In this case, the observer was in school A every day, the whole day, as one of the educators, which meant that the observations could be carried out as a process over a certain period of time.

Wiersma (1991:229) also indicates that observers must try to be as unobtrusive as possible so that they do not interfere with the normal day-to-day activities. They relate to the idea that contextualisation is needed to understand behaviour in terms of the context in which it is observed. The author mentions further that amongst others the researcher must have different means of interpreting events. These different means of interpreting observations will extend beyond an objective recording of what is happening.

In the following section, the various roles of the researcher will be examined in an educational context

3.4.1.1 Researcher's role

(a) Participant observations

According to McMillan and Schumacher (1993:416), a participant observer is a person who has a role in the site, which he/she intends to study. A participant observer is somebody attempting to assume the role of the individuals under study to experience their thoughts, feelings and actions (Wiersma, 1991:229).

One of the ways a qualitative researcher can gain credibility in the research situation is to be an effective participant observer. The researcher could achieve this by being able to adjust or accommodate himself/herself to the situation so that he/she “fits in” in an instrumental manner to gather the required data. Although the idea behind participant observations is that it should continue throughout the period of data collection, it is particularly important at the beginning stages because of its role of informing the researcher about the appropriate areas of investigation and in developing sound research and other relationships (Glesne, 1999: 65 & 43-45).

Glesne (1999:43) writes that participant observations provide the opportunity to acquire the status of a “trusted person”. Through participant observations – through being a part of a social setting –one learns firsthand how the actions of research participants correspond to their words, see patterns of behaviour, experience the unexpected, as well as the expected, and develop a quality of trust with the others that motivates them to tell one what they might otherwise not disclose. The author adds that the interview questions that developed through participant observations are aimed at knowing and understanding the behaviour of the participants. Therefore, the answers of the participants can be interpreted better.

The rationale behind participant observations is that in many instances, the perception from inside is not the same as from the outside (Gay, 1990:208). In this study, the researcher’s role is to hear, see and interact with the participants in all spheres and it is also advantageous to be the eyewitness in the three schools in order to collect the primary data through participant observations.

The main aim of the participant observer is to understand the research setting, the participants and also their behaviour. To achieve this, the researcher must have enough time and also take a learner’s stance. The author indicates further that the only way to maintain this stance is by being flexible and open to changing one’s point of view and again through participant observations, the researcher must strive to make the strange familiar and the familiar strange. The strange becomes familiar in the process of understanding it. To make the familiar strange is more difficult because the researcher will have to go through a series of questions, for example, why is this happening in this way and not that way? All the above-mentioned facts will provide the researcher with new points of view and different ways of thinking about some of the aspects of social interaction. (Glesne, 1999:45-46).

According to Glesne (1999:60), participant observation refers to a way of being present in everyday settings in the way that enhances your awareness and curiosity about the interactions taking place around you. The author further adds that you become immersed in the setting, people and the research questions. In this study, the researcher interacts with the participants at certain pre-arranged times.

The researcher must be able to suspend his or her personal judgement and concerns so that he/she is in a position to consider what the connections are to the phenomenon/a under study. This will also help the researcher to maintain credibility. The researcher should furthermore avoid giving advice or reinforce incidental happenings, because this supports the impression that the researcher assumes a judgmental or an expert role. Assuming a certain role may provide the researcher an opportunity to observe participants in their usual context (Glesne, 1999:60-62).

One of Glesne's recommendations is that the participant observer should guard against being a change agent or a judge; instead, he/she should stay at the psychological margin of the interaction, and remain marginal so that the researcher can stay longer even if the group members are no longer friendly with each other. This will ensure that the researcher is not viewed as the centre of attention and this will enable the researcher to begin to experience what others see, think and feel (Glesne, 1999:63-64).

In this study, the researcher adopted a participant role. This position enabled the researcher to form a picture of people's perceptions of reality expressed through their actions and also through verbalisation of their feelings, thoughts and beliefs.

The role of the researcher is very complex and he/she becomes the primary instrument (Gall et al, 1996:554). This means that the researcher collects data and becomes personally involved in the phenomenon being studied. That is the case in this study as the researcher collected the data and also became involved in the phenomenon under study.

(b) Preparing for observations

It is recommended that qualitative observers should undertake their observations under the guidance of expert qualitative researchers, to enable novice researchers to develop an

understanding of how to approach their observations and how to shift across the three stages, namely, the descriptive, focussed and selected stages respectively as described below (Gall et al, 1996:346). Even if the novice researcher experiences problems, the expert researcher will be there to guide him/her.

(c) Determining the focus of observation

According to Gall *et al* (1996:346), the focus of qualitative research observations is likely to shift from the early to later stages of a study, for example, the first stage is the descriptive stage when observations tend to be unfocussed and general in scope, providing a base from which the observer can branch out in many directions. The second stage is the focussed stage, when the observer has identified the features of the phenomenon under study and begins to direct his/her attention to collect deeper information about this narrow range of features. Finally, there is the selected stage, when the researcher's focus shifts to refining and deepening his/her understanding of specific elements that have emerged as theoretically or empirically most essential. The author also indicates that observational data are gathered until the researchers achieve theoretical saturation, that is, when newly gathered findings essentially replicate earlier ones.

(d) Recording of observations

Guidelines are mentioned below for note taking as a participant observer.

According to McMillan and Schumacher (1993:417), the most elementary requirement of this methodology is field residence, in which the researcher is present in the field for an extensive period. The researcher will be present on the site according to pre-arranged hours. In this study, the researcher will be present during working hours and also after hours as per arrangement.

When it comes to the time the researcher needs to spend on the observations, time is not the issue per se; the issue is the quality of evidence the researcher needs to support descriptions, interpretations and appraisals (Eisner, 1991:192).

The recordings made by the researcher during observations are called field notes. The content of field notes is usually unstructured and rough. The researcher should synthesise and summarise the field notes immediately after each observation and also include any interpretations that come to mind and record any questions that may imply and identify any observation records regarding when, where and under what conditions the observations took place (Wiersma, 1991:230).

Glesne (1999:49) describes field notes or the field log as the primary recording tool of the qualitative researcher. It becomes filled with descriptions of people, places, events, activities and conversations and it becomes a place for ideas, reflections, hunches and notes about patterns that seem to be emerging and need to be recorded. The author adds that field notes become a place for exploring the researcher's own biases. The researcher records data as field notes or observations of what occurred in the field. These field notes are dated and the content is identified (Gall *et al*, 1996:423).

Field notes should be both descriptive and analytic. When recording the findings of detailed events, the observer should always strive for accuracy and avoid assuming a judgmental stance. For example, the notes should provide a clear picture of the situation and its activities, even after a long period has elapsed. Field notes should include explicit references, for example, regarding participant interaction, routines, rituals, temporal elements, interpretations and the social organisation of the participants (Gall *et al*, 1996:346).

Merriam (1998:60-61) indicates that other elements that should be indicated are:

The physical environment.

The context and the kind of behaviour that the setting encourages, permits, discourages or prevents.

Subtle factors such as unplanned activities.

The symbolic and connotative meanings of words.

Non-verbal communication such as dress code, physical space and what does not happen, especially if it ought to have happened.

(e) Note taking

Glesne (1998:54) cites six factors that can be utilised when taking notes as a participant observer. These notes are applicable to this investigation.

When taking notes by hand using a notebook, write only on the one side of the paper. This reduces confusion if notes are photocopied later or cut into chunks for data analysis.

Leave ample margins on either side of your notes for coding and further afterthoughts. Create your own form of shorthand to assist in note taking.

When taking notes, do not discuss your observations with someone else before writing up full field notes. Such talk only dissipates the need to get original observations. This does not mean you should not compare your interpretations with others, but first record your own observations and reflections.

Even if you have taken full, running notes throughout the day, your work is not done when the school bell rings or the sun sets. Read through the day's notes, fill in remembered descriptions, clarify, expand briefly noted events or actions and then reflect on the day and write down your thoughts.

Invariably, unplanned occasions provide data relevant to your research questions. Include these casual encounters in your field notes. Qualitative research is not determined by time or space, even though, when focussing on an institution such as a school, data collection generally occurs within set hours in a set location. This does not preclude collecting data in other places at other times.

In the next section, interviews will be defined and the guidelines will be discussed for conducting good interviews.

3.4.2 Interviews

According to Gubrium and Holstein (2002:85), qualitative interviewing is a kind of guided conversation in which the researcher listens carefully in order to hear the meaning of what is being conveyed.

Mothata (2000:89) writes that the word 'interview' refers to a data gathering technique; while. Glesne (1999:67) describes interviewing as a human interaction with all of its attendant uncertainties.

From the above descriptions, it appears an interview takes place between two persons, but other possibilities include one or more interviewers as well as one or more participants or interviewees. Interviews consist of oral questions by the interviewer followed by the responses of the participants typically speaking in their own words and their responses are either audiotaped, videotaped or written as field notes and can be computerised (Gall et al, 1996:289).

Interviews should be conducted at a convenient, available and appropriate place and time. That is, when both the interviewer and the respondents or interviewees feel like talking at the scheduled meetings. The number of meetings will depend on the length of the interviews. An hour of steady talking is generally an appropriate and acceptable length. The researcher will also accommodate exceptions when less time is needed by the respondents and the researcher should stick to regularities regarding the location, time and length of the interviews, so that the interviewer can make an appointment with his/her respondents at the end of interviews for the same time and place for the next meeting. Again, the researcher must consider an evening meeting if it is preferred by the educators especially (Glesne, 1999:78).

In this study, there were more than three interview meetings. The aim was to gather the requisite information from the participants and for the researcher to realise how SGB members viewed the effectiveness of their functioning in public schools.

According to Gubrium and Holstein (2002:84), it is assumed that the researcher maintains a perspective of disciplined subjectivity. The researcher conducts interviews in order to write, publish and contribute to a body of knowledge and literature. One of the aims of the researcher in this case study is also to contribute to the existing body of knowledge and literature.

The interviewer is in control of the responses, the situation and the schedules. In addition, the interviewer and the interviewee must both agree on the time and place that will be suitable for the meeting. The interviewer controls the questions, pace and sequence of questioning to fit

the circumstance surrounding the situation (Gall et al, 1996:289). Another important aspect that needs to be mentioned is that qualitative interviews focus on quality and on the experiences of the respondents (Gubrium and Holstein 2002:51).

According to Gubrium and Holstein (2002:324), unstructured interviews refer to the research strategy that permits the persons being interviewed to tell their stories at their own pace, in their own ways and within their own timeframe. The author adds that when setting up the appointments for the interviews, the researcher informs the interviewee about the purpose of the interview, how long it will take, and that the interview will, for example, be tape-recorded. The author indicates further that the researcher tells the respondents that when the interview is completed, it will be transcribed word for word and that a part of what the respondents have said may appear in articles, but that all respondents' individual identities will be protected.

Gubrium and Holstein (2002:141) state that unstructured interviewing is a technique for collecting data through group interaction on a topic determined by the researcher. Group interviewing that is a widely accepted research method, owes its popularity to the fact that it is a flexible data gathering technique.

Usually, the interviews began with a brief explanation of the purpose of the project, assurances concerning the confidentiality of the information were given and then a declaration was made that the information would be used specifically for the study and finally, some general guidelines are provided regarding for the process (Gubrium and Holstein (2002:59). The researcher conducted unstructured interviews with the help of an interview guide, focussing on the core questions. These included amongst others, the verbalisation of the criteria for the effective functioning of SGBs in public schools.

In this study, the researcher chose group interviews to gather the required relevant information for the topic under investigation. Gall et al (1996:307) explain that group interviews involve addressing questions at a group of individuals who have been assembled for that specific purpose. The individuals are selected because they are well informed about the topic. The author stresses that group interviews encourage participants to interact freely, in addition, this method encourages them to express certain feelings, perceptions and beliefs that they would not express if interviewed individually. The mood of the interview should be a relaxed and comfortable one and it is often interesting and enjoyable for the participants to

share their views. The participants take the major responsibility for stating their own views as well as drawing out the views of others in the group (Gall et al, 1996:308).

The general group interview is composed of seven to ten individuals carefully selected by a skilled interviewer. In contrast with individual interviews, with group interviews the individuals are assembled at the same time and in the same place, which is not the case with individual interviews (Gall et al 1996:301). The researcher made use of an interview guide for conducting a general conversation, during which the researcher listened carefully and occasionally asked further questions. The conversation was not rigidly controlled.

Bogdan and Biklen (1992:97) contend that when the interviewer controls the content too rigidly, the subjects cannot tell their side of the story. The interview then falls out of the qualitative range.

According to Merriam (1998:75), unstructured interviews are used in conjunction with participant observations in the early stages of a case study and are characterised by flexibility as is mentioned above

The group interview is used as a strategy to obtain a clearer understanding of a problem or assessment of a problem, concerns, a new product, programme or idea. The researcher can obtain this through interviewing a purposefully selected sample group of people rather than each person individually. The researcher creates a social environment to stimulate group members so that they can provide quality and rich data (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993:432).

The group interview avoids a directive role between the interviewer and the interviewee. The researcher will ask questions to initiate discussions and will also allow the participants to take the main responsibility for the continuation of the discussions, when stating their views and indirectly noting the views of others in the group (Gall et al 1993:308). The unstructured interviews are useful for the study of the normative structure of the organisation and for unveiling the existence of other possible social patterns (Gubrium and Holstein, 2002:39).

In this study, the researcher utilised the group interview for data gathering. The interviews were conducted flexibly to enable the participants to express their stories, experiences and beliefs personally in their own words. In any interview, particularly in this current study, the

purpose is to listen, understand and learn about other peoples' perspectives regarding the topic under discussion and not to instruct them. This is what the researcher tried to achieve so that a deeper understanding could be obtained of the participants' perspectives regarding how effectively the SGBs functioned.

3.4.2.1 Purpose of interviews

The purpose of interviews is to derive interpretations, not facts or laws, from the respondents' views. Interviews are framed quite substantively and the interactions aim to understand the meaning of the respondent's experiences and life world (Gubrium and Holstein, 2002:83).

Interviews are conducted with the aim of understanding the setting, the relationships between the components of, as well as members of particular institution(s) or group(s) from the respondents' viewpoint (Gubrium and Holstein, 2002:455). Another aim of interviews is to obtain thick descriptions of a given social world.

An additional significant aim of interviews is to understand the social context of learning in an organisation or unit within organisations such as schools or classrooms, understanding in this context implies exploring the contextual experience, actions and relationships from within the interview process rather than merely describing behaviour or objectifying the subjects.

In this study, the purpose of the interviews is to take the reader directly into the lives and actions of the participants, that is, the degree to which SGBs are functioning effectively in public schools. Therefore, the readers themselves will be able to read and discover further particular aspects regarding the effectiveness of the SGBs in public schools.

3.4.2.2 Advantages of interviews

Gubrium and Holstein, (2002:454) indicate that qualitative interviews can be used to gather information that cannot be obtained by means of other methods, for example, surveys offer mass data about a particular issue, but they lack the depth of understanding that qualitative interviews provide. The author further adds that observations can certainly lead to insights about interactional styles or patterns of behaviour, but without interviews, gathering data

directly from participants or actors, is similar to watching silent movies. For these reasons, the interview has become the most common qualitative tool that researchers employ in education.

Interviews as one of the primary data collection techniques, becomes necessary when the interviewer cannot observe behaviour, feelings or how people interpret the world around them and when the interviewer is interested in past events that are impossible to replicate. Therefore, interviews are used, as they are the best instruments for intensive case studies of a few selected individuals (Merriam, 1998:72).

In this investigation, the researcher used interviews to determine to how effectively SGBs function in public schools. The interviews supplemented the data/information obtained from other techniques, namely, observations and document analysis. . The researcher interviewed SGB members using open-ended questions to arrive at an understanding of the meaning making actions of the participants.

3.4.2.3 Steps in preparing and conducting research interviews

The steps in interviews are the same as those in questionnaires. The recommended steps are as follows: define the purpose of the study, select a sample, design the interview format, develop a questionnaire, which in this case was a set of questions, select and train interviewers, do a pilot test of the interview procedures, conduct the interviews and analyse them (Gall *et al*, 1996:305-306).

(a) Defining the purpose of the interview

The first step in the interview is to collect the required data and define the purpose of the study because it will determine the nature of the interview, the structure, the type of questions and the interviewer qualifications (Gall *et al*, 1996-306).

(b) Selecting a sample (focus group)

In addition to the literature review, the researcher conducted an interview using a focus group (Gall *et al*, 1996:308). For instance, in this study, the interviewees were composed of

established SGB members from the three identified public schools and this group of SGB members was regarded to be rich in information.

The researcher must be sensitive to the existing relationship among the three sets of group members. Fortunately, all members were selected on an equal basis, that is, they were parents and educators from the three identified schools. The principals from the respective schools were interviewed separately, so that the parents (who would be interviewed with the educators who served on the SGBs) would feel free when expressing their actual views about the phenomenon under investigation (Gall *et al*, 1996:308).

(c) Designing the interview format

In qualitative research, the interview format is not very tightly structured. For that reason, the researcher has to create the correct climate that will encourage the interviewees to express their ideas using their own terms about the phenomenon being investigated (Gall *et al*, 1996:309).

The basic approach the researcher used was open-ended questions. The informal conversation interview was characterised by the spontaneous generation of questions during the natural interaction between the researcher and the interviewees and it occurred as part of on-going participant observation fieldwork (Gall *et al*, 1996:309).

(d) Developing the questions

The researcher followed the plan using a number of unstructured questions; while some further questions were formulated on the spot. The interview was characterised by a certain required level of poise, talkativeness and intelligence. The interview questions were asked according to the guidelines and the interview guide, which clearly specified the questions, and the sequence in which they were posed. The interview guide also assisted the interviewer regarding the best way to introduce and to end the interviews. There was a space for the response options for each question, so that the interviewer was able to note down answers that fitted pre-specified response categories (Gall *et al*, 1996:312-313). The interview questions are available in appendix A.

(e) Training interviewers and guidelines for initiating and conducting the interviews

In this study, there was only one interviewer, that is, the researcher herself. Therefore, no further training of interviewers was necessary.

The interviewer must be in a position to engage positively with participants. This can be done successfully if the researcher starts by introducing him/herself, gives a brief talk about his/her background and state the aims of the interview to make the participants feel at ease (Gall *et al*, 1996:313-315).

Special preparations for any interview of this kind are very important. The researcher must consult senior researchers who will provide guidelines as to how the interviews should be approached and also how to supervise the novice researcher during the practicing process (Gall *et al*, 1996:316).

At this stage, the interviewer should be acquainted with the interview procedures, and have the required skills to probe the interviewees during the interview process. The researcher should conduct the interview sessions in a conversational manner (Gall *et al*, 1996:316).

Senior researchers will only release the novice researcher to do practicals or interviews when they feel that the researcher is ready for the process and can meet the required standard of conducting research interviews (Gall *et al*, 1996:316).

(f) Pre-testing the interviewers

Despite the fact that interviews produce primary data, they are open to bias. Hence, a pilot test for the interview guide and procedures is advisable to ensure that the interviews yield reasonable, unbiased data. The pilot test is used to indicate communication problems and any lack of motivation by participants. It also produces clues to indicate the need to rephrase questions (Gall *et al*, 1996,:316-317).

The researcher should come up with the best method to open the interviews and establish a feeling of rapport and cooperation with the interviewees. Recording methods should be evaluated to determine whether adequate information is being recorded, to evaluate the

validity of coding and analysing the data and to avoid excessive breaks in the interview setting (Gall *et al*, 1996:317).

Recording pilot study interviews is an important feature because the interviewer has an opportunity to:

Play back the interview in order to have adequate insight regarding how questions were handled.

Identify unnoticeable problems that emerged during the interview(s).

Let a sub-group from the pilot sample check the wording of interview terms and whether questions are interpreted in the same way to obviate threats to the validity of interviews.

Identify ambiguous questions with the aim of reconstructing them until all or most of the members of the focus group interpret them in the same way (Gall *et al*, 1996:317).

(g) Conducting interviews

The interview is an opportunity for the researcher to investigate/learn what cannot be observed visually and to obtain alternative explanations for what is observable visually. This may be considered a special strength of interviewing in qualitative inquiry (Glesne, 1999:69).

Once the researcher has identified the respondents, he/she will ask them if they will agree to being interviewed. The time and place of the interview is negotiated. The interview is scheduled at times convenient to the participants (Glesne, 1999:98 & 154).

Researchers should ensure when conducting interviews that a high quality is maintained in order to yield the maximum informative data (Gall *et al*, 1996:317). The researcher should also strive to minimise the status of differences present in any research interaction and be able to include the focus group in the research process (Glesne, 1999:86).

Gall *et al* (1996:317), give a list of the expected recommended behaviours applicable to both qualitative and quantitative research. These authors also stress that researchers should

consider reviewing the list of interview behaviours to determine which of those are important for the particular interviews that they will conduct (or train others to conduct).

The next section deals with document analysis, also referred to as content analysis, which is an accepted method of textual analysis.

3.5 DOCUMENT OR CONTENT ANALYSIS

Silverman (1993:59) describes content analysis as an acceptable method of textual investigation, particularly in the field of mass communications.. Birley and Moreland (1998:53) state that document analysis, also referred to as document analysis, is a common term for different types of textual analysis, whose approach emphasises either qualitative or quantitative descriptions and analyses of documents of various types. These documents may be official, semi-official or unofficial. The authors add that content analysis is a very useful approach, particularly for the researcher who is looking at historical or political issues. The procedure for analysing written materials systematically is known as document or content analysis.

The aim of document analysis is to understand the participants' categories and to see how these are used in concrete activities such as telling stories or assembling files (Silverman, 1993:10). McMillan and Schumacher (1993:433) refer to these documents as another form of artefact.. These include both personal and official documents. The former type, namely, personal documents, includes diaries, personal letters and anecdotal records while the latter (official) documents include the minutes of meetings, working papers and drafts of proposals. The official documents suggest an official perspective on a topic; issue or process and such sources may either be historical or contemporary. Ary et al (1990:385) also point out that although the discipline of education is primarily concerned with people, many interesting and useful research projects in the field have been concerned with information obtained by examining records and documents.

The use of documents and records as data sources in quantitative research differs from qualitative research in the analysis phase. In quantitative research, a set of variables is defined and applied uniformly to all the written communications in the sample. Variables are measured to identify quantitative data that can be analysed by conversational statistics, in

contrast with qualitative data that may employ analysed procedures that are likely to be emergent. The very same document or record can be analysed at different points in the study with each different analysis yielding new constructs, hypotheses and insights. The results of the analysis need not be expressed in quantified form because the same document or record can be analysed from different perspectives and for a different purpose (Gall et al, 1996:363).

Qualitative researchers believe that the meaning of a text resides in the mind of its writer and its readers. Thus, the meaning of a particular document or record can change from reader to reader and from one historical period to another. Gall et al (1996:362) add that documents can have different meanings at different levels of analysis. For example, the contents of a textbook can be analysed to determine what topic it covers (Gall et al, 1996:362) or it can be analysed to determine its readability level.

Furthermore, Delmont (1992:104) cautions that whatever types of documents the qualitative researcher uses, the golden rule to remember is that all written documents are socially produced. All the documents are written in a social context, with some audience in mind, even if the audience is only the author. Just as the good researcher is sceptical about what is said to him/her, so too, a researcher must read documents sceptically and must examine them in their social contexts.

Therefore, all documents presented in this study are examined in their social contexts, because the debate about the effective functioning of the SGBs in public schools can only be meaningful, if cognisance is taken of the minutes of meetings, reports, letters and commentaries.

Birley and Moreland (1998: 53) discuss three types of documents:

Primary documents

Primary documents are documents written at the time of the event. They may be official communications, journals, newspaper articles, and minutes of meetings, reports, letters and commentaries.

Secondary sources

Secondary sources are written some time after the event. They involve commentaries on situations and events

Statistical sources

Statistical sources include census and contemporary surveys (Birley & Moreland, 1998:53). In this study, the researcher used as many primary documents as possible. Fortunately, the researcher attended most of the SGB workshops organised by the DoE. Therefore, the researcher had copies of the documents distributed at the workshops (capacity training documents) as well as the Constitution of South Africa (Act No. 108 of 1996), the educational legislation and policy documents.

3.5.1 Primary documents used in the study

A number of primary documents relevant to the study were identified.

In addition to the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (RSA, 1996b) various acts and other policy documents in education with implications for the effective functioning of the SGBs in public schools were identified. These include the White Paper on Education and Training (RSA, 1995) (the National Education Policy Act (NEPA), Act No. 27 of 1996 and the SASA (RSA, 1996a). Drafted within the framework of the Constitution, the SASA (RSA, 1996b) is the most relevant legislation regarding the effective functioning of the SGBs. The relevant sections of the SASA (RSA, 1996a) include sections 16, 20 and 21. Additional official documents relevant to this study include the following:

The South African Schools Act No.84 of 1996 (RSA, 1996a)

Governance in schools, 14 February, (RSA,1996c)

Structure of school governing bodies- extract from a speech by the former Education Minister, Sibusiso Bengu (RSA, 1996d)

A number of the documents mentioned above will be discussed in chapter 4.

3.5.2 Workshops

The attendance of various workshops regarding the training of SGBs by the researcher formed part of the primary documents consulted.

The first workshop was held at Nasrec, Johannesburg and was organised by the DoE. The aim of the workshop was to capacitate the SGB members as widely as possible to enable them to function more effectively. The second workshop organised by the District Director, Mrs Webber of the Southern Ekurhuleni District was held the following year, on September 2006 at Naboma in Alberton.

The third workshop was held under the leadership of Henry Motlana at the Isiphosethu Special School in Vosloorus in the Southern Ekurhuleni District on 23 June 2006 with the aim of developing the skills of existing members of SGBs and of providing insight into their functions and of enhancing continuous development.

These workshops were organised by the principals of the individual schools in order to train SGBs to enable their effective functioning in public schools so that schools could be run more smoothly.

An important issue in the field of research is that of sampling, which will be discussed in the next section.

3.6 SAMPLING

There are different forms of sampling that can be applied in any research of this nature. In the case of this investigation, the following sampling and techniques were applied.

Sampling in field research involves the selection of a research site, time, people and events. There are two basic types of sampling, namely probability and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling (random sampling) allows the researcher to generalise the findings of the study from the sample to the population from which it was drawn. Since generalisation is not the goal of qualitative research, probability sampling is not justifiable in qualitative research. In contrast to probability sampling, non-probability sampling is the most appropriate and suitable method utilised in qualitative research. The most common form is purposive or purposeful sampling (Merriam, 1999:60-61). Sampling is applied to the population under study (Wiersma, 1991:247).

The sample in all three the schools identified for this study took place almost simultaneously. The sampling procedures and techniques were applied to attain adequate representation, will be discussed in the following section.

3.6.1 Selection of informants

Purposeful sampling was used. Purposeful sampling is the selection of information rich cases for an in-depth study in order to increase the utility of the information. The information is obtained from small samples participating in a specific research project (Unisa Guide, 1997: 34). This sampling technique requires that the informants be chosen deliberately by virtue of their status.

According to McMillan and Schumacher (1993:378), purposeful sampling means that the researcher searches for information rich key informants, groups, places and events to study. In other words, these samples are chosen because they are likely to be knowledgeable and informative about the phenomenon the researcher is investigating.

Merriam (1999:168-169) also states that purposeful sampling is based on the assumptions that the investigator wants to investigate, understand and also to gain further insight into the topic under research and therefore, he/she must select a sample from which the most can be learned.

The power of purposeful sampling depends on the selection of information-rich cases for in-depth study. Information rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal regarding the issues of central importance to the purpose of the research (Patton, 1990:169)

Bogdan and Biklen (1992:71) state that in purposeful sampling, the researcher chooses a particular subject because he/she has information to contribute to the study. In this study, the participants were chosen because of their status in the school. Some of them are leaders in political and religious circles and have always been listened to in public regarding the effectiveness of SGBs in public schools. On behalf of their communities, all the participants attended workshops held in 2006 and 2007, which were aimed at the capacity training of SGB members.

When the SGB system was first introduced in public schools, the three schools used in this study adopted the system and the SGB members were selected according to the recommended procedures stipulated in the SASA (RSA, 1996a) that is, in sections 16, 20 and 21). This was done with the hope that the members would be imbued with the intention to promote and to develop the potential of the learners in their community as well as the whole community further and for the schools to become one of the best model schools in the Gauteng Province and indeed, in the country.

The selection of informants in the case study was based on their experience, which distinguished them as having specialised knowledge of the topic under investigation. The researcher, therefore, requires a detailed description of the field from which he will draw individuals who are knowledgeable and informative about the phenomenon of interest (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993:413).

The unique experience of the researcher of these three public primary school, administered by the DoE together with extensive knowledge of the strategies and policies adopted in a wide range of public schools played an important role in the choice of the institution to be examined in the study. All three schools are large public primary education institutions with a total enrolment of more than 984 pupils and with a sound record of good academic achievement.

3.6.1.1 Locating key informants

The SGB members received extensive continuous training from the DoE and other NGOs. The main aim was to capacitate the SGBs and also to encourage members to become pro-active and productive, so that the SGB members could contribute positively to the education of their children.

The researcher considered the selected members of the SGB to be rich in information about the topic under discussion. The informants were approached at schools A, B and C in February 2007, and were invited to share views on the topic under investigation at the times convenient to them as pre arranged. Formal letters were sent to the focus groups consisting of all the SGB members, together with the principals of the identified schools, thanking them in advance for their willingness to be interviewed and also explaining the purpose of the

interviews as well as the issue of confidentiality. The SGBs members were composed of ten members in each of the schools identified. Furthermore, the ten members consisted of seven parents and three educators from each of the three schools under study.

The principals and the SGB chairpersons of schools A, B and C were asked to set up interview dates with the researcher on which he/she would participate, together with the SGB members and any other personnel (co-opted members) who were identified by either the principal or the chairman of the SGB. However, the principal was interviewed separately so that the SGBs could talk freely during their sessions.

3.6.1.2 Sample size

The qualitative researcher needs to devise a selection strategy by means of which he/she will choose the participants, events and time for the investigations of the study, since most research situations are too vast to interview everyone or observe everyone connected to the study. Thus, purposeful sampling is ideal in qualitative research (Glesne, 1999:29).

In qualitative studies, sample size often consists of a smaller number of knowledgeable informants. The main aim is to have a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Gall *et al*, 1996:217). The goal of purposeful sampling is to select those people (cases) who are likely to be informative. Also in this investigation, the same guidelines as mentioned above were used.

In this study, a small sample of ten key informants was chosen from each school to participate in the observations and the interviews (see sections 3.4.1 & 3.4.2). They contributed significantly to the topic under investigation, namely, how effectively SGBs function in public schools. Therefore, three public primary schools were studied by means of observations and interviews; while documents pertaining to the study were analysed.. Therefore, in this study, there were two observation sessions and twelve interviews of thirty minutes each for the SGB members, .there were two interview sessions for the SGB members in each school and one separate session for the SGB chairpersons and the principals.

All the interviews were thirty minutes per session with two interview sessions being arranged for the SGB members; while only one interview session was organised for both SGB chairpersons and the principals.

3.6.1.3 Gaining access

According to Glesne, (1999:39) gaining access is a process. It refers to your acquisition of consent to go where you want, observe what you want, talk to whoever you want, obtain and read whatever satisfies your research purpose. Eisner (1991:172) maintains that access is a delicate matter. Increasingly, the researcher needs access to those they study in order to carry out the research. They ought to understand the aims of the research, the planned research procedures and what they, as people who gave their consent, might expect as an outcome of the work.

Generally, when the study involves an organisation, or agency, the researcher must first make contact with its gatekeeper, to obtain the consent of those who are expected to provide information or to be observed before he/she may enter a research setting and the approval of the principal in that particular school (Glesne, 1999: 39).

Keeping access is as delicate as gaining it. There are factors influencing access namely, the manner in which people are approached, the understanding of the participants and the agreements that are reached with people. Copies of the relevant research product must be shared with the relevant parties before the research results are made public and the researcher must seriously consider all comments made by the relevant parties. The final analysis and the decision to disseminate or publicise the research should rest with the researcher. The researcher is also responsible for the interpretations of the findings. Finally, with respect to access, it is advisable for the researcher to make sure that when he leaves the site, people will have a favourable impression of him. Importantly, he needs to maintain good relationships with all the relevant parties, as he might need to work with the same people again in future (Eisner, 1991:175).

3.6.1.4 Timeframe

The researcher cannot be too definite about the estimation of the timeframe of the investigation, as he is advised not to underestimate the amount of time needed. Delays caused

by unforeseen circumstances in the identified site may cause delays in the progress of the investigations. Problems could be things like gaining access to a site, may drag on because of the institutional structures or issues affecting the scheduled planning or rescheduling meetings at the last moment. Other problematic issues could be unexpected assemblies or participants that do not show up or field trips which could change the observation schedules or matters that simply take longer than planned. Undoubtedly, all these problems can be encountered in qualitative research (Glesne, 1999:33-34).

In this study, however, access to the sites was not a problem for the researcher as she/ was a permanent staff member in one of the three selected schools for the study and also a community member in the area in which the schools are situated.. It was also easy for the researcher to observe the SGBs in action and to schedule interviews, as the researcher was always present in the field of study. Although there were a number of delays, due to other commitments of informants other commitments, the interviews all ran according to scheduled times.

With reference to the problems that the individual researchers face in estimating the amount of time they needed to carry out their research, a solution might lie in developing a timetable. In order to assess the proposed aspects of the research and to anticipate the requirements such as arrangements that had to be made, letters to be written, people to be phoned and places to be visited. The analysis of data should receive at least as much time as the data collection phase. Finally, the timetable serves as a way to check on the feasibility of the planning especially when there are constraints of time and finances. Other constraints that need to be considered are those of your choice of research topic, methods, sites and participants (Glesne, 1999:35).

Other aspects, which need to be discussed apart from interview behaviour, are the issue of trust and rapport, which will be dealt with in the next section.

3.7 TRUST AND RAPPORT

The researcher must be skilled in understanding the identified person's language and culture and how he/she perceives things from his/her own perspective (Gall et al, 1996:319). The interviewer needs to decide in time which aspects of participants' behaviour must receive

attention during the interviewing process. The interviewer will indicate if he will concentrate only on what the participants say or if he/she will also concentrate on the participants' non-verbal communication (Gall *et al*, 1996:319). The researcher's main challenge is to gain the trust of the focus group. This is essential if the researcher is to succeed in encouraging the interviewees to discuss sensitive issues during the interviews and to obtain the desired data (Gall *et al*, 1996:319).

To succeed in gaining the interviewees' trust, the researcher needs to present a clear personal image of himself/herself to the focus group. For example, the researcher may present himself/herself as a teacher and researcher (assuming that he/she has teaching experience) and give details relating to his/her background in teaching and why he/she is a researcher (Gall *et al*, 1996:318).

Significantly, the researcher's appearance and behaviour should be acceptable to the focus group in order to boost rapport building to acquire continuous access to the focus group (Glesne, 1999:97). Hence, the researcher needs to consider the following aspects and characteristics regarding his/her image; amongst them is the dress code, institutional application, ethnicity and life experiences and which aspects of the image are likely to be important to the interviewees and if those aspects have a positive effect on the interview process (Gall *et al*, 1996:318-319).

During the rapport building process, the researcher's authority should be distinguished from the rapport of friendship. The researcher alone is responsible for achieving the recommended required rapport and should maintain a sense of humour and have a high tolerance for ambiguity as well as being sensitive and understanding of the focus group's culture and their perception of the world.

The researcher should also be able to speak and understand the nuances of the language of the focus group. In case the researcher does not understand things like specific workplace terminology or comments fully, this may be shelved until the interviewer feels comfortable enough to ask for clarification (Gall *et al*, 1996:319).

In qualitative research, rapport is a mechanism used to build trust and primarily serves the interests of the researcher. Good rapport encourages informants to disclose information.

However, as Wax (1971:373) indicates, rapport features trust, confidence, not necessarily liking and friendship. Quite often, a researcher can learn more from people he/she dislikes or from people who dislike him/her. Glesne (1998:96) supports this view when he states that in research when dealing with aspects such as relationships, an important issue is that of acceptance and trust and not necessarily being given favours or liking, in order for the researcher to receive the required information. The researcher's main challenge is to gain the trust of the focus group. Without the trust of the participants, the researcher will find it impossible to discuss sensitive issues during the interviews.

In this study, too, the researcher's main challenge was to gain trust in totality in order to gain the required relevant information from the identified participants. Another challenge was that of ensuring the complete confidentiality of participants and the data obtained from them. The problem of confidentiality will be discussed next.

3.8 CONFIDENTIALITY

McMillan and Schumacher (1993:399) indicate that there is a strong feeling among the majority of field workers that both the setting as well as the participants should not be exposed to the public in any way, such as in print. Therefore, researchers use imaginary locations and disguise features of settings in such a way to make it appear similar to several possible sites. The author adds that the researchers routinely use code names for people and places.

Qualitative interviewing requires researchers to deal with a professional code of conduct/ethics. These are formalised and they sometimes constrain the conduct of social research, protect participants and the researcher from physical and emotional harm (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002:88).

The researcher informs the individuals about the procedures that will take place during the research study and the intended use of the research data being collected. The explanation must satisfy the participants that it will be to their advantage to cooperate. The participants should have the right to withdraw from participation at any time and their request should be honoured (Gall *et al*, 1996:88).

Confidentiality requires the signing of consent forms to protect participants from being exposed in public or in print and to protect them against the invasion of their privacy. Sometimes participants do not consider the signing of consent forms adequate and request consent forms to be supplemented by tape-recorded consent (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002:88-89). Usually, individual participants have the rights to review the concurrent case study, in order to ensure confidentiality and also to ensure the protection of privacy (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993:399). The researcher is advised to review the report before it is finally released to the public and those who are interested in the topic.

In this study, confidentiality was of prime significance and highly protected in so far that the identifiable features of place, setting, participants' names and other identifying features were substituted with false names and identities.

The validity and reliability of research results are important aspects that need to be discussed next.

3.9 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

3.9.1 Validity

According to Wiersma (1991:239), the validity of research is the interpretation of the research results with confidence and the generalisability of the results. In other words, it involves two concepts simultaneously, namely, the extent to which the results can be accurate and the extent to which the results can be generalised to the population and the prevailing conditions. The former concept is referred to as "internal validity" and the latter as "external validity."

Validity is generally defined as the trustworthiness of research results, and is especially important in education in which practitioners intervene in people's lives, and the results are trusted to the extent that there has been some accountability for their validity and reliability (Merriam, 1998:198). Glesne (1999:32) states that validity pertains to the trustworthiness of the research and should be thought about during the research design as well as in the midst of data collection.

Validity also refers to the literal truth about the knowledge provided by science without any reasonable doubt (Eisner, 1998:108-109). Silverman (1993:149) also states that validity is the truth, in terms of the extent to which an account accurately represents the social phenomenon to which it refers.

There are two types of validity namely, internal and external validity. Internal validity refers to the extent to which the phenomenon currently being studied relates to the realities of the world (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993:39). It also places the responsibility on the researcher to observe closely and evaluate critically what he/she thinks he/she sees and to understand the meaning of what he/she hears. In other words, the internal validity of qualitative design is the degree to which the participants ascribe a mutual meaning to concepts and the interpretations of the research.

Strategies that increase interval validity are when:

Continual analyses, comparisons and corroborations are carried out.

Participant language is used during the interviews, and care must be taken that it remains less abstract than that of many data instruments – the interviews in this study were therefore conducted in a deliberately conversational tone;

A lengthy data collection period is employed – the current research was conducted over a period of three years (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993:392).

In this study, the informants were encouraged to express their views in their own words and, if possible, to use their own mother tongues, namely, Zulu, Tswana and so on and those interviews were later translated into English.

The field research using interviews and observations was conducted at places convenient to the participants, where there were no time and space restrictions or any disturbances where a controlled situation could be maintained.

Disciplined subjectivity entailing self-monitoring by the researcher, was designed to eliminate the researcher's bias. All phases of the research were subject to rigorous questioning and re-evaluation. Evidence about the deliberations concerning the present case study was presented by the researcher in the form of a memorandum. The memorandum alerted the researcher

when he/she dealt with and deliberated about the analysis of the data. In this case, the researcher became aware of his/her subjectivity.

Internal validity becomes a definite strength of qualitative research when human beings or participants are primarily willing and free to communicate their experiences and present a holistic interpretation to the researcher in an atmosphere of trust and comprehension of what is happening (Merriam, 1998:203).

In short, internal validity is a process that involves both deduction and induction; the researcher systematically reasons through the possible meaning of the data (Wiersma, 1991:241). In the current study and in terms of the criterion used for validity, all the informants shared information and their own views regarding the effectiveness of the SGBs voluntarily. In all instances, the informants were not under any pressure to share their views about the topic under discussion. The informants supported the study in totality with the hope that it would help to make the public aware of what the effective functioning of the SGBs in public schools entail.

External validity refers to the way in which the conclusions of a case study can be generalised to similar situations and the results of a case study are generalised to similar cases (Gall *et al*, 1996:572).

According to Merriam (1998: 207), external validity is the extent to which the finding of one study can be applied to other situation(s), and refers to how generalisable the results of a research study are. The author points out further that the study must be internally valid because meaningless information cannot be applied generally to the population from which the participants were drawn.

External validity is concerned with generalisation and to which population and conditions under which the results are generalised. If the phenomenon is consistent across a number of studies, the degree of generalisation increases (Wiersma, 1991:241-242).

The following principles are important and can be taken into consideration when conducting research (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993:394-397):

The researcher must describe the total number of possible groups and how purposeful sampling was done, to determine whether the findings only represent certain groups of situations.

The aim of the qualitative researcher when dealing with external validity is not the generalisation of results, but the extension of understanding of detailed descriptions that will pave the way for others to have the same understanding in similar situations and extend this understanding in subsequent research. The threats in qualitative research are the limits/limitations to its usefulness.

Comparability is the way in which the description of the research design matches with the realities so that the findings of the study may be used in other similar situations. Translatability refers to the degree to which the technical usage of theoretical frameworks and the investigation of strategies are understood by other researchers.

Comparable and translatable research promotes the uses of the study in a systematic investigation.

The qualitative researcher must establish the typicality of the phenomenon being studied, for example, the school, people involved, for the possibility of comparability and translatability to take place, so that the present findings of the study can be applicable across situations.

The following unique characteristics of the groups studied must be described in minute detail: the socio-economic status, the educational attainment, the age group, the racial or ethnic composition of the participants, the period during which research took place and the contextual features of the location.

The researcher must note and document his role in the situation and the effect it might have on the findings.

The researcher must adopt a non-interfering and non-judgmental role.

To increase the external validity, an ethnographic research design supplemented the study in the present case studies, and interviews were also held in which the focus was on the current phenomenon for which data could be obtained by interacting with participants in a given social situation which resulted in inductive logic being applied. Genuine open response questions (that do not lead to an expected answer) were used. The selection of topics was done in advance, but the researcher decided on the sequence and wording of the questions

during the interview. In these interviews, key informants who had the required special knowledge were used to obtain the required information in totality.

3.9.2 Reliability

According to Wiersma (1991:239), the reliability of the research includes the extent to which studies can be replicated. The concept applies to both procedures and results. The author adds that if a study is reliable, another researcher who uses the same procedures, variables, measurements and conditions should obtain the same results.

Reliability in qualitative research refers to the consistency of the researcher's interactive style, data recording, data analysis and interpretation of participant meaning from the data (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993:385)

In addition, Bogdan and Biklen (1982:44) state that reliability in qualitative research is viewed as the fit between what is recorded and what has actually occurred at the setting under study, rather than literal consistency across different observations. In other words, two researchers studying a single setting may come up with different data and produce different results. Since there was only one researcher in this case, all data was collected, analysed and interpreted in a uniform manner. During this investigation, the researcher strove to avoid impeding the natural flow of information from informants as little as possible.

3.9.2.1 Reliability of design

Strategies that were used to enhance reliability (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993:386-388) were:

The researcher's role – reliability is limited by the use of a known researcher that can have an impact on the researcher status within the group observed, but is justified in the present study in terms of the opportunities that the researcher's status provided, such as accessibility. In this study, reliability was increased by the researcher's observations of the identified sites and by the researcher conducting the interviews in a careful and responsible manner.

Information selection – information must be carefully described as well as the decision-making process that was used in their selection. In this study, the researcher used the direct words (quotations) of the participants. During the decision-making process, consultation and collaboration took place participants regarding certain decisions made.

The social context – the description of the people involved, as well as the time and place of interviews must be presented carefully. The researcher gave a holistic and explicit explanation of the participant's involvement in as well as and their respective roles during the investigations. She also identified the time and place of the meetings.

Data collection strategies – the exact description must be provided of the varieties of observations and interviewing methods, as well as how data was recorded and under what circumstances. The researcher observed the interaction of different stakeholders and interviewed participants in all three schools identified to obtain in-depth information and videotaped the meetings and interviews to obtain a clear record of the proceedings.

Data analysis and strategies recorded in retrospective accounts, where an explanation of how the data were identified, synthesised, analysed and interpreted must be given. The researcher confirmed the findings derived from the field observations and the interviews with the participants concerned to avoid incompatible and even apparently contradictory information when writing the final research report.

Analytical premises as well as the conceptual framework must be explicit. The report about the findings of the present study must be understood by the readers

3.9.2.2 Reliability of data collection

To reduce threats to reliability, the qualitative researcher uses a combination of any of eight strategies. The following were adopted in the study:

(a) Verbatim accounts.

In their studies the researchers present extensive direct quotations from the data to illustrate participant meanings. Verbatim accounts of conversations, transcripts, and direct quotations from documents are highly valued as data. This was the strategy followed in this research.

(b) Low-inference descriptions.

Low-inference means that the descriptions are almost literal and all the important terms are those used and understood by the participants. The distinctive features of qualitative research and the principle method for establishing the reliability of patterns found in data are, for example, concrete, precise descriptions from field notes and elaborations from interviews.. Therefore, the low-Inference descriptions used are directly in contrast with the abstract language of a researcher.

(c) Multiple researchers.

The reliability of research findings is maximised by the use of multiple researchers. Qualitative research based on a team approach, however, is done infrequently and most studies involve only two researchers.

(d) Mechanically recorded data

The use of tape recorders, photographs and videotapes may increase the reliability, this may take place only if different researchers follow the same procedure, using the same camera angles or recording identical segments of behaviour.

(e) Participant researchers

Many researchers enlist the aid of informants to corroborate/confirm what has been observed and recorded, as well as interpretations of the participant meanings and also the explanations of the overall process. This means that the participants are given an opportunity to keep diaries or make anecdotal records to share with the researcher.

(f) Member checking.

It is important to ensure that the individuals who were studied, get an opportunity to review statements made in the research report to confirm the accuracy and completeness of the findings. The main purpose is to represent reality as constructed by the individuals who were

studied. Member checking might also reveal factual errors that can easily be corrected. Another advantage of reviewing each report might cause the participants to recall new facts or to have a new perspective of their situation so that the report will be rewritten accordingly.

(g) Participant review.

Before the researcher can proceed with the analysis of the data obtained from the interviewee to provide comprehensive and integrated findings, the researcher may ask the person to review a synthesis of the data obtained from him/her. The participant is also asked to modify any misrepresentation of the meanings derived from the data collected during the interviews.

(h) Negative cases or discrepant data.

Negative cases or discrepant data refer to situations, social scenes or participants' views that contradict the emerging pattern of meaning. The researcher deals with discrepant data by searching for, analysing and reporting negative cases or discrepant data (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993:388-391)

3.10 DATA ANALYSIS

Glesne (1998:130) describes data analysis as the process that involves organising what you have seen, heard and read, so that you can make sense of what you have learned. The author adds that when working with the data, the researcher must describe the data, create explanations, pose hypotheses, develop theories and link the study with other stories. In order to do this, the researcher must categorise, synthesise, search for patterns in and interpret the data collection.

According to Wiersma (1991:85), data analysis in qualitative research is a process involving categorisation, description and synthesis. Data reduction is necessary for the description and interpretation of the phenomenon under study. The author adds that analysis in qualitative research is a process of successive approximations towards an accurate description and interpretation of the phenomenon. The research report is descriptive in nature and contains little technical language. A qualitative researcher will undertake much of the data analysis

during and after the data collection process as qualitative research design includes the extensive integration and overlapping of components.

In essence then, analysis is the arrangement of what one has perceived, been informed about and discovered as well as the understanding one has arrived at through reading. The revealed data is explained in detail or by creating a picture using words when one is engaged with data analysis. Recommendations for further investigation can also be given in the form of suggestions based on facts. Data analysis entails formulating a set of properly acquired ideas (events), connecting the story with other stories, classifying phenomena that belong together, comparing parts with the whole and developing patterns to explain the data that have been gathered. In this study, analysis of data began during the literature review and took place continuously throughout the participant observations at schools A, B and C during the interviews with the persons identified by the principals and the chairpersons of the SGBs.

It is also important to note the limitations of this study, which will be done in the following section.

3.11 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Following the injunction that communities in South Africa must own the schools, the issue pertaining to the effectiveness of SGBs in public schools has come under scrutiny. Most of the community organisations that have an interest in education feel that the effectiveness of the SGBs is still under careful scrutiny. It has undoubtedly aroused the interest of researchers and the need to investigate the matter developed in order to learn more about the topic under discussion.

The accusations and counter accusations in the debate were so numerous that it was impossible for the researcher to note all of these events.

As indicated in section 3.4, the researcher made use of three data collection techniques. The first technique was to observe what she could see and hear, the second was a small sample approach where participants were interviewed. The third one was the analysis of the documents at her disposal at the time of writing this study. Where possible, the scope of analysis, particularly the analysis of documents was limited to examining the effectiveness of SGBs in public schools. This study does not claim to have identified and exhausted all issues

pertaining to the effective functioning of the SGB, nor to have unravelled the complexity of the problem. However, it is hoped that the findings in this study will help the SGBs nor to have unravelled the complexity of the problem. However, it is hoped that the findings in this study will help the SGB members as well as the policy makers and other ordinary citizens to have a better understanding of how effectively the SGBs function in public schools.

3.12 SUMMARY

The intention of this chapter was to provide an overview of the research design. Several issues have been outlined in this chapter regarding the research design and methodology pertaining to this study. They include the approach used in this investigation, namely, the qualitative approach, the theoretical basis of qualitative research and the researcher's stance. The data collection techniques were also analysed. This investigation employed three data collection techniques, namely, observations, interviews and document analysis. Observations are very important for this study because it is based mainly on observations.

As highlighted in chapter 1, the interviews and document analysis provided the additional information needed about the topic under investigation.

Under observations, the focus was on the researcher as the eyewitness and it can be regarded as an advantage that the researcher was able to make observations and collect the data herself in this investigation.

The concepts of "data analysis," "sampling," "reliability" and "validity" were also touched on in this chapter. The next chapter is going to present the findings derived from the data that were collected and analysed as well as a discussion of the findings.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous three chapters focussed on how South African education legislation such as the SASA (RSA, 1996), focusses on advancing the effective functioning of the SGBs in public schools. Themes that were discussed in chapter 2 were the history of the SGB structures in South Africa; the introduction of the SGBs after democratisation, realities with regard to the functioning of SGBs and concerns with regard to the effectiveness of SGBs in public primary schools. The previous chapter (chapter 3) presented a description of the methodology employed in this study.

In this chapter, the findings obtained regarding how effectively the SGBs in three public primary schools were functioning, will be discussed. During the observation and interview sessions, input and submissions were received from different SGB members representing the SGBs. In the first place the findings from the observations will be discussed..

4.2 FINDINGS OBTAINED FROM THE OBSERVATION PHASE

4.2.1 Introduction

After the democratic elections in 1994, towards the middle of 1997, the issue of SGBs started receiving special attention in South Africa. The process of establishing and implementing SGBs in public schools was outlined initially in the SASA (RSA 1996) and it was also mentioned in the Constitution of South Africa. The observations in this study include several aspects:

The first aspect involved observing how SGB committees held their meetings.

The second aspect involved observing how SGBs interpreted the law (RSA, 1996a) in connection with their functions.

The third aspect involved observing the SGBs' acknowledgement of and understanding of the practical functioning of the SGBs

The fourth aspect involved observing how the SGBs engaged in collective decision-making (when making final decisions) and the involvement of SGBs with the improvement of the school.

The intention was not to concentrate on the above-mentioned aspects in this study only, although they were important to the study in the sense that they were basic indicators of how SGBs initially thought they would govern the schools. This was a practical example of the implementation and articulation of how effectively the SGBs functioned in public schools.

It is important to note that the observation report should be understood in the light of the priority given to the community to reclaim the education of their children. In this regard, it is important to keep in mind that the government created a vehicle for the community to engage in power-sharing regarding the management of public schools.

This section will focus on observations made during SGB meetings attended by the researcher. Such observations constitute an integral part of qualitative research and provide rich in-depth information in addition to that obtained from the interviews. The researcher observed all three schools at different times as arranged with the schools. In school B, they changed the SGB's year plan to accommodate the dates and times of the observations and interviews as arranged with the researcher. Although all three schools' SGB participants made valuable responses during the observation period, in some of the schools, not all the responses were relevant to this study which sought to ascertain how effectively the SGBs were functioning.

Unforeseen circumstances caused delays in the fieldwork in all three schools. For example, in schools A and C, participants confided in the researcher on the last day of their interviews, that they were unsure whether they should participate because they felt they did not have enough self-confidence to do so. The chairperson of school A was hesitant about being interviewed because of misunderstandings between the SGB members and the principal. On the other hand, at school C, the chairperson felt uneasy about being interviewed in the absence of the principal who was attending to other school matters. Nevertheless, despite all the delays, the researcher was received warmly in all three the schools included in this study.

4.2.2 First SGB meeting of school A

The SGB meeting in school A was held on 2 May 2007 in the administrator's office. The meeting was opened by the chairperson of the SGBs. However, the SGB members did not form a quorum.

The deliberations of the meeting focussed on the identification of different fundraising mechanisms in order to supplement the funds received from the grade R and grade seven parents for their end of year function. Amongst other things, all the learners were expected to contribute a certain amount of money to attend the function; learners who did not pay would not be permitted to attend and the unemployed parents were supposed to notify the school in advance of the fact, since they were covered by the Schools Act, section 39 (2). This implies that the chairperson understood and acknowledged the principles contained in the SASA (RSA, 1996a: 26).

Although the submissions were relevant as far as the SGB's duties were concerned and also for this study, none of the participants made any significant contributions towards solving any problems in the meetings. The participants were submissive and usually merely endorsed the solutions to problems proposed by the principal and the educators. Their main aim was to get the end of year function accepted by the meeting. It needs to be mentioned here that the deputy chairperson of the SGB displayed an openly negative attitude towards the educators.

Regarding the maintenance of the school buildings, the chairperson stated that one of the functions for which they were responsible was the maintenance of the school buildings, which included repairing the learners' toilets that were not functioning well and needed to be renovated. He mentioned that the maintenance committee should follow the correct procedures when repairing the toilets. Again, this indicated an understanding and acknowledgement of SGB functions in terms of section 20 of the SASA (RSA, 1996a).

Although the meeting was intended to be a time for sharing and looking ahead, some of the participants were troubled (refer to section 4.2.1 in this regard) and it indicates that certain members misunderstood the purpose of the meeting.

4.2.3 Second SGB meeting of school A

The second meeting was on 29 May 2007, exactly three weeks after the first one. Not all the SGB members attended the meeting and neither were any official apologies tendered by members for not attending the meeting. During the meeting, participants were given an opportunity to make submissions and to express their views regarding the issues under discussion.

The submissions made by the SGB chairperson focussed on how the SGB could increase parental involvement in the school and on the utilisation of the school buildings for the benefit of the school. Suggestions were made that at parents' meetings, parents had to be motivated to participate in the school's activities and that the school buildings had to be available for hiring to the community for over weekends. This was an indication that only the SGB chairperson understood the Schools Act and acknowledged the SGB's functions. The meeting was characterised by a lack of participation by some SGB members as well as a lack of collective decision-making by all the participants. In addition, some members lacked a clear understanding of the school procedures. Both meetings were characterised by considerable tension amongst the SGB members,.

4.2.4 First SGB meeting of school B

The meetings were arranged to accommodate the SGB year plan. However, due to the industrial strike, alternative arrangements had to be made. Consequently, at school B, the first SGB meeting was held on 3 June 2007, attended by all the SGB members and where each member received a copy of the agenda (which the researcher did not receive, see paragraph 4.1). During the meeting, after the chairperson's opening remarks and submissions made by certain members, all the members were given an equal opportunity to voice their opinions on the issues under discussion.

The principal delivered his report about the management of the school in which he referred to the fact that one of the educators was going on pension. After that, the SGB chairperson gave a report on the governance of the school. One parent's submission referred to the maintenance of the boys' and girls' toilets and the participants discussed how that would be done. All the participants were unanimously in favour of the motion put forward regarding

the renovation of the toilets, in compliance with the procedures prescribed by the DoE. This was indicative that the SGB understood and acknowledged their functions in terms of section 20 (9) and section 21 (1) of the SASA (RSA, 1996a).

It must be mentioned that most of the views aired by the members were in line with the prescribed SGB functions. In addition, it must also be noted that here were one or two members who were eager to participate, but were not yet able to do so as they were still new. The atmosphere at both school B's meetings was interesting to note and was different from that experienced in the other two schools. At both meetings, the atmosphere was positive and was characterised by tolerance and patience with one another. It was also apparent that both the new members as well as those that indicated their inexperience, were eager to learn. Importantly, all the members participated in the collective decision-making process. In addition, before the SGB finalised any decision, it was owned by all the members. For example, the date for the next meeting was first scheduled for 19 July 2007, but was rescheduled for 21 July 2007 to accommodate one of the SGB members who had previous family commitments, so that the meeting could be attended by all the members.

4.2.5 Second SGB meeting of school B

The second SGB meeting was attended by all the members. During the meeting, all the members were given an equal opportunity to make submissions regarding the issues discussed.

The participants' input was relevant and focussed on the set agenda. One of the SGB members made a submission in which the steps that should be taken by educators when one of the learners was injured during break, were set out clearly. The participants all accepted the motion to improve the school buildings to ensure the safety of the learners. The suggestions put forward were indicative that the principal made use of collective decision-making and had succeeded in fostering a healthy team spirit amongst his staff. In addition, the participants were all involved in the collective decision-making process.

The last submission by the principal dealt with the disruption of school activities by the chronic late-coming of learners because of transport problems, especially the learners who lived outside the feeder areas. The participants identified collective strategies to solve the

problem. As outlined in the SASA (RSA, 1996a: 16), section 20 (e), one of the objectives of the SGB is to support or help the principal, educators and other staff carry out their professional functions. This is because the DoE has conferred the necessary powers on the SGBs to carry out their basic functions. In this regard, educators are urged to recognise parents as partners in education and to promote a harmonious relationship between home and school. This implies that the educators will have to regard parents as their allies, even more so because both parties are interested in and concerned about the learners (Doom, 1997:4).

4.2.6 First SGB meeting of school C

In school C, a scheduled SGB meeting was planned for 9 August 2007, but was postponed until 16 August 2007 because the SGB did not form a quorum as some SGB members were busy attending a workshop. This meeting just as all the others was held in the staff room and all the SGB members were present. This meeting, like all their other meetings was opened by the principal. The atmosphere at their meetings was conducive to collective decision-making. In addition, in school C, the participants were all given an opportunity to make submissions.

The principal's address focussed on the daily management of the school, since the industrial strike was over, normal teaching was taking place and the school was already engaged in a recovery plan to make up for lost time. This indicated the principal's acknowledgement of his role as an ex-officio member. Amongst other things, the principal proposed that the parking area should be extended because of the increase in the number of cars on the school premises. After the deliberations, the area where the extension could take place was identified and all the members supported the idea, however there was no mention of how the extension was to be done. These discussions were an indication that the parents were involved in school activities and that there was a good team spirit amongst the members.

The SGB chairperson's submission dealt with the need for the immediate renovation and restoration of both the boys' and girls' toilets which were not in a good condition. The participants were in favour of the idea and identified mechanisms to avert such problems in future. This was an indication that the SGBs understood and acknowledged their functions in terms of section 20 of the SASA (RSA, 1996a), and that there was good teamwork amongst them and that they engaged in collective decision-making.

Thereafter, the members agreed on the proposed date, time, venue and agenda of the following meeting. In that regard, it must be mentioned that the deliberations were significant and relevant as far as the SGB functions and this study and the provision of education are concerned. Importantly, it was evident to the researcher that the meeting was intended to be a time for sharing ideas and looking ahead. All the SGB members were actively engaged in the discussions as well as in the decision-making process. There was evidence of a good team spirit and the atmosphere was cordial and friendly that was reflected by the tolerance and patience with which members treated each other. It was also interesting to witness the principal engaging in clarifying some of the issues that were to be discussed, for the enlightenment of all the members.

4.2.7 Second SGB meeting of school C

The second meeting was an urgent meeting held on 21 August 2007, exactly a week after the first one that all the members attended. During the meeting, participants were given an opportunity to air their views.

The discussions focussed firstly on a report on athletic activities and secondly, on the maintenance of the school buildings. The discussions were productive and insightful for the researcher. After that, a submission was made about the progress made in connection with the 2007 school year plan. A further submission was by the principal regarding the fact that there were insufficient funds to pay the SGB educators because of the low rate of payment of school fees. Of particular relevance to the functions of the SGBs at this meeting was their participation in joint decision-making, the mutual support and cooperation that was evident amongst all the SGB members who were involved in a project to raise funds to augment the available school funds. In addition, it was evident that the SGB members acknowledged their functions as stipulated in Section 36 of the SASA (RSA, 1996a), regarding meeting the school's needs.

4.2.8 Conclusion

The above discussion focussed on how SGBs are functioning in public primary schools in terms of the SASA (RSA, 1996a) which gives important guidelines and principles regarding the roles and functions of the SGBs of public schools. In all three schools the researcher

observed, the correct procedures for holding meetings were followed and deliberations during the meeting focussed on SGB functions. In school A, the atmosphere was characterised by considerable tension as a result of the problems experienced by SGB members. Although participants were afforded an opportunity to air their views, the SGB chairperson who appeared to have an extensive understanding of the SGB functions, dominated the discussions. Some participants appeared to have a lack of understanding of their roles and functions and those of the SGBs. Furthermore, there was a lack of participation in the problem-solving and decision-making processes by SGB members. What was also noticeable was the hostility the SGB deputy chairperson displayed towards the educators.

The mood of the meeting in school B was more welcoming and relaxed compared to the mood in school A's meeting. In schools B and C it was evident that there was a good team spirit and that they engaged in collective decision-making under the guidance of their principals. It was indicative that the participants understood and acknowledged the SGB functions and accepted the fact that parents were their partners in education. The input of the various participants was relevant and the discussions adhered to what was on the agenda. In contrast with schools A and B, the principal of school C dominated the discussions.

In the next part of this chapter, supplementary data for the study, gathered from the unstructured interviews will be presented. The findings are based on the responses from the SGB members' interviews

4.3 FINDINGS BASED ON INTERVIEWS WITH SGB MEMBERS

4.3.1 Introduction

The previous section of this chapter presented the findings based on the observations. The focus was specifically on determining how effectively the SGBs are functioning in public schools. The interviews supplemented the observations, as indicated in section 1.8.1 of this study. The focus will now be on the findings based on the interviews held during May and September 2007 with selected participants. This part of the study will focus on the data from the interviews and will serve to enrich and supplement the data obtained from the observations.

In the first, second and third sections, the responses of the three schools' participants to questions about the effectiveness of the SGBs in public schools will be discussed regarding how effectively the SGBs are functioning in public primary schools.

4.3.2 Responses from SGB members with regard to the composition, membership and election of SGBs

4.3.2.1 Elections

In terms of the new approach of the South African education system, the SASA (RSA, 1996a) has clearly mandated the democratic governance of schools involving different stakeholders in the SGBs of public schools. Therefore, members of SGBs should be elected democratically. Literature presented in chapter 2, section 2.4.2, sets out details regarding the composition of the SGBs and their elections.

The participants were asked about the composition of the SGBs, the election process and how they felt after being elected in terms of the Schools Act. All three schools' participants informed the researcher that the SGB elections take place once every three years. They added that the parents nominate the candidates, after which the parents cast their votes for the individuals they wished to represent them on the SGBs. The participants from school A added that SGBs are elected so that the school can run smoothly. Furthermore, they also indicated that if the different stakeholders in the SGB committee have a good relationship with each other, it can prevent many future problems and can lead to a common understanding of issues amongst members.

School B's participants indicated that the election process is supervised by the hosting school and is under the control of the DoE. On the night of the elections, the nominees are taken from the floor. During the elections that take place at the parents meeting, the nominated people sit in front of all the parents in the school hall before voting takes place and are all asked the same question, namely why they want to serve on the SGB.. The aim is to give nominees an opportunity to convince parents that they are the most suitable candidates to serve on the SGB. The actual voting then begins and the counting of votes is done on the same day.

One school B parent remarked that:

Voting it is pretty open [it means the process of voting is made known to all the parents before voting takes place/they are educated before they can vote for the members they want to represent them on the SGB].

Levacic (1995: 1) states that there is an absence of “hotly contested elections” in the majority of schools. School B’s participants said that voting by educators and non-teaching staff takes place in the staff room and that the voting process is democratic. As is the case on the parents’ voting day, the counting of the votes of the educators and the non-teaching staff is also done on the same day that voting takes place. Regarding the educators, three representatives must be nominated for election. Therefore, monitors are invited to schools to make sure that everything takes place according to the prescribed procedures. School C’s participants indicated that they issue the parents with forms so that they can nominate potential SGB members.

4.3.2.2 Composition and membership

The SGBs of ordinary public schools are composed of elected members, a principal, co-opted members and learners in grade 8. The co-opted members are people from the community who are elected to assist the SGBs with their functions, but they do not have voting rights. The act mandates that there may be more parent members than other SGB members who have voting rights (Ngidi, 2004: 261).

The participants from both schools B and C agreed that the composition of the SGB should be based on the core democratic values of representation. Therefore, it is undemocratic to have an unbalanced representation of stakeholders on the SGB that is responsible for all decision-making. The main reason for the SGBs including different stakeholders is that parents and educators have different, but specific roles to play in the education process. School C’s participants added that the membership of SGBs should also include learners in order to ensure proper representation of the community on the SGB.

4.3.2.3 How SGB members perceive their membership

Some SGB members had mixed feelings about being elected to serve on the SGB. In contrast, some of school A's participants indicated that they were happy to be elected as members of the SGB because they wanted to be part of the SGB of their school. They felt it created an opportunity for them to gain insight into and obtain firsthand knowledge of what was happening at school.

One parent from school B who was less happy about serving on the SGB said:

I was scared because I thought that SGB work was going to interfere with my work, as I did not exactly know what is happening at school.

They added that they were happy because the workshop they had attended helped them to understand that as SGB members, they had to work together as a team. They were invited to ask for help from knowledgeable people when there were things that they did not understand. They were also reassured that nobody was going to laugh at them if there was something they did not know. The workshops they attended gave them extra confidence because they felt they were now better equipped to work for the community.

The participants from school B said that they had been elected a long time ago. However, they added that they were not satisfied, because after being elected they had not received any support from the parents who had elected them. This viewpoint was echoed by one of the parents from school A,

In all the discussions that are held in the parents' meetings we are not supported by the parents but instead you are criticised negatively by the parents who have elected you. They are happy to sit there on the night of the meeting and elect whoever they want to. But actually to be there and support [us], they are not there. It's always the same parents present. Any way whatever you do means nothing to parents. All your endeavour means nothing to parents.

The participants from school C said that only after being trained, did they realise how much was expected of them and only then did they realise the nature and extent of the roles they had to play as SGB members. The SGB training also helped them to get rid of their misconceptions regarding SGBs, how they could be involved as members of the SGB in terms of the SASA policy (RSA, 1996a). Moreover, they revealed that their training had made them

eager to carry out their functions and had made it easy for them to carry to do so, because they were now trained and were fully aware of the parameters within which they had to operate.

4.3.2.4 Conclusion

This section dealt with how SGB members perceived their membership of the SGB. The above data emanating from the interviews with SGB members indicated that all three schools' participants said that the election of SGB members is carried out by the parents. The terms of office of SGB members expire every three years. Voting takes place during elections and the votes are counted on the same day. Participants from schools B and C agreed that voting is done democratically and all the different stakeholders are included.

From the above data, it appears that some of school A's participants were happy to be elected as SGB members and indicated that the first SGB workshop had empowered them. In contrast, the participants from school B asserted they were not happy to be SGB members since the parents did not support them, but rather tended to criticise them. School C's participants, said that they had only realised what their functions were after they had been elected. School A and C's participants indicated that the SGB training had helped them to overcome their fear of serving on the SGB.

4.3.3 Responses from SGB members with regard to the aims of SGBs in public schools and the attendance of meetings

Representatives were asked to give their views regarding the aims of SGBs in public schools and the attendance of meetings.

4.3.3.1 Aims

The fundamental aim in establishing SGBs in public schools is based on the idea of the decentralisation of power where stakeholders can share power with the state. The overall purpose is to empower schools and communities and to motivate them to assume ownership of and take responsibility for their own education in their own country. In answer to the question concerning what they regarded were the most important aims of SGBs in public

schools, a number of different responses were received. They can be grouped together as follows:

(a) Parental involvement

The participants from both schools A and B felt that one important aim would be to involve the parents who would have to work closely under the guidance of the educators. In this way, the parents would have an opportunity to control the school funds and play an important role in the financial matters of the school.

School A's participants added that parental involvement had a further advantage of exposing parents to the school so that they would learn more about the way schools function and how the school funds were used. In addition, parents and educators could work together as a team in solving problems such as drug abuse amongst schoolchildren. Lastly, they said that they felt that a school could not run smoothly without the involvement of the parents.

One parent participant from school A's SGB said that:

I don't regret to be an SGB member because I will have an opportunity to learn how the school function

School C's participants stated that the main aim was to make parents aware of what was happening in school, that the different stakeholders had to be involved and that they had to be involved in drawing up the curriculum and doing macro planning at school.

(b) Funding

School B's participants indicated that the main aim of SGBs in public schools was to help with the governance of the school. They added that schools were currently in a difficult situation as the government intended to withdraw its funding from public schools because the SGBs had more authority than they had.

A parent participant said that

I understand that the government is planning to withdraw section 21 status from the SGB because they [the government] think they have lost control over schools and that the SGBs have taken over their duties. But that is still in the pipeline

4.3.3.2 Attendance of meetings

Participants were asked to respond to the question regarding whether they held meetings with different stakeholders, the real reasons members did not attend meetings and whether any action was taken against those who did not attend meetings. Their responses showed a good deal of consensus, although there were a few minor differences in their responses that were as follows:

(a) SGB meetings

The participants from all three schools reported that meetings were held once a term except in emergencies. The participants from both schools A and C indicated further that they usually met before the general parents' meetings. As far as school B was concerned, the participants indicated that meetings were arranged to accommodate the term and exam timetables respectively as well as the length of the term. Furthermore, they explained that they tried to hold a meeting once a term in the evenings because most of the parents were at work during the day. Their meetings were not too long because everybody arrived prepared for the meetings as they received agendas in advance. Meetings were never held over weekends, as was the case in some other schools.

(b) SGB meetings with non-SGB members

The SASA (RSA, 1996a) stipulates that the SGB constitution must make provision for SGB meetings with parents, learners, educators and the other staff of the school and that the SGBs should present an annual report at least once a year (Ngidi, 2004: 260).

All three schools indicated that they normally met with non-SGB members when necessary and when there were issues that affected them. The participants from schools A and B

indicated further that normally the educator component made an appointment to meet with the non-SGB members to report on the outcome of the meeting, when there were some issues that needed to be clarified. They also met with non-SGB members before the SGB meetings so that they could note the concerns and needs that had to be reported to the parents.

4.3.3.3 Reasons for non-attendance of SGB meetings

The replies to the question about the reasons why the SGB members did not attend meetings were insightful and informative. They can be grouped as follows:

(a) Transport problems

School A's participants indicated that in some of the township schools, the situation was serious as many SGB members worked far from home and in addition, they had transport problems. The unemployed SGB members did not have money for transport at night as they were expected to pay for their own transport. This is reflected by one of the parent participants from school A who said:

In the location we have more serious problems such as working far from home, struggling to get home in time because transport is scarce. We are expected to use our own money to attend evening meetings and we do not have money for the [fohloza] taxi.

(b) Employed and unemployed SGB members

The employed participants from school A indicated that they sometimes experienced problems when they requested permission from their employers at work to leave early in order to attend meetings, as their supervisor(s) were not aware that they served on the SGBs. Furthermore, they did not receive formal invitations to the meetings so that they could produce them as proof when asking for permission to attend the meetings. School C's representative added that meetings that were held in the afternoons were inconvenient for the employed members.

One SGB parent from school A remarked that:

We sometimes experience problems because our bosses don't want us to attend meetings because they were not officially informed that we are members of the SGB. We are not invited to the meetings officially and that is not right. Umlungu [the boss/supervisor] wants to see an official letter that I will be attending a meeting.

(c) Safety

The participants from school A mentioned that they were worried about their personal safety. One of the participants elaborated as follows:

I am worried about our safety. These meetings are held at night and they expose us to danger. However, some of our members prefer evening meetings.

(d) Personal reasons

According to school A's participants, they did not have enough money to buy airtime. One parent from school A gave the following reasons for not attending the meetings:

It is very important to apologise in time but I don't have money to apologise telephonically because I am not working. Some of us our spouses are jealous because we are young. No I can't attend evening meetings.

In addition, the participants from schools A and C mentioned that other problems that prevented parents from attending meetings could be unexpected personal crises that left little time and energy for involvement in SGB matters.

(e) Conflict and problem solving

School A's participants alleged that conflicts amongst members of the SGB caused them to stay away from the meetings. In addition to the many problems that should have been solved at school, the SGB's duties were difficult to carry out. Some of the conflicts were caused by domineering principals, as is also mentioned by Van Wyk (2004:53) when he states that the

principal has the power and authority to undermine the work of the SGBs as they are highly dependent upon them (the principals) for quality of information.

(f) Level of commitment and devotion to their tasks

Schools A and C's participants indicated that the real reason could be that some members were not committed to their tasks, particularly the parents, who had not been adequately prepared to serve on the SGBs.

A different reason was given by school B's representative who said that sometimes members did not attend because they were simply too lazy to do so. However, she added that this did not apply to the current members who were conscientious and attended meetings regularly.

4.3.3.4 Inactive members in SGBs

The participants explained how they dealt with inactive SGB members. All three schools indicated that SGB members normally wrote letters to inactive members advising them to resign after they had not attended three meetings. The participants from schools A and C added that their resignation letters had to include reasons for not attending the SGB meetings. They said that after the resignation of members, they consulted parents to co-opt other members in their place. Then, at the next scheduled meeting, the parents were advised to elect a parent or parents who were available to help with school activities and were prepared to assist the SGB.

4.3.3.5 Conclusion

This section has dealt with the responses of SGB members regarding the aims of SGBs and the attendance of meeting. The conclusion is that both school A and B's participants felt that the main aim was to involve parents in school affairs; they wanted parents to have an opportunity to control the school funds. School A's representative said that serving on the SGB offered parents an opportunity to become aware of how the school funds were used and that the school could not run smoothly without SGB assistance. In addition, school C's participants felt that parents would become aware of school activities and have insight into and provide input on the curriculum of the school.

Another conclusion is that all three schools' representatives agreed that SGB meetings were held once a term. School B added that all their school meetings were held in the evening and not over weekends because most parents were at work during the day and weekends were there for their families. All three schools admitted that they normally met with the non-educators when there were issues affecting them and before SGB meetings, so that they could note the concerns that needed to be submitted to the SGB committees.

According to school A's participants, the real reasons for the SGB members not attending the meetings were that some SGB members worked far from home, the unemployed members did not have transport money or money to report telephonically why they could not attend and the evening meetings exposed them to danger. Further reasons for their non-attendance of meetings were that some spouses were jealous when they attended SGB meetings at night, some members wanted to avoid conflict with SGB members, furthermore, they did not receive formal notices inviting them to meetings and the employed members' employers were not aware that they served on the SGB. The participants from schools A and C indicated that there was a lack of commitment by SGB members and that the afternoon meetings were inconvenient. School B's participants were of the opinion that in the past members had not attended meetings because they were too lazy to do so.

All three schools agreed that inactive members were advised to write resignation letters after three months so that new members could be co-opted to serve on the SGB in their place. School A and C's participants added that the letter had to state the reasons for the problem that prevented SGB members from attending meetings.

4.3.4 Responses from SGB members with regard to the training of new SGB members and the commitment of members

4.3.4.1 Introduction

Participants were asked about the training of newly-elected SGB members as well as how committed they were. Their answers reflected their practical experience in this regard.

4.3.4.2 Training of new members

Based on their experience and background knowledge the respondents answered as follows with regard to the training received by new members.

(a) Capacity building

The decentralisation of the governance and management of schools requires that the different stakeholders in the SGB should be developed in a number of areas and capacitated to deal with the complex issues and tasks they are expected to perform. Therefore, provision of appropriate training especially for the parent component is an absolute necessity.

All three schools' participants agreed that it was very important that every member of the SGB should receive training before they assumed their duties so that they could know what their job descriptions and their duties entailed

School A's participants indicated that training would equip and capacitate them with experience to perform their duties. The participants from schools A and C added that training would ensure that they understood the expectations of the DoE. School A's participants expressed concern about the fact that a great deal of information was given to them within a short space of time during the DoE training sessions. The second problem connected with the training programmes was the absence of monitoring programmes and follow-up workshops by the DoE to ensure the effective functioning of the SGBs. On the other hand, participants from school C indicated that there was a problem; parents thought that as SGB members, they had the right to confront the principal and to expel educators from their work. The participants from school B said that training would enable the SGBs to be aware of parameters within which they needed to function and it would help them to get to know their responsibilities, rights, when to talk and when to keep quiet.

The initial ignorance of parents from school B regarding the functions of a SGB is reflected in what one of the parent participants said:

At first, I heard about the governing body but I did not exactly know what it was all about. I totally did not know.

The member added that after she had been co-opted and trained she realised that what she had known about SGBs was different from what was actually expected. As a new member, she observed, learnt and enjoyed a great deal, but did not know what to do. In her own words:

I don't regret to be an SGB member. I feel I can do more. But it comes with time. When you know what you must do, you will do it at your best of your ability.

(b) Continuous training

Continuous training is one of the positive mechanisms employed to ensure quality management and governance by both the SMTs and the SGBs and may lead to the achievement of the community needs in public schools. The participants were asked to explain what continuous training the SGBs had received from the DoE and other NGOs that had an interest in education.

The participants from both schools A and C stated that they did not need regular training; but instead they felt they needed a minimum of a month's training to ensure the improvement of their skills. It is evident that SGB competence was directly related to the amount of training they had received. Therefore, there is still a definite need for improving the quality of SGB training, especially for the parents and for follow-up training by the DoE (Maile, 2002: 53). School B's participants indicated that they had received training from the National Professional Teachers' Organisation of South Africa (NAPTOSA) from time to time regarding the new developments. During those training sessions, parents are generally advised about the problems facing education and what the government might or could introduce in future.

4.3.4.3 Commitment of SGB members

The viewpoint of participants from school C is that SGB members must be committed and they must perform their prescribed roles. They added that SGB members must be eager to learn and they had to know what they were doing because they represented the people who elected them. Consequently, the duties of the SBGs had to be taken very seriously because one did not become a SGB member just for the status it brought. The participants from

schools A and C preferred not to express their views on this point for reasons only known to them.

4.3.4.4 Satisfaction and dissatisfaction with SGB training.

The respondents were asked to express their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with regard to SGB training. Their responses were grouped as follows:

(a) Satisfaction

The participants from schools A and C indicated that they were satisfied with the SGB training they had received and they felt that the training they had received was an opportunity for personal development. The participants from both schools A and C added that it helped them to gain insight into what their responsibilities entailed and to become aware of the expectations they had to meet as SGB members. In addition, school B's participants indicated that everybody was of the opinion that it had been a learning experience for every one concerned as well as an opportunity to gain new information.

One SGB member from school B remarked as follows:

Training makes you to be proactive and you also learn how different people act towards different situations. They [the trainers] also indicated that every school is different and it is run differently.

(b) Dissatisfaction

The participants from schools A and C indicated that the training period was too short. They were trained for one to two days instead of being trained for a whole month. SGB members from both schools A and C remarked that:

You cannot be expected to know everything within a short space of time.

However, both groups of participants from schools A and C respectively stressed the fact that some members go back to school not understanding their expected duties very well and may misinterpret the information they receive. Therefore, they cautioned the SGBs to take training

very seriously because everything that had been said in the workshops should be put into practice regarding the governance of the school. School B's participant indicated that some training did not provide SGB members with what they needed. She added that it was crucial to remember that each SGB member was unique and therefore the individual's needs for training might not be the same as those of other people.

A representative from one of the schools indicated that the outgoing SGB members should be given a chance to work with new SGB members in at least three meetings to gain some experience. Even if the former SGB members did not teach them anything, they could give the new SGBs some advice. Outgoing members could point out that they felt ill-prepared for the task because of their lack of information regarding their tasks and insufficient training; consequently, certain SGB members, such as the teachers and the principals contributed the most to what happened in the meetings. A parent member from one of the schools had this to say:

Angeke ngivume ukuthi bangitshela esikoleni same. This means never they want to instruct me in my school. The person just go into this thing [[SGB committee]] without the know how [knowing], and what is going to happen.

One participant from one of the schools said that it was very important that outgoing members should transfer the knowledge that they had acquired to the newly elected SGB members, so that they could have some idea of what their duties entailed.

One parent from school A said that:

The former SGBs only mentioned that the SGB duties are very difficult but did not explain what they mean. They were supposed to tell us what they mean and how we should approach different perspectives. They brush-brush us and left us like that.

Another parent from school A stated that:

We don't want to leave them [the newly appointed members] hanging on the fence like a washing. We are in the darkness we don't know anything

One of the educators from school A mentioned that he would advise the SGB members to take workshops very seriously because the information they were given at the workshops was very important as they were being prepared for the types of duties they would be expected to

carry out in future. In addition, they had been informed about the functions, composition and the functions of each member in the SGB that enabled them to function optimally. One of the teachers from school A motivated the need for training and workshops as follows:

Because it is going to be difficult if you are a treasurer and you don't know who you are accountable to, whom do you account to?

A participant from school B pointed out that he would advise parents to focus on their areas of expertise in the SGB, so that the specialist areas of members of the SGB, such as agriculture, could be used in the SGB for the benefit of the school. The last piece of advice was that parents should find ways of becoming involved in the affairs of the school.

4.3.4.5 Conclusion

This section dealt with the responses of SGB members regarding the training of new members and commitment of members. School A's participants felt that although the outgoing SGB did not teach them anything, they could advise the new SGB members to use the chance to work with the outgoing SGB members for a short period of time, before taking over from them in order to benefit from their experience. They felt that the lack of information had hampered their ability to execute their duties compared with the teacher component of the SGB. The educators from schools A and C said that they would advise the SGB to take the workshops seriously because it had equipped them with the requisite skills needed to perform their duties effectively. School C's educators said that their advice to SGB members would be that they should be committed and conscientious about carrying out their expected duties. In addition, school B's participants confirmed what school A's participants had said about advising the new SGB members to focus on their areas of expertise. They added that as new SGB members, they should become involved in the school activities as much as they could. In a similar vein, the participants from school C advised the SGB members to be committed to their tasks and to be eager to perform their duties and take them seriously.

In this discussion, the idea of training SGBs before the assumption of duties was endorsed by all three schools' participants, because training would enable SGB members to become familiar with their job descriptions. Both school A and C's participants complained about the

short duration of the SGB training. School C's participants stated that training sessions would help them to determine what their tasks entailed.

The participants from both schools A and C expressed satisfaction with the SGB training provided by the DoE. However, they did recommend that all SGB members should receive a month's training at least. On the other hand, although participants from school B acknowledged that training was a learning opportunity and a chance to share information, they felt that the DoE training had not been beneficial for them because their individual needs had not been met. However, they indicated that were happy with the training they had received from the unions such as NAPTOSA.

4.3.5 Responses from SGB members regarding how effectively and efficiently the SGBs function

The question regarding how effectively the SGBs are functioning, has been responsible for a great deal of controversy in the South African community. Ever since the introduction of SGBs in the mid-nineties, there have been doubts about their level of efficiency in public schools. The Schools Act (SASA) stipulates that SGBs should perform their functions effectively on behalf of the school and for the benefit of the community (Ngidi, 2004: 260). At the same time, it is felt that inaccurate, inappropriate or erroneous knowledge about educational issues could act as a barrier to adequate performance of the SGBs (Brehony & Deem, 1995: 83)

Against this background, participants were asked to present their views with regard to the efficiency of the SGBs and their functions. The responses were insightful and informative. The respondents' views on this particular issue were as follows:

4.3.5.1 The efficiency of SGBs

With regard to how effectively the SGBs were functioning, school A's participants indicated that the SGBs should draw up a mission statement; in addition they had to ensure that all the school facilities and buildings were used effectively. They added that the SGB members should be trained so that they could use the section 21 allocations effectively, that is, 60% of the allocated amount should be used for Learning and Teaching Systematic Material (LTSM)

and 28% for maintenance and other services. The participants from school C added that the SGB members should support the school and attend meetings so that they could perform their duties effectively. School C's participants felt that the SGBs had to work closely with both the parents and educators, so that they could work together as a team in the running of the school. If the principal failed to attend to the issues that impacted on or affected the school negatively, it could mean that there was no teamwork between the management and the government of the school or any positive intervention by SGBs because they are also accountable to the school. Therefore, every stakeholder in the SGB must be prepared to perform his/her role actively and if SGBs are held accountable by their stakeholders, their efficiency would improve (Ngidi, 2004: 260).

School C's participants indicated that SGBs must be involved in the schools' activities so that they can help with the disciplining of learners, educators and managing the finances of the school. When necessary, SGBs had to recommend disciplinary hearings or procedures for misbehaving learners. It was therefore necessary for the SGBs to advise and support educators experiencing problems and to monitor the educators, to be involved in sport and be involved with the members of all school committees.

4.3.5.2 The functions of SGBs

Based on their own experience and background knowledge, the respondents answered as follows regarding the functions of SGBs:

(a) SGBs should develop school constitutions

Regarding the aspects of redress and equity, the Schools Act requires SGBs to develop their own school's constitution in line with the country's constitution. The fundamental aims of the constitution are to direct the actions and functions of SGBs and to ensure that members adhere to the rules and principles contained in it.

In this regard, the participants were asked to voice their opinions concerning the importance and necessity of drafting a school constitution and to comment on whether it should be linked to the country's constitution.

The participants from the three schools indicated that there was indeed a need for the SGBs to draw up a school constitution because they were part of South Africa. School A's participants confirmed that they were aware that they were expected to draw up a vision and mission statement for their school and school B's participants added that the drawing up of the constitution and school policies were the joint responsibilities of the principal and the SGB. While the principal only gave guidelines, the rest of the input had to come from the members of the SGB. . They added that the principal knew where he wanted to take the school, but he could not do that without the involvement of the SGB. Schools C's participants added that it was important for the SGBs to draw up a school constitution because all public schools had to apply certain rules and procedures as set out in the SASA (RSA, 1996a). In this regard, it is important to note that a constitution provides the guidelines to which the SGBs must adhere when performing their expected duties (Potgieter et al, 1997: 29).

The participants from schools A and C went on to say that a constitution would give everybody concerned direction regarding matters such as the starting and closing times of school for both educators and learners. In addition, it would also curb the laissez fair attitudes prevailing in some schools regarding late coming, for instance. They added that it was important that all the stakeholders should be involved in drawing up the constitution and it should be binding on everyone concerned. In that way, everybody would know what the aims, basic policies and regulations of the school were.

The participants from the SGBs of all three schools acknowledged that the schools' constitutions should be linked to the country's constitution. School A's participants felt that this could offer advantages when requesting government assistance for the school. The participants from school B pointed out that the school constitution must comply with the rules and requirements outlined in the Provincial Gazette (the official provincial government newspaper) authorised by the MEC (Potgieter et al, 1997: 29).

School C's participants stressed that the constitution should not only be in line with the county's constitution that was applicable to the whole country, but the school must also follow certain rules and procedures set out in the SASA (RSA, 1996a).

(b) What should the role of principals be as members of SGBs?

One of the reforms in our country's education system resulting from changes in the governance of education in South Africa is the devolution of power and shared responsibilities by stakeholders in public schools. Therefore, one of the crucial issues closely related to the efficiency and effective functioning of the SGBs was the important role played by principals as members of the SGB. The responses by the respondents regarding the roles played by principals in the SGB were varied as will be seen in the following section.

The participants from schools A, B and C stated that the principal was an ex-officio member who knew everything about the functions of the SGBs, and therefore he/she had to guide the SGBs. According to school B's participants, the principal facilitated or watched over everything that was discussed in the SGB meeting. Although he had no power to vote, he/she could sway the opinions of the members and direct the discussions.

In addition, the participants from schools A and B described the principal as the manager of the school and the SGB as the governor of the school. They added that it was important to note that the principal is the manager of the school and as such, he is at school on a daily basis. As the school is managed by the principal and governed by the SGB, he must supply the SGB with regular reports, because he is the link between the two entities, so that this partnership can succeed. It is extremely important in this situation that the principal and the SGB should have a good relationship with each other to ensure the smooth and effective running of the school.

(c) What the role of the educator component should be in SGBs

The participants from schools A and C agreed that the role of the educator component was to report to the educators about the decisions taken at SGB meetings as well as to report the educators' concerns to the SGBs. School B's participants indicated that the educator component was very important because the educators worked with the children themselves. They were therefore the ones that had to provide guidance to parents regarding how they should assist learners. In turn, the parents communicated ideas to educators, which they implemented whenever possible.

(d) The governance and management of SGBs

Changes in the governance and management of education have taken place worldwide, such as the inclusion of different stakeholders in the SGB structures. The aim of this change was to have shared and balanced representation as well as responsible SGBs in public schools. Currently, there is considerable interest in the way both the SGB and the principal operate and establish working relationships with each other in order to improve the development of schools and to achieve community and national goals. Therefore, the participants were asked to give their views on the governance and management of public schools.

The participants from all three schools pointed out that the SMTs that were all professionals and accountable to the DoE regarding the smooth running of the school, were the managers of the school. They added that the SGBs were responsible for the governance of the school and were accountable to the parents and the learners regarding the governance of the school and they also had to draw up the school constitutions.

The SASA (RSA, 1996a) stipulates that the SGBs are responsible for the governance of the school, whereas the principal under the authority of the HOD is responsible for the professional management of the school. Mestry (2006: 35) states that the principal has a duty to facilitate, support and assist the SGB in the execution of its statutory functions regarding the assets, liabilities, and financial management of the public school.

4.3.5.3 Conclusion

This section dealt with how efficiently and effectively the SGBs are functioning. The conclusions that can be made based on the findings are as follows: The participants expressed varying opinions with some similarities about their functions and efficiency as SGBs. All three schools' SGB participants acknowledged the need for SGBs to draw up a constitution. School B's SGB's participants added that it should be done with the assistance of the principal; while school A and C's participants stressed the importance of different stakeholder representation when drafting the school constitution. In addition, all three schools felt the constitution should be in line with the country's constitution. The participants from both schools B and C agreed that the school rules must comply with the country's constitution and

school C's SGB participant pointed out that the school constitution must be linked to the guidelines set out in the SASA (RSA, 1996a).

Another finding was that school A's participants were aware that they were expected to draw up a vision and mission statement for their school. A further finding was that the participants from school C indicated that they must support and attend meetings to ensure the effectiveness and accountability of SGBs that should also assist with the learners' discipline.

It was also found that the participants from all three schools understood the role of the principal as an *ex-officio* member. SGB Participants from school B pointed out that the principal should facilitate discussions and maintain good relationships; while the educators should shape and implement parents' ideas and the parents should acknowledge the importance of educators. The participants from schools A and C mentioned that the educator component played a dual role, as they had to report to both the SGBs and the educators about those issues or matters that were of mutual concern.

All three schools' participants agreed that the SMTs manage the school and they are accountable to the DoE; whereas the SGBs govern the school and are accountable to the parents and the learners.

4.3.6 Responses from SGB members with regard to the financial management of schools

This section deals with the responses with regard to budgets, accountability, the allocated functions of the SGB, audited financial statements and school fees/money generated.

Financial management is one of the most delicate and serious issues in public schools. It is therefore very important for schools to adhere to the DoE guidelines when managing the finances of institutions. The delegation of the allocated functions to the schools brings about the need for the proper management of funds in all public schools in South Africa. The literature indicates that the SGB is both responsible and accountable for the management of school funds. In this regard, the main task of financial managers is to facilitate matters, to support and assist the SGB in the execution of its statutory duties in relation to assets, liabilities, property and other financial management issues (Mestry, 2004: 130). Therefore,

the participants were asked to indicate the most effective way of managing school funds. From the responses, the following relevant issues stood out:

4.3.6.1 Budgets

Participants from schools A and B agreed that schools must have a budget, to which participants from school C added that the reason why they needed a budget was to prevent them from exceeding their incomes. School B's participants stated that all the relevant stakeholders must be involved in the drawing up of a budget at the beginning of the year and also with its revision at the end of the year. In addition, the budget must be analysed on a monthly basis. The budget should be presented to parents at a general meeting and should be adopted by the majority of the parents and if rejected; a new budget should be drawn up.

They felt that the school fees supplemented the money allocated to the schools by the DoE and that the school could not depend on its school fees only. They added that, schools must have an effective system regarding the recording, administering and the usage of the funds.

4.3.6.2 Accountability

The participants from school A stated that SGBs had to have the necessary skills to be able to work with the school funds because they were accountable for those funds. In their case, the financial committee met at the end of every month to consolidate a report on the financial status of the school and the expenditure of the school. They added that all the school funds must be deposited into one account so that SGBs can account for all the money with which they have been entrusted.

They pointed out that when the SGB members were elected there was a need to check the candidates' backgrounds and they should try to include professional people with experience in financial management for a position such as that of a treasurer.

They went on to say that their school financial committee should include different stakeholders such as both the principal and certain members of the SGBs, because both parties were responsible for the finances of the school. Furthermore, it should be remembered that the principal is also a member of the SGB committee (Mestry, 2004: 127).

One parent from school A added that:

At times, the principal does not want us to see the financial statements from the bank. Instead of releasing the financial statements, she will start questioning us. The problem is that the SGBs are supposed to see the financial statements of the school and the principals does not want to release the statements and will start questioning.

Section 20 of the SASA (RSA, 1996a) provides SGBs with the power to administer and control the school property, buildings and resources occupied by the school. In most cases, the SGB delegates various financial tasks to the principal based on the supposition that the principal is generally better informed about the delegated tasks than the SGB members. This means that the principal is accountable for the finances of the school

4.3.6.3 Allocated functions of SGBs

In the past, the South African government has contributed a considerable amount of money to school funds. Provisions in the SASA (RSA, 1996a) regarding the allocated functions of a public school formed the basis of the discussions. In this connection, the participants were asked to respond to the question regarding how the DoE regards section 21 schools.

If schools want to qualify for section 21 funds, they have to adhere to certain prescriptions regarding the management of funds and they are compelled to submit audited financial statements at regular prescribed intervals. School B was asked to give its views about the reasons for the government withdrawing the powers of the public school SGBs.

One parent from schools C's answer was straightforward in this regard, because she thought that the government felt it was no longer in charge of the situation; it felt it had lost control and that the SGB was taking over its [the DoE's] functions.

A further probing question was whether this withdrawal of powers was something they knew about or whether it was still in the planning stages. The response from the SGB was that it was still being debated and it seemed that the DoE felt that the SGBs had too much influence in certain areas.

Another parent from school B added:

All schools are run differently and the DoE still regards our school as a model C even if we are now in section 21. Apart from section 21 payment, we get very little assistance from the DoE. The school is looking after itself and our school is financially independent. We don't want to ask anything from anybody. We don't have to answer to the DoE how we spent the funds and that might be one of the things the DoE is not happy about.

4.3.6.4 Audited financial statements

One of the responsibilities of the parents is to prepare the financial statements of the school and to see to it that they are audited as stipulated by the DoE. In this regard, the participants were asked to explain how they audited the financial statements of their particular schools.

School A and C's participants indicated that it was very important to audit the financial statements to check if the school funds were not misused. They added that auditing that is carried out annually, helps the SGBs to govern responsibly. Proper financial reports and the auditing are essential as all section 21 schools are expected to submit audited financial statement to the DoE, so that the DoE can release the allocated funds for the following year.

4.3.6.5 School fees/money generated

One of the fundamental functions of the SGBs is to encourage parents to pay school fees to supplement the school funds. Upon being asked to respond about the necessity of paying school fees, the participants expressed different viewpoints.

Both school A and school B's participants agreed that parents must pay school fees so that the SGBs can meet the schools' responsibilities. The respondents of both schools A and C highlighted the fact that the school budget is based on the premise that their income will be derived from revenue generated by the payment of school fees. Accordingly, the participants from both schools B and C agreed that the allocated funds were not sufficient to meet their financial needs regarding the running of the school, so there was a need for the parents to pay school fees to augment the allocated funds (refer to chapter 2, section 2.4.6).

4.3.6.6 Conclusion

This section dealt with budgets, accountability, the delegated functions of the SGB, audited financial statements and the school fees/money generated. The necessity of having a budget was accepted by all three schools. School B's participants added that it must be drawn up by different stakeholders. School C's participants felt that a budget helped them not to overspend. In addition, the respondents from both schools A and C indicated that a budget is based on the payment of school fees.

All three schools agreed that school fees that supplement the allocated funds from the DoE, should be managed properly. To qualify as a section 21 school, a school must comply with all the necessary guidelines prescribed by the DoE. According to school B's participants, the government intended to withdraw the allocated functions from schools because it had lost control over schools. School A and C's participants indicated that all schools were expected to submit an audited financial statement to the DoE so that they could be allocated funds in the following year.

4.3.7 Responses from SGB members with regard to decision-making and communication

Respondents were asked to comment on how they take decisions as well as how they communicate with different stakeholders. The responses reflected their practical experience in this regard and can be grouped as follows:

4.3.7.1 Decision-making in schools

Decision-making is a process that involves all the different stakeholders with the aim of equalising the representation of constituencies. The issue here is not to take the decision-making power away from the SGBs, but rather to make their governance more effective and efficient so that the schools can function more effectively. The participants were asked to comment on the decision-making process.

(a) Decision-making process in schools

Both school A and B's SGB participants indicated that decision-making is a process that needs all the stakeholders to be represented in order to be able to make viable and valid decisions. What is important is that the process has to be carried out democratically involving all the stakeholders, though the SGBs have the final say because they are in the majority.

School C's SGB participants indicated that there was no autocratic decision-making at their school. In their school, decisions were normally taken by both the SMT and the SGB together.

(b) The role of principals in decision-making.

Regarding this issue, school A's participants indicated that as the principal is an ex-officio member, his role is to see that everything is done according to the stipulated regulations. They added that she provided guidance to the SGBs when there were conflicts amongst them, so that an amicable and acceptable common solution was reached.

School C's participants indicated that the principal was the overseer of all matters pertaining to the school and he was also an accounting officer. Whenever a decision was taken, it had to be ratified by the principal before it was communicated to the relevant people involved. It is therefore advantageous to have the principal on the SGB since he has influence over issues that can benefit the school.

4.3.7.2 Communication in schools

One of the fundamental aspects in any institution is to encourage all stakeholders to establish and ensure that continuous vertical and horizontal communication takes place. In this respect, an open door policy can enhance communication by cascading information to the appropriate role-players. Against this background, participants were asked to respond with regard to the importance of communication at school level and they had the following to say:

(a) Communication in schools

In any institution, positive communication with the stakeholders is healthy and essential so that different stakeholders can work together as a team towards the attainment of the organisation's aims and objectives. Therefore, the school will benefit from more effective and functional SGBs. The respondent's responses were based on their experience of the communication styles characteristic of their institutions.

(b) Communication channels

All three schools indicated that they communicated with parents by means of written letters inviting them to parents' meetings to discuss certain issues. School A's participants indicated further that they also arranged meetings with educators to discuss issues that affected the educators. They added that they also made use of the educator component of the SGB to pass information on to the educators. School B said that communication took place through appointments made with the relevant parties, by means of telephones, and newsletters sent to parents and by arranging parents' meetings. In the case of emergencies, they communicated telephonically with parents.

4.3.7.3 Conclusion

This section focussed on decision-making and communication at school level. Participants from all three schools agreed that decision-making needed the equal representation of all stakeholders and school C's participants advocated following the democratic process. School A's participants observed that the role of the principal in decision-making was to guide the rest of the SGB members. Participants from school C felt that all the decisions taken must be ratified by the principal before they could be implemented.

All three the schools' participants stated that they communicated with parents in different ways, for example, by means of letters, by telephone and by scheduling appointments for meetings with them.

4.3.8 Responses from SGB members with regard to the appointment of educators

The replies to the question about the nature and type of experience parents had regarding recommending educators for appointment, were informative. Their answers reflected their practical experience in this regard.

4.3.8.1 Recommendation of educators for appointment by SGBs

In South Africa, one of the duties of the SGBs is to recommend educators for appointment to the DoE as indicated in the SASA (RSA, 1996a) section 20 (i) and in chapter 2, section 2.4.3. This is a rather delicate and awkward matter since the literature indicates that most of the parents in South Africa are illiterate and they still believe that the education of their children should be left in the hands of the educators whom they regard as highly educated.

The participants were asked to comment on the criteria they were using to recommend educators for appointment at their schools and their experience regarding the interviewing of educators to be appointed at their schools. The participants shared their views on the procedures they followed in this regard.

4.3.8.2 Procedures for educator appointments

The participants from schools A, B and C said that the posts were advertised according to the DoE guidelines, after which the DoE forwarded the screened applications to the schools, which then draw up short lists. The SGB members elected the panel that had to run the interview process. At the end of the interviews, the panel discussed the individuals' responses. They felt that it was very important that interviewers should make an amicable decision that was fair to all candidates. The best candidates of the day were identified in accordance with the marks they had obtained and their relevant qualifications for the post. Even if the candidate did not express himself well because of a language barrier during the interviews, his/her qualifications were taken into consideration. Following that, the school sent the names of the three candidates that had performed the best, to the provincial department of education according to their order of preference.

School A's participants added that after that, if the provincial DoE was satisfied with the procedures followed during the interviews, the candidates were appointed according to the order of preference by the school. In cases where the candidate had already been appointed elsewhere, the second best candidate was then appointed.

The participants from school B indicated that the recommendation of the appointment of the educators was left to the SMTs because they were the professional people and they dealt with the day-to-day management of the school, the SGBs only supported them in that regard. It is interesting to note that school C's participants indicated that in most cases, the recommended candidate was already working at the school as a temporary educator.

4.3.8.3 Conclusion

This section focussed on the appointment of educators and the procedures followed. The participants from one of the schools stated that although they did not have the authority to appoint educators, they advised the SMTs regarding the best candidate in their opinion. That is, they recommended which educators should be appointed, according to the stipulations of the relevant legislation. School A's participants added that if the Provincial DoE was satisfied with the process followed, then the HOD made the final appointment. This differs from the procedures followed by school B, their participants indicated that the recommendation was done by the SMT and the SGB only supported them. It is interesting to note that school C's participant remarked that the person to be appointed had often already been working on a temporary basis at their school.

4.4 FINDINGS BASED ON INTERVIEWS WITH SGB CHAIRPERSONS

4.4.1 Introduction

The previous section presented the findings of the interviews with SGB members regarding how effectively the SGBs function in public schools. Against this background, the focus is now on the findings that are based on the interviews with the three SGB chairpersons from the different public primary schools. The individual chairpersons' responses with regard to how effectively the SGBs are functioning in public primary schools will be discussed next.

4.4.2 Responses with regard to the effectiveness of SGBs

The chairpersons of the three schools were asked to express their views about the effectiveness of the SGBs in public schools. Their responses are grouped as follows:

4.4.2.1 Communication

School A's chairperson indicated that the SGBs are effective and efficient when they are open and transparent. The chairperson of school B indicated that both the principal and the SGB chairperson communicated well with the educators as well as the learners and that there was a good relationship between the educators and the SGB. Moreover, the chairperson of the SGB spent quality time with the principal where ideas on how to improve the school and on how to spend money on the education of the children were shared.

Regarding the efficiency and effectiveness of the SGB, the chairperson of school C's SGB indicated that the staff of their school helped the SGB to function effectively. She commented on the nature of the relationship between the staff and the SGB members as follows:

The staff too, is fortunate because the SGBs don't use words like we are the SGBs and they will hear from us. In fact, we communicate well with the staff.

4.4.2.2 Commitment

The general purpose of the SGB is to perform its functions effectively in terms of the Schools Act, on behalf of the school and for the benefit of the school community. Therefore, the SGB occupies a position of trust regarding the school. In other words, the SGB members are expected to act in good faith, to carry out all their duties and functions on behalf of the school and to be accountable for their actions.

School B's chairperson indicated that he thought that both the commitment and the behaviour of the SGB members were excellent, especially as they received no financial rewards for what they did. School A and C's participants did not respond on this aspect.

4.4.2.3 The role of SGB chairpersons

The chairperson of school A indicated that the role of the chairperson was to solve problems at school and he had the most responsible job regarding the school, such as the financial responsibilities of the school. He added that the SGB was the backbone of the school and that the SGB chairperson together with the SGB, solved all the school problems. He explained their approach to problem solving as follows:

Rather than push it [problems] under the carpets. It [problems] has to be solved.

The above quote simply means that he advocated resolving the problems rather than avoiding them.

The chairperson of school B's SGB indicated that the role of the SGB chairperson was to make sure that the school was managed properly, to make sure that the finances of the school were managed correctly and that all the money was spent wisely. He added that the SGB chairperson did not get involved with educational matters because they were the responsibility of the principal. The SGB was there to make sure that the school followed the rules of the country. He added that the main function of the chairperson was to arrange meetings, to chair the meetings, to follow the agenda, to control the meetings and maintain discipline in the SGB meetings. He also felt that the atmosphere in the meetings should be democratic.

The chairperson of school C's SGB indicated that the chairperson worked closely with the principal. When there were activities that had to take place at school, the principal would inform the chairperson first and they would then discuss the matter. After that, the SGB would meet to discuss the proposals made. Only when consensus had been reached, did they inform the rest of the parents of the decision. She added that as the chairperson of the SGB, you represented the parents of that school. It was important for the SGB to liaise with the principal to ensure that decisions were carried out. In reply to a probing question directed at school C's SGB participant, she defended the idea that the chairperson helped the principal to resolve the problems encountered at school. The chairperson indicated that the SGB and the staff solved the school problems together.

4.4.2.4 The role of principals in SGBs

The principal as a member of the SGB plays an important role in it. The principal has to be an all-rounder in an institution because of the many functions entrusted to him/her by the DoE. Therefore, the SGBs cannot function effectively without the principal. The respondents were asked to express their views on how they saw the role of the principal.

The chairperson of school A indicated that the principal acted as an ex-officio member and as an advisor to the SGB. The chairperson of school B indicated that the principal's main aim was to report to the SGB about the daily functioning of the school and give day-to-day reports about the problems encountered with regard to the educators. It was also the responsibility of the principal to provide feedback about the available funds, the expenditure of the school, the school budget, all the improvements, school facilities and recreations, buildings, maintenance and the appointments of educators.

The chairperson of school C indicated that it was very important that the principal should serve on the SGB since he was the first person with whom the DoE communicated regarding matters that concerned the learners and the parents and then the principal could inform the SGB.

4.4.2.5 Conclusion

It is a fact that SGB chairpersons in South African public schools have a statutory responsibility for many functions pertaining to the schools. The chairperson of school A indicated that SGBs were effective when there was transparency. School B's chairperson indicated that his SGB was efficient because he spent quality time with the principal discussing school matters. School B's chairperson indicated that he thought that the commitment and behaviour of the SGB members were excellent, especially as they received no financial compensation for what they did. The chairperson of school C commented that their school staff helped them to be effective.

The chairperson's role in public schools is very important. It was evident that the chairperson in school A was aware of his roles such as solving problems at school and being responsible for the school finances. The chairperson of school B indicated that it was his responsibility to

makes sure that the school was managed properly, while he ensured that the SGB did not involve itself with the educational matters. He added that his main function was to organise meetings and run them properly. School C's chairperson stated that he had to work closely with the principal and that the principal should first inform him before passing any information on to the other stakeholders.

The chairperson of school A was of the opinion that the principal's main aim as an ex-officio member of the SGB was to advise the SGB. The chairperson in school B indicated that the principal's main functions were to report to the SGB about the daily functioning of the school. The chairperson of school C indicated that the DoE first communicated with him before communicating with the other stakeholders.

4.4.3 Responses with regard to SGB meetings

It is very important that SGBs should hold meetings with stakeholders in order to discuss issues pertaining to the school for the benefit of the learners and the school. Respondents were asked to respond with regard to meetings held by the SGBs and their responses can be grouped together as follows:

4.4.3 1 The role of principals in SGB meetings

The respondents were asked to comment on the importance of holding regular SGB meetings. The chairperson of school A indicated that it was very important for SGB members to hold their own meetings so that they could strategise.. At those meetings, the SGB would have an opportunity to discuss any issues that would be discussed at the parents' meeting. The ideas generated were the combined ideas of both the SGB members and the educators.

The chairperson from one of the schools indicated that there was a need for the SGB to have its own meetings with the principal. He added that normally he met with the principal alone at least once a week, to discuss matters that could help their school to progress and to improve.

One of the chairpersons indicated that it was very important for the SGB to hold meetings with the principal. It needed to discuss certain matters beforehand in order to prevent

problems when they met with the parents. They had to sit down, discuss the agenda, and focus on matters of interest.

4.4.3.2 Mandate from parents

The participants' were asked to give their views regarding the importance of holding meetings with the parents. The chairperson of school A indicated that it was very important for SGBs to hold meetings with parents because they were the mouthpieces of the parents and were doing the work on behalf of the parents. He added that the school belonged to the parents and they were also the custodians of the school. For example, the SGB normally liaised with parents regarding what the school fees should be because they had the final say. Without the parent component, the school would not be able to run smoothly.

The chairperson of school B indicated that since SGB members had been elected and appointed by the parents, it was obvious that they trusted the SGBs to govern the school on their behalf. Therefore, they had to hold meetings with the parents in order to report to them on matters regarding the school, such as the decisions taken by the SGBs and the reasons for taking those decisions. Meetings were also held in order to accommodate the parents' ideas. SGBs normally sent letters and questionnaires to the parents to elicit their responses about certain issues. After that, they engaged in discussions, following which they implemented the decisions taken. Lastly, the SGBs held meetings with the parents in order to attend to the needs of the school and the parents' requests.

4.4.3.3 Changes in education

The chairperson of school C indicated that there was a need to inform parents about educational changes because of the many changes that had affected our country's educational system. They needed to have a meeting with parents in order to inform parents about the new curriculum so that they could help their children at home with their homework. She added that it was therefore important for parents to know the cell numbers of the educators. This would assist parents in communicating with the educators about the things they did not understand. This is in line with what Pretorius and Lemmer (1998:21 & 27) say, namely that every parent has the right to information held by the department, public school or private school if such information concerns a learner in the school concerned (Pretorius & Lemmer, 1998: 21 & 27).

4.4.3.4 Conclusion

As the above discussions clearly show, it is apparent that SGBs in public schools have many problems. For instance, the chairperson in school A did not respond to this particular aspect because of problems experienced at their school as indicated earlier (see section 4.2 in this regard).

The chairperson of school B indicated that there was a need to have meetings with the principal. Normally he first discussed issues pertaining to the school with the principal. The chairperson in school C stated that meeting with the principal was important in order to discuss the agenda and to reach a common understanding before it was discussed at the SGB meeting or at the parents' meeting.

It is apparent that SGB chairpersons in South African public schools have a statutory responsibility for many functions pertaining to the schools. The chairperson of school A stated that SGBs were effective when there was transparency. School B's chairperson indicated that his SGB was efficient because he spent quality time with the principal discussing school matters. He declared that he thought that the commitment and the behaviour of the SGB members of his school were excellent, despite the fact that they received no financial reward for what they did. The chairperson of school C commented that their school staff helped them to be effective.

In both schools A and B, the chairpersons affirmed the importance of holding meetings with parents. School A's participants added that the SGBs acted on behalf of the majority of parents and were mandated by parents to perform certain activities; whereas, school B's participants pointed out that parents' meetings were held for various reasons. It is interesting to note that school C's participants contended that parents' meetings created an opportunity for the school to inform parents about educational changes.

4.4.4 Responses from SGB members regarding financial management

Respondents were asked to respond regarding the issue of financial management and their responses can be grouped together as follows:

4.4.4.1 Financial management

Financial management is one of the key areas in a school because schools will not function smoothly if the school funds are not managed properly. Good programmes have been developed to assist the SGB to manage the school's finances effectively and efficiently. The participants were asked to give their views about good financial management.

School A's chairperson did not want to give his opinion, instead he scratched his head looked down and went outside for few seconds after which he rejoined the interview session. During the interview period, school A was experiencing a serious financial crisis (the researcher became aware of this problem when she was interviewing the SGB committee). The chairperson of school B's SGB indicated that when a school has good financial management it implies that the school must have a good budget. He said:

You must know the expectations of the year and keep the cost at the minimum amount so that you can be able to pay SGB [extra] educators.

He also had this to say:

That is what the school can offer for the poor learners and the people within their environment.

School C's chairperson indicated that their school has a very strict auditor. Therefore, it is not easy for the school to misuse the funds because the auditor is very strict.

4.4.4.2 Training in financial management

Training in financial school management is fundamental and helps to prepare and equip school managers and SGBs with the necessary financial skills. This training enables both the SMTs and the SGBs to be responsible and accountable for the funds that have been received for the attainment of the specific school objectives. The participants were asked regarding the support they had received from the DoE, which developed their skills in managing the school's finances.

The chairpersons of schools A and B indicated that training in financial management would enable the incoming SGB members to handle the school funds. They added that the DoE must encourage the SGBs by organising more training opportunities for the SGB members on financial management. School B's chairperson informed the researcher that the workshops organised by the DoE for SGB members who were not experts in that field, were very basic. They offered no advanced workshops on financial management. Therefore, it was imperative for SGBs to include somebody on the SGB financial committee with a good financial background who understood economic matters. He added that if they failed to employ good financial managers, they would not have been able to meet all their financial commitments.

School B's chairperson stated that they did not send anybody to the DoE's financial training workshops, but used their own members instead who had a solid financial background. They audited their own financial statements and submitted their audited statements to the DoE. Fortunately, they had never had problems in connection with their school's financial statements. It can therefore be concluded that they were managing their school finances properly.

The chairperson of school C contended that the DoE just offered basic training regarding the functions they would be expected to perform as SGB members, but after that, they did not get any support from the DoE, even though they had indicated their training needs to the DoE. She added that in recent years, their school had had a problem with blocked toilets and although they had applied to the DoE for the renovation and repair of the toilets, it took years before the renovations were done. He complained that:

I cannot call that support because it does not happen immediately when you are experiencing a problem. Most of the time we are doing things on our own.

Of importance is the criticism levelled at the training currently offered by the DoE. That although the DoE does organise and provide training for SGBs on financial matters, there are complaints that the training is usually ineffective because many departmental officials assigned to train the SGBs are not managers or experts in school finance (Van Wyk, 204:54 & Bush *et al*, 2004)..

4.4.4.3 Self management and the financial means of independent schools

The principal as an ex-officio member of the SGB has a very important role to play in the financial management of the school. Although the SGB is accountable to the parents regarding the school funds, the principal is also an accounting officer, and as such, he is responsible to the DoE.

Against this background, the participants were asked to explain how they understood self-management and independent schools respectively.

The chairperson of school A explained that the term ‘self-managing schools’ refers to the fact that SGBs must be able to manage the school funds because if the SGB is unable to manage the finances of the school, it will collapse. It is important that the DoE organises training on financial management to equip the SGBs with financial skills. The chairperson issued the following warning:

We should not spend left and right that is very important. Without self management, I cannot be the chairperson because everybody will come and say I want R50.00 or R30.00, so we have to manage ourselves in order for the school to run effectively.

The chairperson of school B’s SGB indicated that the school managed itself, which meant that school B only received an extremely small subsidy from the government. He highlighted the fact that the SGB had to be in a position to control the budget, as schools were faced with many financial challenges. He also declared that a great deal of money was spent on water and lights and the schools were not supposed to pay for those items because they were not in a financial position to do that.

School B’s SGB chairperson was not satisfied with the allocated budget they had received from the DoE, because he thought that the amount of money allocated was insufficient. He pointed out that:

Basically we manage ourselves. We have to finance ourselves for books and paper. It is not always easy because things are becoming harder and harder. To control the budget is not an easy business in the educational situation.

School C's SGB chairperson commented that it meant a lot to be an independent school. However, she had initially been concerned about the fact that independent schools were supposed to use school fees to pay for their school's needs. The reason for her concern was the fact that parents did not pay full school fees; in fact, they only paid a small proportion of the full amount they were supposed to pay. Nevertheless, she acknowledged the positive contributions made by the government that assisted schools to pay for certain items.

In recent years, there have been major changes in the nature of the governance of schools. As a result, the SASA (RSA, 1996a) puts considerably more emphasis on decision-making and the devolution of authority and responsibility to schools than in the past. This has given birth to self-managing schools. This means that the authority was decentralised to school authorities to decide about the allocation of resources in the education system, with the pre-determined goals, priorities and frameworks for accountability being set out in the SASA (Caldwell & Spinks, 1988:5)

4.4.4.4 The role of the principal in financial management

The chairperson of school A indicated that the SGB usually depended on the principal for the smooth running of the school. The principal was in charge of the education of the children and was responsible for the purchase of books and other materials that were needed. The SGB governed the school and was supposed to generate funds, while the role of the principal was to deliver his input on how the school funds were to be generated, managed and spent.

The chairperson of school B indicated that the principal played a very important role in the SGB financial committee, since he had teaching experience and knew the costs of running the school on a daily basis. It was very important for the principal to be part of the SGB so that he could provide them with the correct figures and estimated amounts of money needed to run the school. The principal should be able to estimate the correct amounts that need to be spent on equipment, buildings and improvements to the machinery.

The chairperson of school C's SGB reminded the researcher that she had said that the principal had an important role to play in the SGB and with managing the money that the school had to administer and that he/ she had to account for the school funds. Therefore, while the SGBs had money, the situation was that they did not know how to spend the money to

meet the needs of the school. This placed a heavy burden on the principal who knew the exact needs of the school such as shortages of computers, stationary and office furniture, for example. In contrast, SGB members only knew about the general school needs such as a need for a security gate and guard, for example, and not about the items such as stationary that might be needed.

The chairperson of school B indicated that the principal had to prepare a budget that covered the school's projected needs for the following twelve months; this was then presented to the SGB for discussion. During the discussion of the budget, the SGB could make suggestions if there were figures that needed to be adjusted and then, if there were sufficient funds, the school could go ahead and make the necessary acquisitions.

The literature indicates that for any school to be successful, it is important that all the relevant stakeholders collaborate with each other. Though the SGB is accountable to the parents for the administration of school funds, the principal can play an important supportive role in ensuring that the school's finances are managed efficiently (Mestry, 2006: 13).

4.4.4.5 Fundraising in schools

One of the functions of a SGB is to raise funds for the school in order to meet the needs of the school. The participants were asked to explain how they raised funds for their schools.

The chairperson of school A's SGB asserted that it was very important to raise funds and to have a fund-raising committee for this purpose because the school could not run without money. He said that the chairperson of the fund raising committee should be a member of the SGB. He added that:

The chairperson of the fund raising committee is supposed to give the SGB committee a report so that they can receive blessings from the SGBs. There are many things which school must pay for and we cannot always use the allocated funds.

He mentioned that there are a number of fund raising methods such as concerts, music competitions and requesting donations from companies.

School B's SGB chairperson confirmed that there were different ways of raising funds for the school in order to meet the needs of the school. School B's chairperson added that the parents served on a fundraising committee to help them with fundraising.

School C's SGB chairperson emphasised that the principal was very important as far as the school funds were concerned, because he was the accounting officer. He stressed that the SGBs have funds but do not know how they should be spent in the interest of the school.

4.4.4.6 The role of educators in financial management

The educators and SGBs must cooperate with each other to realise the vision and mission of schools. The participants were asked to respond regarding the support that the SGB received from the educators and the support the educators received from the SGB.

(a) Mutual support

School A's chairperson declared that the staff must support the SGB so that the school can run smoothly. There must be two-way communication between the staff and SGB members so that the SGB can function properly. School B's chairperson said that the SGB did not have an open door policy and that educators were not supposed to go directly to the SGB with their problems. In cases where they could not solve their problems with the principal, the SGB accommodated them and then dealt with those problems.

(b) Parental support of the SGB

The SGB chairpersons of both schools A and school B said that the parents supported them in various ways with different activities; on the other hand, school B's chairperson reported that they did not get much support from parents. The chairperson of school A explained that the most perceptible form of support enjoyed by SGBs was when parents paid their children's school fees and when they ensured that their children did their homework. Some schools resorted to legal means to collect school fees, but at their school, they did not resort to legal means because it was too expensive.

The chairperson of school B's SGB indicated that in the past, efforts by the PTSA that had been responsible for fundraising, had failed because of the lack of support from the parents. School C's SGB chairperson informed the researcher that at their school, they did enjoy the support of the parents with fundraising, for instance, when they were involved in a project.

The functionality of the school is determined by the ability of the SGB to perform its roles and to execute its responsibilities. Obviously, the schools that have supportive and active SGBs will prosper and their results will improve. Where this is the case, educators feel that they have the backing of the community for the work they do, as well as feeling appreciated and protected, and as a result, the learners will benefit. In order for the school to be functional, we need parents who are committed, responsible and accountable and who support the SGB that they have elected (Asmal, 2000: 4)

4.4.4.7 Conclusion

The SGB chairpersons of schools A and B agreed that financial management meant that the school must have a good budget and school B's chairperson added that having a good budget would enable the school to manage its expenditure. School C's SGB chairperson indicated that their school's funds were not misappropriated because their school had a strict financial auditor.

The above discussions clearly indicate that the SGB chairpersons of schools A and C were in favour of providing SGB members with training in financial management since it would equip the incoming SGB members with the necessary skills to handle school funds properly. School B's chairperson said that the workshops in financial management organised by the DoE were too basic, therefore they never sent anybody to those workshops. Instead, they relied on the expertise of SGB members who had a financial background.

School A's respondent defined self-managing schools as schools that were able to manage their funds themselves.. The chairperson of school B mentioned that their school managed itself and received little assistance from the DoE. School C's chairperson indicated that they were apprehensive about managing themselves at first, because parents did not pay their children's school fees.

The SGB chairperson of school A outlined the role of the SGB in the generation and management of school finances; while the principal manages educational matters. School B's SGB chairperson indicated that the principal used his experience in financial management and provided the SGB with accurate figures and amounts to run the school. He was also responsible for drawing up the budget and presenting it to the parents. The chairperson of school C's SGB accentuated that the principal was an accounting officer and that the SGB depended on the principal's experience in managing school funds.

The participants from the three schools mentioned different ways of raising funds to meet their schools' needs. In this regard, the participants of schools B and C's SGBs respectively, mentioned the importance of involving parents in fundraising. The chairpersons of schools A and B's SGBs agreed that financial management required a good budget; school B's chairperson added that a budget was needed in order to manage the school's expenditure. School C's SGB chairperson indicated that they did not misuse funds as their school had a strict financial auditor.

All three schools' chairpersons stated that the staff supported them in different ways. The chairperson of school B's SGB was concerned about the lack of support from the parents, which had led to the failure of the Parent-Teachers Associations (PTSA's) in the past.

4.4.5 Responses from SGB chairpersons regarding training

Respondents were asked to respond with regard to the training the SGBs had received from the DoE. The responses can be grouped as follows:

4.4.5.1 Capacity building

One of the aims of the DoE is to provide continuous training to the SGBs to help them execute their functions effectively. Therefore, there are organised programmes in place for that purpose. The participants were asked to discuss the training they had received from the DoE and suggest how the training could be improved in future so that the SGBs in public schools could be more effective.

4.4.5.2 Continuous training

The chairperson of school A indicated that the DoE training period for the SGBs needed to be extended so that SGB members have a more complete understanding of their duties.. He indicated that currently the training was done once or twice a year... He argued that if the SGB members were better trained, the mismanagement of school funds could be reduced. He added that the SGB members needed constant training because it would make them understand and remember what they had learnt.

The researcher decided not to ask for a response from school B because the chairperson had clearly indicated that they used the expertise already available in their SGB as they felt the training was too basic; for that reason, they did not send people to DoE workshops on management (see section 4.4.5.2).

In contrast, the chairperson of school C felt satisfied with the training they had received from the DoE. She felt that they had benefited a great deal from the training. She added that:

I do not think I have the grounds to tell the DoE to improve their programmes. Up to this end I cannot decide on behalf of the DoE which programmes must be put in place for further development. Improving the programmes is not a problem.

The chairperson was satisfied that she understood what the DoE recommended and how they should implement the training. If they did not understand, they were free to communicate with the DoE and the DoE would assist them.

4.4.5.3 The SGBs' recommendations of educators for appointment

One of the primary duties of the SGBs in public schools is to recommend which educators should be appointed. The participants were asked to comment on the training they had received regarding the recommendation of educators for appointment.

The answers of the SGB chairperson of school A were straightforward; he admitted that they had never been trained to select educators for appointment. The DoE had only started speaking about it and. he added that the only previous experience he had in that regard had

been gained in a corporate environment. He was not sure whether the procedures for the selection of personnel in the corporate world applied to a school environment as well.

The SGB chairperson of school B indicated that they had received training from the unions and the NGOs. The researcher did not interview school B's respondent because the SGB made it clear that they did not interfere with the recommendations regarding the appointment of educators (see section 4.3.8.2). That function was carried out by the SMTs because of their experience, and the SGB merely supported the SMT. Therefore, they did not send anybody to undergo training at the DoE workshops (refer to chapter 4, section 4.4.5.2 in this regard).

The chairperson of school C's SGB stated that they had received training regarding the selection of applicants. In that respect, they also used their discretion by taking the educator's appearance and clothes into consideration, to see if he/she looked like an educator, if he/she was suitable to be a teacher and if he/she was presentable.

4.4.5.4 Conclusion

The greatest cause of concern and dissatisfaction expressed by school A's SGB chairperson was the short period accorded by the DoE for the training of SGB members. In contrast, the chairpersons of schools A and C's SGBs were both satisfied with the length of the SGB training. School B's participants indicated that they did not attend the DoE basic training workshops because they used their own human resources to train their members (see section 4.4.5.2).

The chairperson of school A's SGB revealed that the DoE had never trained them to select educators for appointment, but they would be trained for that very soon. School C's chairperson said that they had been trained for that purpose and they also used their own discretion when recommending educators for appointment.

4.4.6 SGB chairpersons' responses with regard to SGB responsibilities and other matters

The SGBs were asked to respond with regard to their responsibilities and other SGB matters. Their responses were grouped as follows:

4.4.6.1 Conflict management

In any institution or committee, there are differences that should be resolved by the leaders if they lead to conflict between members. Participants were asked how they resolved differences pertaining to governance in their schools. The chairperson of school A's SGB indicated that whenever there were problems, he organised a meeting with all the different stakeholders; during which they identified any problems between them and then worked together to find joint solutions to their problems.

The chairperson of school B's SGB had a different view regarding how to resolve the differences pertaining to governance at school level. He said that he used his personal experience of the environment and added that:

I always believe you got [have] to listen to people's problems. Don't always try to govern by a stick and you become a ruler. That is your way or no way. I always believe there must be an open policy for everybody, which everybody is entitled to use. In the event when problems are occurring, I always listen, give them my advice, the reasons and [then] give them an opportunity to respond.

School C's SGB chairperson indicated that they rarely had disagreements in their school probably because they treated each other as brothers and sisters and understood each other. She thought that if they were to have problems at their institution, they would sit down with the aim of discussing and resolving those problems and after that, it would be fine.

4.4.6.2 A sense of belonging

The DoE encourages SGBs to become members of the SGB association so that they can work together as a team and help one another to develop. Their responses about the SGB association were favourable. The chairpersons of schools A, B and C's SGBs indicated that it was important to belong to an association because the school could not face the DoE alone. It would be much better to present problems to the DoE as an association rather than as the SGB of a particular school. The chairperson of the SGB of school B added that belonging to such a structure would give the SGBs an opportunity to get together and resolve grievances together as an association.

4.4.6.3 Collaboration

School B's chairperson indicated that his SGB only communicated with the DoE when they were invited as part of the SGB alliance to discuss the changes regarding governance. He added that the DoE also learnt from them because nobody is perfect.

The chairperson of school C's SGB emphasised that she disagreed totally with the idea of a SGB that controlled the school and the principal. As the chairperson, she pointed out to his SGB members that when they were at school, they were not politicians. She added that it was not their role to control the staff; on the contrary, they felt that they should rather share ideas with them. They involved the principal in any school activities so that he could be part of any activities they undertook.

4.4.6.4 Communication

The chairperson of school C explained that communication refers to both school-to-home as well as home-to-school communication. It can include various aspects such as information on school programmes and learners' progress. Feedback from parents is an integral part of an effective and efficient communication process (Pretorius & Lemmer, 1998:27).

4.4.6.5 Advice to new SGB chairpersons

The outgoing SGB chairpersons must advise incoming SGB chairpersons before they assume their duties. This will prepare the chairpersons for what is expected of them as chairpersons when they take over from the previous chairpersons.

The chairpersons of both schools A and B agreed that there must be control over the finances of the school. The chairperson of school A added that all SGB members must work together with the principals and the staff members in order to promote the smooth running of the school and to avoid any problems that might occur.

The chairperson of school B's SGB mentioned that there were policies in place with regard to the running of the different SGB committees and the school as a whole. The chairperson must be careful how he approached new ideas; he should welcome but should not try to reinvent

the policies that were already in place. Neither should he go out of his way to try to change other people's ideas. Everyone must be involved and be happy with the changes that were introduced. In addition, the chairperson should be careful not to upset people with the changes that he made. Instead, he should aim to gain experience as a chairperson and strive to be strong and disciplined at all times.

The chairperson of school C's SGB indicated that some people did not understand what a SGB entailed. The first thing that she would tell the new SGBs was that they had to understand that when they were at school, they were not there to judge the educators. Secondly, they should not involve themselves in the personal lives of the school staff. Even if they saw an educator drunk over the weekend, it did not concern them. She added that since the finances of the school had the potential to cause a major communication breakdown, it was important to know how things were done in schools.

4.4.6.6 Conclusion

Managing problems at any institution is very important. In this regard, the chairperson of school A resolved problems by organising meetings with the different stakeholders. During the meetings, they identified and resolved them. School B's chairperson said he used his personal work experience to solve problems. According to school C's chairperson, they had no need for problem solving, as there was no conflict at their school.

All three schools highlighted the importance of belonging to a SGB association where they could engage in talks with the DoE as a group and not as individual schools. School B's SGB participants added that they only communicated with the DoE when it introduced changes. The chairperson of school C's SGB indicated that SGBs were not supposed to control the staff; but rather to share ideas with them. Their philosophy was that the communication channel should be a two-way process.

The chairpersons of schools A and B indicated that they would advise the SGB members about the importance of controlling their schools' finances. School B's chairperson added that he would make them aware of the school policies that were in place, he would advise them to approach new ideas carefully and not try to reinvent the existing policies. What is more, he would caution them against upsetting people. A further piece of advice would be that they

should try to gain experience and should remain strong and disciplined. The chairperson of school C's SGB stated that she would advise them to separate their personal lives from their professional lives in order to prevent problems. In addition, she would try to alert them to the fact that school finances sometimes caused conflict in SGBs.

4.5. FINDINGS BASED ON INTERVIEWS WITH PRINCIPALS

4.5.1 Introduction

The previous section presented the findings derived from the interviews in connection with how the SGB chairpersons tried to ensure that the SGBs in public schools functioned effectively. Against this background, the focus is now on the findings based on the interviews with the three school principals. The responses of each of the principals will be discussed with regard to how effectively the SGBs are functioning in public primary schools

4.5.2 Responses with regard to the election of new members

The responses of the three principals regarding the election of new members will be discussed next.

4.5.2.1 Problems experienced with regard to the election of new members

School A's principal mentioned that problems arose when parents who were unsuitable candidates or who lacked the personal qualities needed, were elected to serve on the SGB. If people who were irresponsible, unemployed, uneducated or were incapable of maintaining their families, were elected to the SGB and expected to perform SGB activities, it could cause problems for the educators and the principal. Consequently, they would have to carry the major burden of the workload to make up for members who contributed very little to the functioning of the SGB. What made matters worse was the fact that they had been elected to the SGB for three years; this meant that the principal would have to carry the burden of the work himself, for that length of time.

School B's SGB principal added that newly- elected SGB members were not aware of what their roles entailed and therefore, it was necessary for the principal to make it their task to

explain to them what their roles involved. However, there could be problems with this process:

There is a tendency of principals not telling the SGB members exactly what their roles are, they only tell them what they [already] know and what they want them to know.

The principal of school C's SGB indicated that it was very problematic to have SGB members that were not trained. Therefore, it was important that they received training as soon as they assumed their duties. If this failed to take place, a number of problems could arise such as the misuse of members or the misappropriation of funds.

4.5.2.2 Positive aspects regarding newly elected members

The principal of school A felt that SGB members benefited a great deal from their exposure to the school environment after their election as SGB members. Undoubtedly, they became more knowledgeable about school matters and learned to understand the school situation better. In fact, it was essential to expose SGB members to the educational environment so that they could view the school, the educators and the DoE in a more positive light.

The principal of school C indicated that if SGB members were trained before the assumption of their duties, the schools could only benefit from it. They would know why they had been appointed and what was expected of them in terms of their roles and functions as SGB members.

4.5.2.3 Conclusion

The greatest concern expressed by the principal of school A was that people without the necessary leadership qualities were elected by parents to be on the SGB. She added that newly elected SGB members benefited considerably from serving on the SGB because of the valuable experience and knowledge they stood to gain as SGB members. School B's principal expressed concern about the fact that new members were uninformed about their duties; therefore, it was the principal's duty to explain their duties to them. Unfortunately, there was a danger that principals could tell them only what they wanted them to know. Therefore, it was important to train SGB members soon after the assumption of their duties. In contrast, the

principal of school C felt that if the training of SGB members was undertaken even sooner, namely before the assumption of duties, it would be beneficial for the school.

4.5.3 Responses with regard to the effectiveness of SGBs

Responses by the three principals regarding how effectively the SGBs function will be discussed next:

4.5.3.1 Effectiveness of SGBs

School A's principal indicated that in order for the SGBs to function effectively and efficiently, they must understand the SASA (RSA, 1996a) that sets out the duties of SGBs. School B's principal indicated that they worked together as a team. There was a substantial amount of consultation in their school and they received adequate support from the different stakeholders. School C's principal pointed out that what made the SGBs efficient and effective was the involvement of all members in decision-making. It was pointless to have people elected to the SGB and then exclude them from the decision-making activities of the school. On the other hand, if they were part of the school's decision-making process and felt part of the school and knew exactly what their roles were, the school would prosper. Just as is the case with a board of directors in the corporate world, the SGB was involved in decision-making in the school with the aim of ensuring that the school was run effectively.

From the interviews, several functions of the principal were identified, one of which was that of contributing to the development of SGB members. School A's principal asserted that the principal was the liaising officer between the SGB and the district office; in that capacity, she should see to it that the recommendations made by the SGBs were implemented to ensure the smooth running of the school. She added that the principal's function was to see to it that members of the SGB received all the relevant documentation sent by the district office.

The principal of school B's SGB contended that for any principal to be effective, he should know exactly what the functions of the principal were. Just as he was responsible for the management of the school, the SGB was responsible for the governance of the school and that is a very important distinction. School C's principal responded by indicating that the basic function of the principal as an ex officio member, was to offer advice.

Mestry (2004:8) agrees that the principal plays an important role in that he is the one who is responsible for the professional management of the school., and what is more, he represents the DoE on the SGB and makes sure that the policies set out in the SASA (RSA, 1996a) are implemented. In addition, he must assist SGB members and provide training opportunities for their further development.

4.5.3.2 Principal's support of SGBs

Both the principal and the SGB must support one another and this must occur within a relationship of trust as they need to work together to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the school. Therefore, the intention was not to strip SGBs of their powers, but rather to make the governance of schools more effective and capable of functioning more effectively.

The participants were asked to give their perceptions regarding the issue of support by the principal to the SGB. The responses of the participants can be grouped into different categories as will be discussed below.

(a) Developmental programmes

School C's principal confirmed that he regarded it as his task to help develop SGB members as many of them were parents. For that reason, he developed programmes for the SGB members so that they could become better informed about their functions in order to motivate and empower them and to ensure that they operated within the framework stipulated by the DoE.

(b) Sense of belonging and ownership

The principal of school B indicated that he offered support to the SGB members to make everybody on the SGB feel important. His aim was to encourage them to take ownership of the school and make them feel they belonged on the SGB so that everybody felt welcome there. The principal added that he liked people to feel needed, valued and important.

4.5.3.3 Conclusion

The principal of school A stressed that SGB members should understand their roles so that they could be effective and school B's SGB chairperson indicated that they should work together as a team. The principal of school A indicated further that the principal liaised with the DoE on behalf of the SGB, therefore, she should see to it that the recommendations from the DoE to the SGB were carried out for the smooth running of the school. It was also important that all SGB members should be aware that the principal was responsible for the management of the school; while the SGB governed the school. She added that she made all the stakeholders feel special and important so that they could take ownership of the school. In addition, school C's principal commented that the principal offered advice, assisted SGB members to improve their skills and knowledge by organising developmental programmes for them and by explaining what their duties entailed since most of the members were parents.

According to school A's principal, the SGB would function effectively and efficiently if it understood its duties as set out in the SASA (RSA, 1996a). The principal of school B ascribed the effectiveness of his school's SGB to the spirit of teamwork and consultation that was a characteristic of his school. The principal of school C pointed out that SGB members should be involved in school activities if they wanted to function effectively and efficiently as a SGB. A further prerequisite for the effectiveness of SGBs is that, they should be part of the decision-making process. Furthermore, they should feel that they owned the decisions made in order for the school to run smoothly.

4.5.4 Responses with regard to the training of SGB members

The establishment of democratic SGBs throughout the country requires comprehensive developmental programmes in financial management as well as in other matters regarding the functions of the SGBs. The principals have an important role to play in organising these developmental programmes for SGB members.

Against this background, the participants were asked about the provision they had made for developing SGB members, what the outcomes were and how the programmes could be improved in future so that they could become more effective.

4.5.4.1 The role of the principals in the developmental programmes offered

The principals of schools A and C said that systems or programmes had been put in place to develop their SGB members. The SASA (RSA, 1996a) prescribes a number of functions that the SGBs should perform. School A's principal indicated that the aim of the training was to inform the members of the functions they were expected to carry out, such as controlling school funds, since they were expected to apply for the allocated functions under section 21 of the SASA (RSA, 1996a). Other functions expected of them were looking after the school services, undertaking the maintenance of school property and LTSM. To this, the principal of school B added that the school created certain systems as tools to counteract the weaknesses of the school and everybody had to know how those systems worked.

The principal of school A explained that the DoE workshops supplemented programmes that were offered in schools. The internal programmes were divided into sections such as financial management, the meaning of the section 21 provisions and the functions of SGBs. It is important to note that she felt that the outcomes of the programme were not satisfactory because the SGB members did not know what their tasks entailed. The SGB members still experienced problems with the school finances because they only focussed on how the money should be spent and not on how it could be generated by means of sponsors and donations. They waited until there was a problem and then they went to the principal to ask for help. This principal added:

Whereas, as blacks, I am talking of blacks because this is a township school, if people can learn to listen and then act after, I think we can achieve a lot and the SGBs can be efficient.

An important point made by the principal of school B is that because principals have not been trained in financial management, the school should elect people with a financial background, such as someone who is a qualified bookkeeper, to serve on the financial committee. He explained that:

The school is well resourced because it has two people on the financial committee with a financial background, one is an administrator and the other one is an educator. However, I believe there is room for improvement.

He added that the school must make use of the human resources already available on the SGB. Furthermore, the principal must disseminate all the information needed because in most cases, when people understand what is going on, they become involved in the school's activities. A better understanding of their tasks and functions can help to improve the financial management of the school.

The financial situation in school B was favourable at the time of this investigation. This was underlined by the principal's assertion that the financial management programmes in his school worked very well.

School C's principal emphasised that it was important that the principal should help SGB members to understand their roles in financial management better and so that the school could benefit from their activities. He added that the members of the SGB had agreed to attend workshops organised by the DoE later in the year. He commented as follows:

Therefore, those are the programmes in place to improve the lives of the SGBs so that they are not cheated by the principals [the principals do not cheat them] because a little knowledge is very dangerous.

It is essential that every SGB member should receive training and that this training should not be reserved for a few SGB members only (Bush *et al*, 2004).

4.5.4.2 Training to recommend educators for appointment

Capacity building programmes are very important for the SGBs because a large number of SGB members will be performing their duties for the first time and it is part of further personal development. In addition, such programmes will equip the SGB members adequately with the prerequisite skills to perform their expected duties in order to promote the effective governance of the school.

Regarding the above issue, participants were asked to respond about the kind of training SGB members had received from the DoE regarding the selection and appointment of educators.

School A's principal responded by indicating that every year when there were piles of applications from educators, the SGB members went to the district office where they were

given step-by-step instructions on the process involved when selecting and recommending educators for appointment so that they knew what to do when they went back to school. In addition, all the terminology was explained to them in their mother tongues for better understanding. The SGB members also made use of circulars that they had received from the DoE and they were given all the necessary documentation by the principal.

The researcher decided not to interview school B's principal in this regard (see section 4.3.8.2 in this study). School C's principal indicated that immediately after he had provided training for the SGB members of his school, the DoE organised training for them as well. He added that the process of selecting and recommending which applicants should be appointed had gone smoothly the previous year, as the SGB members understood exactly what they had to do. The final decision regarding the appointment of the educators rested with the SGB and the chairperson should approve the recommendations made.

4.5.4.3 Conclusion

Following the previous discussions, the principals of schools A and C stated that there were systems in place for the development of SGB members and school A's principal added that their aim was to develop the SGB members' skills in financial management. She explained that despite the fact that the DoE workshops supplemented the internal workshops, the outcomes of the workshops were still not satisfactory because the SGB continued to experience problems..The principal of school B indicated that the SGB should have at least one person with financial skills serving on it and schools should make use of the expertise that is available among its SGB members.

School C's principal explained that SGB members must be trained in financial management so that they can understand their roles better for the benefit of the school. The principals of schools A and C stated that the DoE undertakes training for the SGB members that will equip them with the necessary skills for the selection and recommendation of educators for appointment. In addition, they need training in the type of terminology they will use in the course of their duties.

4.5.5 Responses with regard to the SGB executive committees

Just as every authoritative structure or organisation has an executive committee, the SGB also has an executive committee. Therefore, respondents were asked to comment on the SGB executive committees in public schools.

4.5.5.1 The role of the executive committee of the SGB

The executive committee of the SGB should consist of people who can be contacted easily when urgent decisions have to be made. The task of the committee is to make decisions on a day-to-day basis to ensure the smooth running of the school. It is imperative that the decisions made by the executive committee and other committees must be ratified by the full SGB at a later meeting (Potgieter *et al*, 1997:27).

School A's principal commented that the executive committee members of the SGB members were not adequately prepared for their roles when they were newly elected. The principal added that he was still working with the SGB members so that they could get to know what their roles as executive committee members entailed.

School B's principal stated that it was important that the committee should meet at least once a quarter to discuss issues that pertained to both the SGB and the school. He added that the executive committee should meet to discuss matters that pertained to the SGB and their plans in detail.

4.5.5.2 Conclusion

School A's principal indicated that the executive committee members of the SGB were not adequately trained for the functions they were supposed to perform when they were newly elected and she was still working with the SGB members as part of their ongoing development. School B's principal stated that it was important that the committee should meet at least once a quarter to discuss issues that pertained to different stakeholders and that the executive committee should meet in order to discuss school matters in detail.

4.5.6 Responses with regard to financial management

Financial management at school level requires certain skills to manage the finances of the school. The DoE and the principals as their representatives and accounting officers, must play their part in developing the skills of SGB members in financial management. Against this background, the principals were asked about the provision they had made to develop the skills of the SGB members in financial management.

4.5.6.1 Principal's role in financial management

The three participants were asked to give their views about the role played by the principal in financial management.

School's A principal expressed the view that financial management was the backbone of the school. Therefore, the principal should have knowledge of how to handle the school finances and empower the SGB regarding financial skills.

School C's principal was of the opinion that the principal's role in financial management was simply that of an accounting officer. As the finances of the school were in the hands of the SGBs, they had to set up a financial committee. While the day-to-day financial activities were in the hands of the financial committee, the role of the principal was to authorise payments, make sure that all the claim forms were signed and that the cheques were requisitioned.

In short, the SGB is accountable to the parents for the finances of the school, the principal must support, and assist the SGBs in ensuring that the school finances are managed efficiently (Mestry, 2004: 13).

4.5.6.2 Conclusion

School A's principal said that it was essential that principals should be skilled in financial management so that they could be in a position to help train the SGB members regarding financial management. The principal in school C saw the principals as accounting officers that had to assist the SGBs with financial management and the SGB itself should ensure the proper management of school funds.

4.5.7 Responses with regard to meetings and decision-making

This section focussed on the role of the principals regarding meetings and decision-making at school. Holding meetings and making decisions with different stakeholders is very important in an organisation. Regarding these two issues, principals from all three schools were asked to respond on how they hold meetings as well as making decisions at school.

4.5.7.1 The role of principals at SGB meetings

School A's principal declared that principals played a vital role in SGBs, because they provided them with information about the correct procedures to follow at meetings. Furthermore, it was important for the principals to be present at SGB meetings since the parents represented the community, they were not educators and some of them were too illiterate to understand the language used in the departmental policies and the rules. The principal provided guidance and assistance to SGB members wherever possible, because they were not acquainted with the procedures and techniques for preparing agendas and conducting, or controlling meetings.

School B's principal asserted that the SGB could not have meetings without the principal as he felt that the meetings were not regarded as functional at all in that case. The principal was expected to report to the SGB since he was responsible for the management of the school and he/she was expected to report to the SGB about the day-to-day happenings at the school.

School C's principal stressed that it was very important that principals should attend SGB meetings as has already been said, the principal represents the DoE. Therefore, if the principal was not at the meeting, it meant that the DoE was not part of the process. Therefore, the principal had to be present as the representative of the department of education and as the accounting officer within the institution.

One of the contentious issues closely related to cooperation, particularly within the SGB, is the collective decision-making process. Against this background, the participants were asked about their views on the collective decision-making process.

4.5.7.2 The joint decision-making process

School A's principal explained that the decision-making process is something that needs to be paired with the vision of the school. The principals of schools A and C both stated that there should be joint decision-making at school level. Furthermore, when a decision is taken, people must support it.

The principal of school B added that if all the stakeholders were involved in the decision-making process, all institutions would run smoothly. Therefore, if people were part of the decision, they would cooperate to achieve a common goal, but if they were not involved with the decision, they would not achieve this goal. Decision-making should not be limited to the SGB only, but should be extended to all parents. Therefore, parents should be consulted on issues affecting their children. It is important to note that parental involvement in decision-making will also develop parents and this will therefore also help to develop parent leaders and representatives (Pretorius & Lemmer, 1998: 27)

He supported the idea that everybody should be informed and consensus should be reached when a decision was taken, so that the school could work together so that matters could run smoothly. There should be a balanced approach in decision-making and the responsibility for it rested on the shoulders of the SGB of that particular school. Democratic principles as well as the demands of this country should be valued and adhered to, by creating a strong bond between the school and parents (Pretorius & Lemmer, 1998: 27).

The principal of school B asserted that parents thought differently from what they expected of them. They had to cooperate with the parents because some people had very firm ideas and were not easily convinced. He added that people must be informed about changes in education and whether it would have a positive or negative effect on them. . He expressed the following viewpoint:

Sometimes you must invite an enthusiastic person and talk to him/her about something and if he/she likes that, he/she will buy the idea.

4.5.7.3 Conclusion

According to school A's principal, the principal's presence at SGB meetings is very important, because he/she could provide guidance on the correct procedures to be followed at meetings and could assist members wherever possible. The principal of school B pointed out that meetings without the principal were regarded as non-functional because the principal had to report to the SGB.

The principal of school A asserted that decision-making should be based on the vision and mission statements of the school. Furthermore, the principals of schools A and C indicated that when there were decisions to be taken, different stakeholders should be represented and they should support one another. The principal of school B stressed the importance of cooperation, even though parents were often not easy to convince. He added that people needed to be informed in advance about the changes as well as any possible effects these changes would have on them.

4.5.8 Responses with regard to the effect of good relationships between the SGBs and the SMTs

The participants were asked to comment on the issue of how good relationships between the SGBs and the SMTs can promote the effectiveness of the SGBs.

4.5.8.1 Healthy relationships and a good team spirit

School A's principal said that she thought that if the SGB and the SMT had a good relationship, the atmosphere in the school would change. It would result in effective teaching and learning as the SGBs and the SMTs are the cornerstones of the school. Good relationships in many schools were not evident because the SGB was a contentious issue in many cases. She added that in practice, relationships between the SGBs and the SMTs were somewhat problematic for the following reasons:

Sometimes the SGBs come to school with the notion that they are the rulers, we are going to show them and that we can hire and fire educators. On the other hand, the SMTs will talk professionally about disciplined behaviour and say look here, we are

here to manage and you are here to govern. But the SGBs don't understand how to govern, they think if you govern, you govern, manage and lead [at the same time].

The same principal suggested that the DoE must intervene by organising workshops for SGB members immediately after they had been elected and the difference between management and governance should be explained as well the boundary that separates the two concepts.

School B's principal had a different opinion about the relationship between the SMTs and SGBs. He stated that the SMT collaborated well with the SGB and they worked well with the staff members, parents and learners to achieve the aims of the school. School C's principal asserted that if the SGBs and the SMTs did not communicate well, the school would collapse. Thus, a healthy relationship between the two entities must be established in order to promote education and improve the working conditions within the school itself.

4.5.8.2 Cooperation amongst SGB members

The school principal of school A indicated that it was difficult to obtain cooperation from the parents of learners. She did not think that the problem lay with the educators and the non-teaching staff because they had been in the field for the past fifteen years. She indicated that the SGB members wanted to impose their authority on the educators and non-teaching staff. This led to considerable resentment and conflict amongst the members of the SGB. She also had the following to say:

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

The principal of school C remarked that intervention strategies should be in place to assist people with problems. He indicated that one must establish a good relationship with new SGB members immediately after being elected, because you would be working with them for a period of three years. Communication channels with all the SGB members must be kept open and they must be involved in all the activities of the school.

4.5.8.3 Conclusion

The principal of school A was convinced that good relationships between the SMT and the SGB would change the school atmosphere and therefore, this would be conducive for effective teaching and learning. She commented that many schools had bad relationships with the SGBs and suggested that the DoE should provide workshops for SGB members as part of their intervention programmes, even before they assumed their duties so that they could differentiate between management and governance, amongst other things. The principal of school B enjoyed a healthy working relationship with the different stakeholders. On the other hand, the principal of school C indicated that relationships between the SGB and the SMT should improve to prevent the school from collapsing.

4.5.9 Responses with regard to trust between principals and SGB members

Trust and good relationships between the principals and SGB members can be achieved by enabling the parties to acquire the skills they would need to perform their functions. In this way, conflict management can be avoided if time is spent on training the principals and the SGBs regarding their responsibilities, so that a relationship of trust can be established between them. Regarding this issue, principals were asked to share their views on how they built up a feeling of trust between themselves and the other SGB members.

4.5.9.1 Mutual trust

The principals of schools A and B revealed it was difficult to maintain trust especially with the other SGB members. School A's principal alleged that when the SGB members were on the school premises, they gave the impression that they were solely responsible for the governance of the school. He added that:

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

School B's principal mentioned further that since arriving at the beginning of the year [he became the principal of school B in January 2007], he had not experienced any problems. If the principal is honest with SGB members, there would be a feeling of mutual trust amongst all the members. He added:

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

In addition, school C's principal declared that the most important thing was to maintain openness and confidentiality and that the communication channels must always remain open between the principal and the other SGB members.

4.5.9.2 Conclusion

The principals of schools A and B both contended that it was difficult to build up and maintain trust with the other SGB members and school A's principal added that when the SGB members were on the school premises, they gave the impression that they governed the school all by themselves. In contrast, school B's principal mentioned further that since arriving at the beginning of the year, there had been no problems with SGB members and that a feeling of mutual trust existed between the SGB members and himself.

4.5.10 Responses with regard to communications

The respondents were asked to comment on how they communicated with the other SGB members when information had to be passed on to them as part of the cascading process. Their answers reflected their practical experience in this regard.

4.5.10.1 Means of communication with SGB members

The participants were asked to explain how the principal communicated with SGB members. All three schools' principals indicated that they normally communicated by means of the telephone and letters; while school C's principal indicated that his school also used SMSs as a means of communicating with members. School A's principal informed the researcher that

she usually communicated with the SGB chairperson because he was the main person with whom she worked. The principal of school B added that, in addition to the telephone, he made appointments with members for meetings with them. He also organised an informal meeting with the other SGB members once a term when they enjoyed a meal together that offered them a chance to get to know each other better.

At times, some parents preferred to talk to the SGB members rather than to the principal. When the researcher asked probing questions regarding how the principal dealt with parents who went straight to the SGB without first going to the principal of the school (school B), the principal's responses were not surprising. He said that the SGB members always reported to him when parents consulted them first. In all cases, the parents were informed that problems that could not be solved would be referred to the principal and he would keep the SGB informed on all issues.

4.5.10.2 Conclusion

All three schools' principals mentioned that the simplest way to communicate with the different stakeholders was by telephone. The principal of school A added that she communicated mostly with the SGB chairperson. It is interesting to note that the principal of school B invited the other SGB members to a meal in order to get to know each other better. Although the parents of the learners at his school sometimes preferred to talk to SGB members first, the SGB reported everything to him afterwards.

4.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter focussed on findings based on observations carried out and interviews conducted by the researcher regarding how effectively the SGBs in public primary schools are functioning. An outline of the findings derived from the observations was presented in this chapter (see sections 4. 2. 2 to 4.2. 7). Observations were carried out at different schools on different dates and at specific scheduled times. The opinions offered during the discussions revealed a certain lack of understanding by SGB members of the functions they were expected to perform, is a cause for concern.

This chapter also presented and analysed data obtained from interviews with SGB members, SGB chairpersons and principals in the three schools under study. From the responses to the interviews with SGB members (see section 4.3) specific themes were identified with regard to:

The election, composition and membership of SGBs.

The aims of SGBs in public schools and the attendance of meetings.

The training of new SGB members and the commitment of SGB members.

The functions and degree of effectiveness of SGBs.

Financial management, responses with regard to decision-making and communication.

Appointments.

Secondly, the SGB chairpersons gave their views on how effectively the SGBs were functioning, SGB meetings, financial management, training and SGB responsibilities and other matters (see section 4.4)

Lastly, the principals' interviews also focussed on specific themes (see section 4.5) which included responses with regard to:

The election of new members.

The effectiveness of SGBs.

The training of SGB members.

The SGB executive committees.

Financial management.

Meetings.

Decision-making.

Good relationships between the SGBs and the SMTs.

Trust between the principal and SGB members.

Communication.

The following chapter will include a summary of the previous four chapters, the limitations of this study, the conclusions based on the findings made and the recommendations regarding what can be done to ensure that the SGBs function more effectively in public primary schools.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE STUDY

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The problem regarding the effectiveness of SGBs has frequently formed part of educational and political debates in South Africa as indicated earlier in this study (refer to sections 1.2 and 2.2). In South Africa, immediately after the democratic elections, the government of the day introduced participation of different stakeholders in governance as discussed earlier in this study (refer to section 2.3.2). The SASA (RSA, 1996a) provides guidelines with regard to the functions of the SGB to help bring about the effective functioning of SGBs in public schools. These guidelines were discussed in sections 2.4 and 2.5

The aim of this study was to investigate how effectively SGBs are functioning in public primary schools and to explore the legalities of the governance of SGBs in terms of public schools, with a view to providing guidelines on improving the effectiveness of the SGBs in South African public schools (refer to section 2.4.3). The significance of this study lies in what the participants do (practical functions) and not what their actions mean to them. The researcher presents data obtained from observations of SGB meetings as well as interviews with SGB members that reflect their views on how effectively SGBs are functioning in public schools (refer to sections 4.3 to 4.6). As indicated before, the data from the informants strengthened and expanded the data gathered from the observations.

Various researchers have based their arguments on the effects of the politics of the past regime and on both local and foreign practices to give substance to both their educational and political research stances for educational reasons (refer to section 1.1 in this study). However, there have not yet been a sufficient number of investigations evaluating the effectiveness of SGBs since the introduction of different stakeholders' participation in public schools in 1997 following the inception of the democratic government. Hence, the present study is undertaken to contribute to the debate regarding how effectively the SGBs in public schools are functioning.

Chapter 1 deals with the research problem, the aims and objectives of this study, the definition of terms as well as a discussion of the research design and research methodology for this study. It also provides the historical background of the functions of SGBs in public schools.

Amongst other aspects, chapter 2 addresses the history of SGBs in South Africa with special emphasis on the history and functions of statutory and non- statutory bodies (see sections 2.2.2 and 2.2.3). The discussions with regard to these bodies indicated the need to introduce the participation of different stakeholders in public school governance (see section 2.3). This chapter also deliberated on the realities with regard to the functioning of the SGBs (see sections 2.4.2 to 2.4.11). Other matters that were discussed were the concerns regarding the functioning of SGBs (refer to sections 2.5.2 to 2.5.6).

It was necessary to explore some of the issues raised in the SASA (RSA, 1996a) that provides a broad overview of the functions of the SGBs in South African public schools particularly. The discussion in chapter 2 included concerns with regard to the functioning of SGBs. From the literature, it was clear that though the ineffective functioning of SGBs is a universal phenomenon, there are unique problems pertaining to SGBs in South Africa that need more specific attention (see section 2.2).

Chapter 3 dealt with the research design that included, amongst others, aspects such as the research questions, the qualitative nature of the research, the research approach, the research stance, sampling and data collection techniques. Other aspects discussed were the qualitative methodology, the theoretical basis of this research and the necessity for disciplined subjectivity. Data was obtained primarily through observations that were supplemented by unstructured interviews. The researcher originally intended to collect data through document analysis and unstructured interviews to supplement the observations (refer to sections 1.8, 3.4.1 and 3.4.2); however, the principals informed the researcher in advance that she could collect data through interviews and observations but they would not give her access to any documents in their respective schools.

Chapter 4 presented the findings of the study based on the observations made and the interviews conducted. As far as the observations are concerned, the researcher observed the participants' actions and interactions during SGB meetings and conversed both formally and

informally with participants from the three selected public primary schools. Observations were used as first-hand information accounts of the situation under intensive investigation. The second part of this chapter presented data obtained from the unstructured interviews with the SGB members, the SGB chairpersons and the principals as ex officio SGB members.

The aim was to obtain an in-depth understanding of the participants' verbalised thoughts and perceptions regarding the functions of the SGBs (refer to sections 4.2 to 4.5). For greater clarity during the interview sessions, data was collected by means of concrete detailed notes, audio recordings and video recordings to obtain information on the main theme, namely, how effectively the SGBs in public primary schools are functioning. In addition, information was also sought on a number sub-themes regarding which the respondents shared their views (refer to sections 4.2 to 4.5).

5.2 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study was aimed at ascertaining how effectively the SGBs function in public primary schools. There were a number of limitations in this regard: one of which was the small sample size, which is typical in qualitative research, simply because the informants were likely to be knowledgeable about the phenomenon being studied. In addition, the communities in which the schools were situated played an important role in their respective schools (refer to sections 1.8.2 and 3.6.1.2). This study was designed to be exploratory and descriptive in nature in order to provide an in-depth understanding of the topic that was investigated (refer to sections 1.8 and 3.3). Unstructured interviews were ideal to arrive at a holistic interpretation of the phenomenon under study and to strengthen and augment the data obtained from observations. Document analysis that entailed examining documents containing rich in-depth information that formed part of the context (refer to section 3.5).was aimed at supplementing the main data collection technique, namely, observations, to obtain firsthand information regarding the situation under study (refer to sections 1.8, 1.8.1 and 3.4.1).

Although the informants contributed useful information to this study, their lack of knowledge about their duties and the concerns expressed by the participants narrowed the study. For instance, some participants did not know what the SGBs entailed and what was expected of SGB members. The rationale was that it was impossible for them to obtain all the knowledge that was needed within a short space of time (refer to sections 4.3.4.1a and b). For example,

during the first observation session, the researcher was informed by the participants of school A's SGB that they preferred to be interviewed in the absence of their school principal since there were misunderstandings between them. Although the researcher obtained permission from both the principal and the SGBs in all three the schools to undertake this research, a number of restrictions were imposed by all three the schools. For example, in school A, this study was conducted at the time that the SBG members were addressing certain problems and the researcher respected their feelings. On the other hand, in schools B and C, the school principals were present at the SGB meetings during the observations and interview sessions (refer to sections 4.1 and 4.2).

Lastly, the participants from school A's SGB did not want to express their views for reasons best known to them and preferred to be observed and interviewed only by the researcher (refer to sections 4.2 and 4.3 in this study).

The researcher also experienced considerable problems as a result of the industrial strike that lasted from May to mid- July 2007 that delayed the progress of these investigations (refer to section 4.2.4). Furthermore, in all three schools the researcher was informed by the school principals when she made the appointments for the interviews that they would not give her any written school documentation for analysis. The reason was that it was part of their school policy not to give outsiders their school documents for research purposes and she respected their views.

The primary goal of this study was to gain insight into and understanding of the informants' perceptions and thoughts about how effectively the SGBs in public schools are functioning (refer to section 3.2). Regarding both types of data collection methods, namely observations and unstructured interviews, no attempts were made to formulate a hypothesis or to prove or disprove a theory. In addition, it was not the aim to establish trends or to generalise the findings of this study. Data was categorised into main themes that were further sub-divided into sub-themes that emerged from the observations and unstructured interviews (refer to sections 4.2 to 4.5)

The researcher used purposeful sampling techniques to select the informants based on their status (see section 3 6.1). This means that the investigator searched for informants rich with information. In other words, the informants were chosen because they were likely to be

knowledgeable about the phenomenon under study. Although the informants provided rich and relevant information pertaining to the study, the lack of thorough knowledge about their duties narrows this study (see section 4.3.4.2a). Despite the limitations, the study identified several issues that need urgent attention to improve the effectiveness of the SGBs in public schools in our country (refer to section 5.5 in this study).

5.3 FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

5.3.1 Introduction

This section summarises the key issues with regard to the effectiveness of SGBs in public primary schools. It is apparent from this study that the three public primary school SGBs had more in common than they differed.

This fact is supported by the data collected in all three schools by means of observations and unstructured interviews (refer to sections 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5) or observations (refer to section 4.2). This research has identified the importance of SGBs and the important roles they play in public primary schools. Both the literature and the empirical studies concur that if SGBs are to fulfil their functions effectively, they should make use of valuable human resources at their disposal such as principals, SMTs and the DoE personnel.

5.3.2 Observations at SGB meetings

The researcher attended and observed SGB meetings of the three public primary schools as indicated above to gain in-depth understanding of how the SGBs interpreted their functions and the SASA (RSA, 1996a). During these observations, it was found that all three schools followed the correct procedures for holding meetings; furthermore the deliberations at the meeting were found to be relevant to SGB functions; while the atmosphere during the meetings differed in all three schools. For example, in one of the schools, the atmosphere during the meetings was characterised by considerable tension compared with the other two schools where the atmosphere during the meetings was more cordial (refer to sections 4.2.2 to 4.2.7). The deliberations were based on the items on the agenda and were in line with SGB functions (refer to sections 4.2.1 to 4.2.6). Although participants were given an opportunity to air their views during the meetings, the discussions were dominated by the SGB chairperson

in one of the schools and also by the principal in one of the three schools (refer to sections 4.2.3 to 4.2.7).

In two of the schools studies, it was apparent that almost all the SGB members were active and it was evident that there was harmony and a good team spirit amongst them and that collective decision-making was undertaken under the guidance of the principals (refer to sections 4.2.4 to 4.2.7). On the other hand, in one of the schools, apart from the chairperson, the SGB members were not active at all; neither did they participate in the discussions and the chairperson took most of the final decisions on their behalf (refer to sections 4.2.2 to 4.2.3).

The conclusions in this study show that although some of the SGBs are functional in schools, they do not all operate in the same way. For example, there was evidence of a good team spirit and collective decision-making under the guidance of the principals in two of the schools; in contrast with the third school included in this study, where the SGB members were not all active. Neither did they participate in discussions nor did they involve themselves in the discussions because the chairperson took most of the final decisions on behalf of the other members and dominated them (refer to sections 4.2.2 to 4.2.3).

5.3.3 Composition, membership and election of SGB members

The findings based on the interviews revealed that in general, the SGB understood the processes pertaining to SGB elections set out in the SASA (RSA, 1996a). From the participants' responses, it appears that they clearly understood the election process. It was clear that some schools' participants had mixed feelings about being SGB members, as the outgoing SGBs did not teach them anything about the functions of SGBs and because they did not get any support from the parents who had elected them. Certain participants indicated that their anxiety regarding their capability to perform their functions had been alleviated by the training they had received from the DoE (refer to section 4.3.2.3).

The three schools' participants informed the researcher that the terms of office of SGB members ended after three years and during elections, voting was fair and democratic and they also agreed on the composition of the SGB (refer to sections 4.3.2.1 and 4.3.2.2 in this study). However, the submissions made by SGB participants reflected their mixed feelings. The biggest concern expressed by them was that parents elected parents without the necessary

leadership qualities to serve on SGBs because principals spend much time explaining the SGB roles to members and by the time that they understand their duties, their term of office has expired (refer to section 4.5.2.1). Nevertheless, the newly elected SGB members did benefit from the principals' expertise and experience. It was mentioned that the lack of information by SGB members concerning their duties caused problems and the principals had to assist them to understand their duties and this led to the danger of misusing untrained SGB members. From what has just been said, it is clear that some principals ignore or misunderstand the fact that one of their roles is to assist and guide the SGBs as provisioned in the SASA (RSA, 1996a). In these discussions, it has become clear that there is an urgent need to educate parents before the elections. At present, they cannot be expected to govern schools effectively if they have mixed feelings about their duties. Therefore, there is a need to investigate the principals' role with regard to educating SGB members.

The conclusion reached about SGB elections was that all the schools' participants clearly understood and acknowledged the procedures with regard to SGB elections. However, some members had doubts and fears and also lacked the necessary confidence to be on the SGB. Therefore, this indicates that it is very important to address the doubts and fears of new SGB members, particularly so that they can be more confident regarding their functions and what is expected of them. Fortunately, it seems that the current SGBs of schools are trying to develop their members and to provide training for them immediately after the elections.

5.3.4 Aims of SGBs, SGB meetings and inactive SGB members

The findings revealed that the participants were aware of the aims of SGBs in public schools. One of the aims they mentioned was the involvement of parents in school affairs and with the school funds, for example. The participants felt that the aim was to make parents aware of the activities that take place at school and solve problems together, so that their involvement could also influence the curriculum of the school. A further aim was to help with the governance of schools and make them aware of the fact that the government intended to withdraw its funding of public schools under section 21 (refer to section 4.3.3.1).

The representatives informed the researcher that SGB meetings were held once a term and they avoided evening meetings because most parents were employed and weekends were reserved for their families. All three schools' representatives stated that they normally met

with non-educators when there were issues affecting them and before SGB meetings, where there were concerns that needed to be addressed by SGBs (refer to section 4.3.3.1). All three schools' participants were aware that SGBs should hold meetings with different stakeholders with the aim of promoting the needs of both the learners and the schools (refer to section 4.3.3.2). The participants motivated the need for holding meetings with parents as follows: The SGBs represented the wishes of the majority of parents, meetings created an opportunity for the school to inform parents about changes in educational matters and policies and that parent meetings were held for various other reasons. These findings imply that the SGBs knew and acknowledged the importance of holding meetings with different stakeholders and benefited from these meetings (refer to sections 4.3.3.2a and b).

In addition, one of the SGB's chairpersons indicated that the SGBs represented the wishes of the majority of parents; on the other hand, one of the chairpersons indicated that meetings created an opportunity for information sessions, changes in educational matters and policies and the third chairperson stated that meetings were held for various reasons. It appears therefore, that all three schools' chairpersons followed the same approach, namely that they expected inactive members to write resignation letters after the non-attendance of three consecutive meetings and two schools' SGB chairpersons added that the letter should state the reasons for their absenteeism, after which new members were co-opted to serve in their places (refer to section 4.3.3.4).

The findings indicated that when principals were asked about the presence of principals at SGB meetings, they replied that the principal's presence on the SGB was very important because they assisted the SGB when necessary. The meetings without the principal were regarded as non-functional because the principal had to report to the SGBs (see section 4.5.7.1).

All three schools' participants said that although there were acceptable reasons for members' absence from meetings, inactive members were advised to write resignation letters giving reasons for their absenteeism after the non-attendance of three consecutive meetings. Following that step, new members were co-opted to serve in their places (refer to sections 4.3.3.3a to f). From the above discussion, it appeared that the SGBs did follow the correct procedures for holding meetings. It is also evident that they also knew how to deal with inactive SGB members. However, there is still room for improvement.

It can be concluded that all the schools' participants had a common understanding of the functions and roles of SGBs in public schools, the procedures to be followed regarding SGB meetings and the fact that inactive members should resign after being absent from three consecutive meetings

5.3.5 Executive members of SGBs

The findings indicated that the principals agreed that the executive members of SGBs were not adequately trained for their requisite functions and principals were still busy with the process of further training and development. They stressed the importance of holding SGB meetings at least once a quarter to discuss issues pertaining to different stakeholders and also emphasised that the SGB executive committees should meet in order to discuss school matters in detail (refer to section 4.5.5.1). This indicates how important it is that SGB executive committees have to be functional in a school and the need to empower and develop these structures to enhance the effectiveness of SGBs.

It is clear that the principals supported the idea that SGB executive committees should be adequately trained so that they can be more functional in order for the schools to run more smoothly.

5.3.6 The function and efficiency of SGBs

The participants were aware of and acknowledged that they were expected to draw up a vision and mission statement for their schools so that they could be in a position to utilise the section 21 allocations effectively. They were also aware of the need to work closely with parents and to support and attend meetings so that they could become more effective, accountable and assist with learners' discipline (refer to section 4.3.5.1).

Another finding was that the participants from all three schools indicated that they understood that it was the duty of the principal as an ex-officio member to guide the SGB. Participants pointed out that the principal should facilitate discussions, maintain good relationships, ensure that parents contributed ideas and that those ideas were implemented by the educators. In turn, the parent component acknowledged the importance of educators (refer to sections 4.3.5.2b and c).

On the other hand, it was found that the different SGB chairpersons had varying perceptions about the principal's role as an ex-officio member of the SGB. Some participants were of the opinion that the principal's main function as an ex-officio member of the SGB was to advise the SGB, whereas other participants said the principal's main function was to report on the daily functioning of the school. The DoE first communicated with the principal before communicating with the other stakeholders. The findings in this regard indicated that all three SGB chairpersons understood the SASA (RSA, 1996a), the role of the principals and their responsibilities as provisioned by the SASA (RSA 1996a), (refer to section 4.3.5.2a in this study).

The participants indicated that the educator component played a dual role, that is, they reported to both the SGBs and the educators about issues or matters pertaining to these two constituencies. This implies that the participants misinterpreted the provisions in the SASA (RSA, 1996a) concerning the role of the educator component on the SGB. For example, the participants were unaware that they should promote the interests of both the learners and the school. The findings indicated that there is a need to stress that both the parent and educator governors must work together as a team in the SGBs (see section 4.1.4.2).

The respondents agreed that principals were responsible for drawing up the school constitution, but with the assistance of different stakeholders. Furthermore, all three schools indicated that it should be in line with the country's constitution and one of the school's respondents added that it should be done with the assistance of the principal (refer to section 4.3.5.2a). They also felt that the school rules should comply with the country's SASA (RSA, 1996a). It is interesting to note that all three the schools' SGB members agreed that the school constitution is important. Therefore, this suggests that schools are being run in accordance with the requirements set out in the SASA (RSA, 1996a).

The participants agreed that the role of the SGB chairperson in public schools is very important. The chairpersons stated that the effectiveness of the SGBs depends on their capacity to perform certain duties, such as being able to draw up a constitution, solving problems at school and being responsible for school finances. They reported that their SGB members were efficient and that they spent quality time with the principal discussing school

matters; they also pointed out that the SGBs in their schools were performing very well even though they were not remunerated for their duties.

The chairpersons explained further that their responsibilities were to ensure that the school was managed properly, to ensure that the SGB did not involve itself with educational matters and that their main function was to organise meetings and run them properly. Their school staff helped them to be effective. They reported that the chairperson worked closely with the principal who should first inform the chairperson before forwarding any information to the other stakeholders (refer to section 4.3.5.2). It was found that the chairpersons had different perceptions regarding the roles of SGBs, however, what they all said was that they (the chairpersons) would function more effectively and efficiently if they understood their duties as set out in the SASA (RSA, 1996a).

Furthermore, the participants indicated that their SGB was effective because there was teamwork and consultation in their school. They made all the stakeholders take ownership of the school by making them feel special. In addition, the principal liaised with the DoE on behalf of the SGB. For example, the principal was responsible for the management of the school while the SGB governed the school. It is significant that they acknowledged that the effectiveness and efficiency of the SGBs depends on their involvement in all school activities. The principal had to develop the SGBs and had to explain what their duties entailed since most of the members were parents. In addition, the participants felt that members should be part of the decision-making process and should own the decisions in order for the school to run smoothly (see sections 4.5.3.1, 4.5.3.2a and 4.5.3.2b).

It appears that the principals understood and acknowledged their responsibilities and duties. However, there is still room for improvement to ensure the smooth running of the school and its effective governance. In addition, the findings revealed that respondents understood the difference between governance and management (refer to section 4.3.5.2d). This does not detract from the importance of the principal as a link between governance and management and as a link between the school and the DoE. It appeared that the SGBs largely depended on the principal for receiving quality information and that the SGBs were still struggling with their required authoritative roles. From one of the participant's responses, it transpired that this specific participant did not realise that it was the duty of principals to assist the SGBs so that they could become more effective (refer to section 4.5.2.1).

It is important to note that it was not very clear to the other SGB members that they governed the school and did not manage it and that the educator component was also part of the SGBs and not a constituency of them.

Therefore, the conclusion reached with regard to the functions of SGBs is that the developmental training provided that was aimed at empowering the SGBs was insufficient to equip SGB members to perform their functions effectively. It was also clear that the educator component did not understand that their role in the SGB was to promote the interests of both the learners and the school and not to supervise fellow colleagues. Not all the principals were aware of their responsibilities, neither did they understand and acknowledge their duties; this was illustrated by the fact that one of them did not recognise fully that her role was to assist the SGB as the DoE representative.

Another conclusion reached regarding this particular aspect is that SGBs misunderstood the provisions in the SASA (RSA, 1996a); they were under the impression that principals were responsible for drawing up the constitution that is linked to the country's constitution. They did not realise that this was the duty of the whole SGB and not only that of the principal (refer to section 4.3.5.2a).

5.3.7 SGB training

With regard to SGB training, it was found that the participants were willing to share their knowledge and expertise with the new SGB members so that they could gain insight into what was expected of them before they assumed their new responsibilities. They felt this way irrespective of the fact that the former SGB members did not teach them what to expect regarding their SGB duties. The newly-elected parent component in particular, felt that they were not ready for their tasks because of their lack of knowledge; which was not the case with the teacher component. All three the schools' SGBs said they would give the following advice to the incoming SGB members regarding certain important issues (refer to sections 4.3.4.1 to 4.3.3). They would advise them to:

Attend workshops in order to gain the required skills.

Be committed to the SGB and to perform their SGB duties conscientiously.

Focus on their specialist areas to assist the struggling educators with developmental training.

The findings regarding this aspect indicate that the developmental training and development of the SGBs were insufficient to equip them with the necessary skills and expertise to perform their functions effectively. However, some participants were satisfied with the training they had received from the DoE.

In a number of instances, it was found that the developmental training of the newly-elected SGB members was insufficient for them to perform their functions effectively. The more training they received, the more confident and efficient they would become, because they would be better equipped to know what their tasks entailed. Although the participants were generally satisfied with the quality of SGB developmental training provided by the DoE, they recommended a period of a month's training, in the place of the current period of training that they regarded as too short. In this discussion, the idea of training SGB members before the assumption of duties was accepted by all three schools' participants, in order to enable the newly elected SGB members to perform their duties more efficiently (see section 4.3.4.1a). The participants viewed training before the assumption of duties as an opportunity to get to know their boundaries and school B's participants informed the researcher that they regarded the training received from the National Professional Teachers Organisation of South Africa (NAPTOSA) as a learning opportunity and an information sharing opportunity as outlined in this study (see sections 4.3.4.1a and b). They said that they did not send stakeholders for DoE training because it dealt with the basics and did not meet their individual needs.

During these discussions, it became clear that there was an urgent need to educate the SGBs' parent component before assumption of duties and a month's training was advisable. Such training should aim at empowering the new SGBs and prepare them beforehand about the SASA (RSA, 1996a) requirements and expectations so that they could become aware of their duties, which would be beneficial for both the learners and the school. The SASA (RSA, 1996a) does not stipulate that SGBs should only attend union training. It appears that the DoE is ineffective, because some schools do not implement the DoE policies nor do they attend the DoE SGB training workshops.

The findings revealed that the current SGB chairpersons would advise the incoming SGB members to undergo training in future so that they could be in a position to control the

school's finances. It is pleasing to note that the SGB's first priority was to receive training on financial management, because the school cannot be run without money. A positive result of training would be that it would help to reduce or prevent conflict when making decisions about spending funds. One of the school's SGBs did not attend the financial management training workshops organised by the DoE (refer to sections 4.4.5.2 and 4.5.6). They said that they would inform new SGB members about the existing policies and would advise them not to try to reinvent them, to approach new ideas carefully, to try not to upset people and to try to gain experience and be strong and disciplined.

This clearly indicates that the participants were well informed and gave sound advice on how to introduce changes if needed. On the other hand, they would advise the SGB members not to interfere in the personal lives of educators and would make them aware that the way school finances were handled, could sometimes cause conflicts and this would be the best way of dealing with this problem. They indicated that SGB members were responsible for the school's finances for the benefit of the learners and the school (refer to section 4.5.6.1). Therefore, it was indicative that the outgoing SGB members wanted to empower and develop the incoming SGB members before they left so that they could be in a position to govern the school more effectively and efficiently.

All the participants agreed that systems were in place for the development of SGB members regarding financial management. The DoE workshops supplemented the internal workshops and the DoE trained SGB members to select and recommend the educators for appointment. In addition, the terminology used was explained to them and one school principal asserted that the outcomes of the workshops were not satisfactory because of barriers still encountered by the SGBs. Another participant indicated that SGB financial committees should include at least one person with the necessary financial skills to help with financial management needs (see section 4.5.4.1). Outgoing SGB members would also advise SGB members to undergo training in financial management for the benefit of the school and not to wait and approach the principal only when there were problems.

The conclusion reached with regard to the training received by the SGBs is that there were mixed feelings amongst the members, regarding certain matters. For example, some of the schools did not capacitate the members adequately regarding the required skills to perform their official functions effectively. Undoubtedly, certain participants were not ready to

perform SGB duties when they were elected, but they were subsequently empowered by the SGB training. However, it transpired that the training did not provide them with sufficient insight into the practical problems they experienced in the field. In addition, the training frustrated them because they were inundated with large amounts of information within a short space of time. The DoE repeatedly advocates continuous training, the monitoring of SGB functions and supporting SGBs, but this still seems to lie in the future.

Furthermore, although the SGB training is aimed at empowering new SGB members before the assumption of their duties, to enable them to get to know the requirements and responsibilities pertaining to their duties, the SGBs were not all satisfied with the training they received from the DoE. Therefore, one of the schools preferred to be trained by the union rather than the DoE.

It is important to note that the SASA (RSA, 1996a) does not stipulate that SGB members can only attend union training. Furthermore, it appears that the DoE is inconsistent and there is no provision for disciplinary measures against schools that fail to implement DoE policies.

5.3.8 Training to select and recommend educators for appointment

The findings reveal that it was not very clear to some of the SGB members who should select and recommend the appointment of educators. For example, the participants indicated that they did not recommend the appointment of educators as the process of educator appointments was carried out by their SMT and that they only endorsed them; while one of the school's participants added that the provincial DoE finalised appointments. Interestingly, the participants indicated that the SGB usually recommended educators already working on a temporary basis at their schools (see sections 4.3.8.1 and 4.4.5.3.). It appears that the participants ignored the provisions in the SASA (RSA, 1996a) because they said that they were not involved in the process of educator appointments, but only advised the SMTs regarding the best candidates. This implies that SGBs misunderstood what the requisite procedures and provisions in the SASA (section 20) regarding the recommendation of educators for appointment entailed (RSA, 1996a).

The findings in this regard reveal the different experiences of the three schools' participants. For example, one school's participants claimed that the DoE had never trained them to select

and recommend educators for appointment, but indicated that they would be receiving training for that very soon. On the other hand, one of the schools indicated that they did not attend the DoE basic training workshops because they used their own human resources for training. The third school's participants confirmed that they had received training from the DoE and that they used their own discretion when recommending educators for appointment; while others felt that that was the function of the SMTs (see section 4.3 8.2.). In general, it seemed that the SGB members felt that the training they had received at DoE workshops was not beneficial and they expressed a great deal of dissatisfaction in this regard (refer to section 4.3.4.3b).

In contrast, when the principals were asked about the training of SGB members to recommend the appointment of educators, they indicated that the DoE did train the members to recommend the appointment of educators (refer to section 4.4.5.3). Some participants and principals mentioned that SGBs were trained by the DoE and one of the principals added that the terminology used was also explained to them in their mother tongues (refer to section 4.5.4.2). They were positive about the training they had received and indicated that they felt it would prepare them to perform their duties more effectively (refer to sections 4.3.4.3a; 4.4.5.2, 4.5.3.1a and 4.5.4.1).

Regarding their satisfaction and dissatisfaction concerning the DoE training they had received, the findings revealed that SGB members were not satisfied with the short duration of the training and the lack of commitment by SGB members (refer to sections 4.3.4.1, 4.3.4.2 and 4.3.4.3b). They were satisfied with the fact that the DoE training provided them an opportunity to gain information and regarded the training as a learning opportunity. Therefore, the greatest source of dissatisfaction was the short period accorded by the DoE to training SGB members. A further reason for dissatisfaction was the fact that there was no follow up by the DoE after the initial period of training and one of the school's SGB members mentioned that the training enabled them to challenge principals and expel educators from their teaching posts. However, it is interesting to note that some of the schools' SGBs were satisfied with the duration of SGB training. Importantly, in some instances, certain SGB members indicated that they had not known anything about SGBs before receiving training (see sections 4.3.4.3a and b).

It is important to note that the SGBs are trained in financial management and to recommend the appointment of educators. Regarding the training of SGBs with respect to their functions and the training of SGB members to recommend the selection and appointment of educators, there are discrepancies between what was reported and what is actually prescribed in the SASA (RSA, 1996a). For instance, the conclusion reached concerning the role of SGBs in the selection and recommendation of educators for appointment, was that some SGBs misunderstood which procedures should be followed and which provisions were applicable when recommending educators for appointment as stipulated in the SASA (refer to section 20i)(RSA, 1996a). For instance, the participants claimed that they used their discretion when performing this task, whereas no provision is made for this option in the act. Furthermore, the length of time for training was also an issue for the SGBs; a month's training was recommended instead of the existing few days' training, from which SGB members could only benefit.

5.3.9 Decision-making and communication

In these discussions, it has become clear that all three schools' participants acknowledged that decision-making needed the equal representation of all stakeholders. The participants added that decision-making should be done democratically and a decision should first be presented to the principal before it could be finalised and implemented (refer to sections 4.3.7.1 and 4.5.7.2). They added that the principal should guide SGBs as far as decision-making was concerned. Therefore, it is clear that the SGB members had a common understanding of the procedures followed in decision-making and also regarding the best ways of communicating with different stakeholders in an institution. Arising from this discussion, the participants indicated the importance of principals in SGBs in decision-making as they regarded them as their resource persons.

Another finding is that there were similarities in the three schools' approaches to communication. All three schools' participants (SGB members as well as SGB chairpersons) indicated that they communicated successfully with the parents by using a variety of communication methods. For example, they communicated by means of letters, telephonically and at meetings. Another similarity was that all three principals indicated that they communicated telephonically with different stakeholders. In contrast with the two schools' principals, one principal indicated that she communicated mostly with the SGB chairperson.

One of the principals invited SGB members to a meal in order to give everyone a chance to get to know each other better. His school's parents sometimes preferred to talk to the SGB after which the SGB reported everything to him (refer to section 4.5.10.2).

The conclusion reached regarding decision-making is that the SGBs have a common understanding of the procedures followed in decision-making and similar communication methods are used with different stakeholders in an institution. Although the findings revealed that two of the schools communicated well with stakeholders, in one of the schools it appeared that there were some problems in this regard. At this school, there was a breakdown in communications between SGB members, which is one of the sources of conflict in organisations in most cases (see sections 4.1 and 4.5.10.1 in this study). In addition, all three schools' participants indicated the importance of principals to SGBs, specifically as the resource persons in decision-making.

Currently it is up to the SGBs, the staff and the community to work together to provide support structures and to use the available resources to promote a positive attitude with regard to assisting SGBs to be more effective and to overcome the challenges faced by them for the benefit of the learners and the school (see section 4.5.8.1).

5.3.10 Financial management and support by different stakeholders

The findings revealed that there was general consensus that financial management meant that the school should have a good budget and by drawing up and adhering to a good budget, the school would be able to manage its expenditure. Furthermore, it was found that the participants felt that the different stakeholders should all be involved in drawing up a budget. It was indicated that one of the SGB members reported that they did not misuse the funds because their school had a strict financial auditor and it helped them not to overspend. They supported the training of SGBs in financial management since it would equip the incoming SGB members to handle school funds properly. It was also indicated that the SGBs in a particular school did not attend the DoE basic workshops in financial management; instead, they made use of members on their SGB who had a sound financial background. It was also stated that a school must have a financial committee and school funds must be deposited in the school's account. However, the SGB members expressed their concern about the fact that sometimes they did not have access to the school's financial statements.

It was said that it is important that the SGBs should submit audited financial statements to the DoE to qualify as section 21 schools in the following year. They added that the viability of a budget depends on the rate of payment of school fees and that the school fees supplementing the funds allocated by the DoE should be managed properly. The schools applied to the DoE to become section 21 schools (refer to section 4.3.6.3). Furthermore, one of the school's SGB participants informed the researcher that the government intended to withdraw the section 21 status from schools because it felt it had lost control over schools. All schools were expected to submit an audited financial statement to the DoE so that they could be re-allocated section 21 funds in the following year (see sections 4.3.6.3 to 4.3.6.6).

The findings indicated that the designated role of the SGB in financial management was to generate school finance, while the role of the principal was to manage educational matters. The principal used his experience in financial management and provided the SGB with the correct figures and amounts to run the school. After drawing up a budget, he presented it to the parents. They acknowledged the principal's role as an accounting officer and indicated further that the SGB depended on the principal's experience in managing school funds (refer to section 4.4.4.7). The findings indicated that some chairpersons misunderstood the fact that the SGBs had to draw up the budget as provisioned in the SASA (RSA, 1996a)

It was pointed out that it was essential for principals to be skilled in financial management so that they could develop the SGB with regard to financial management. The respondents were of the opinion that the principals are accounting officers and must assist the SGB in financial management and the SGB must ensure the proper management of school funds (refer to section 4.5.6.2). This indicates that the principals had an understanding of the policy incorporating principals in financial management

Another finding is that the participants' responses regarding self-managing schools differed according to their practical experiences in their particular schools. The respondent defined self-managing schools as schools that were able to manage their funds. There was an indication that a particular school received little assistance from the DoE and that they had been apprehensive about managing themselves initially because only a small percentage of parents paid school fees (refer to section 4.4.4.7). This suggests that the participants in that

particular school did not acknowledge the constitutional redress of the imbalances of the past regime as stated in the SASA (see section 4.3.6.3 in this study) (RSA, 1996a).

This implies that the factors that deter the performance of SGBs need to be addressed, because as long as there are perceived problems; there will be dissatisfaction about the inconsistency and ineffectiveness of the DoE.

All three schools agreed that fundraising was done in different ways to meet the schools' needs and two of the schools' chairpersons indicated the importance of incorporating parents in fundraising. Financial management meant drawing up a good budget and added that in order to manage its school expenditure, a school needed to have a budget. One school's representatives reported that they did not misuse funds as their school had a strict financial auditor (refer to section 4.4.4.7). The implications were that all three schools understood the means and purpose of fundraising.

Regarding the conditions described above, all three schools' chairpersons agreed that the staff supported them in various ways. For example, the educators assisted with the collection of money from the learners on a given date under the supervision of the SGB. However, there were concerns about the poor support by the parents, which had led to the failure of the PTSAs in the past. It appears that the SGBs in public schools are now more skilled in financial management than before, but there is still room for improvement. The findings regarding this issue reveal wide variations in the experience and levels of expertise concerning the financial management of various SGBs. It was also found that the SGBs were knowledgeable about financial management although there was room for improvement. All three schools' chairpersons agreed that the staff supported them in a number of different ways. However, the chairperson of school B's SGB was concerned about the poor support of parents, which had led to the failure of the PTSAs in the past. The SGB chairpersons interviewed revealed that after the parents had elected them to serve on the SGBs, they did not give them any further support; in fact, they rather tended to criticise them. (refer to section 4.3.2 of this study).

Therefore, the conclusion reached is that it appeared that all the participants understood the financial management procedures and it was clear that two school chairpersons supported the training of SGB members in financial management since it would equip the incoming SGB

members to handle the school funds properly. On the other hand, one of the school's chairpersons revealed that they did not attend the DoE basic workshops; instead, they attended the union's workshops and made use of SGB members who had a financial background (refer to section 4.4.5.4).

The SGBs of two schools appeared to be skilled in problem solving. The third school reported that it had never experienced serious conflicts that had to be resolved. However, it was discovered that relationships between the SGBs and principals in some of the schools were not good (refer to sections 4.1 and 4.4.6.1).

5.3.11 Other responsibilities and problem- solving

This study has found that managing problems is very important in an institution. The participants stated that they normally resolved problems with the assistance of different stakeholders and added that problems should be resolved amicably. For this purpose, they used their personal environmental experience during problem solving. Apparently, they had never experienced conflicts in their school that needed serious problem solving.

The findings revealed that all three schools' participants acknowledged the importance of belonging to a SGB association because they could then become engaged in talks with the DoE as a group and not as individual schools. A particular school confirmed that they only communicated with the DoE when it introduced changes and that their SGBs shared ideas with the staff and advocated that communication channels should be a two-way process. All three schools acknowledged the recommendation in the SASA (RSA, 1996a) that the SGB should belong to the SGB association. Another finding was that the SGB association advocated that there should be trust between SGB members and the SMTs. The SASA (RSA, 1996a) also stipulates that the SGBs in public schools should be able to maintain trust in the SMTs so that they are able to solve problems effectively and it recommends belonging to the SAGB. That will help them to be able to solve problems together and work together as a team during any engagement because they would be able to help one another with the interpretation and understanding of documents and the terminology used. It was also revealed that the starting point of any structure resides in good relationships, which promote cooperation and collaboration.

Regarding the advice that SGB chairpersons would give the incoming SGB members when their terms of office ended, they indicated that they would advise the incoming SGB members about the importance of controlling the school finances. One chairperson commented that he would make SGB members aware of the existing school policies and would advise them not to try and reinvent them. In addition, he would tell them to approach new ideas carefully, strive not to upset people, and try to gain experience and to be strong and disciplined. The chairpersons said they would advise SGB members to separate their personal lives from their professional lives prevent problems from developing and they would make the new members aware that school finances sometimes caused conflict (see section 5.3.2.10).

The principals' responses with regard to developing good relationships between the SMT members and the SGBs were interesting. They acknowledged and supported the idea of promoting good relationships between the SMTs and the SGBs because it would change the school atmosphere and this could lead to effective teaching and learning in school. She indicated further that many schools had poor relationships with the SGBs and this necessitated immediate DoE intervention. They advocated extending the DoE intervention even before the SGBs assumed their duties so that they could differentiate properly between management and governance. That school enjoyed a healthy working relationship with the different stakeholders. On the other hand, the principals indicated the importance of improving relationships between the SGB and the SMT in order to ensure the ongoing orderly and efficient government and management of the school (see section 4.5.8.3)

The findings indicate that two schools' SGB members had trouble maintaining trust in the other SGB members. School A's principal asserted that the SGB members gave the impression that they governed the school all by themselves; however, since the beginning of the year (2008), there had not been any serious problems. In addition, one of the principals indicated that there should be mutual trust between the SGBs and the principals and that there were confidential issues that should be kept secret (refer to section 4.5.9.2).

It appears that both the SGBs and the SMTs understood that there should be mutual trust between them and also that there were confidential issues that should be treated with care. It is significant that the SGBs were all prepared to become more effective and efficient. One school's chairperson expressed a serious concern when he indicated that in their school they only communicated with the DoE when it introduced changes. A further concern was that the

DoE appeared to lack consistency since it permitted certain schools to choose whether they wanted to attend the DoE training workshops or not. The DoE did not seem to enforce this requirement and the question was asked what the department was doing to rectify the situation

Lastly, it appeared to be important that SGB members should trust one another so that they could influence other stakeholders to meet the needs of both the learners and the schools (refer to section 5.3.10). It appeared that the SGBs were committed to working harmoniously with others and towards the smooth governance of schools. The SGBs that governed their school without any problems could even present problem-solving workshops to which other SGBs are invited. . In addition, it was suggested that those SGBs that were skilled in problem solving, could collaborate with other schools' SGBs and assume a mentoring role towards them (refer to section 4.5.8.3).

The conclusion reached on this particular aspect is that the chairpersons' perceptions of the principal's role as an ex-officio member differed. The chairperson of one of the schools was of the opinion that the principal's main aim as an ex-officio member of the SGB was to advise the SGB, whereas the chairpersons of other schools acknowledged that the principal's main function was to report on the daily functioning of the school. One of the chairpersons explained the modus operandi of the DoE regarding the way it communicated with various stakeholders, for example, it first communicated with the principal before communicating with the other stakeholders. It is clear that all the SGB chairpersons of the three schools understood the SASA (RSA, 1996a) as well as the role of the principal and his/her responsibilities (refer to section 4.3.5.2a in this study) as provisioned by the SASA (RSA, 1996a)

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE STUDY

5.4.1 Introduction

As there are a number of factors that impede the effective functioning of SGBs, a number of recommendations will be made with the aim of improving the effectiveness of SGBs in public schools. The recommendations are discussed in the following sections.

5.4.2 Observations

In general, the SASA prescribes the correct procedures that SGBs should follow when holding meetings and engaging in deliberations relevant to SGB functions, during the meetings. Though participants were given an opportunity to air their viewpoints; the discussions were dominated by the SGB chairpersons in schools A and B (refer to sections 4.2.3 to 4.2.7) and some of the SGB members were inactive and did not participate in discussions. Ultimately, the chairperson was responsible for taking any final decisions. It was apparent that school C's principal also dominated the discussions (refer to sections 4.2.5 and 4.2.7).

It is recommended that principals and SGB chairpersons should establish a platform for members to engage in debates about the topic during the meetings and individuals should be asked how they felt about the topic under discussion. In this way, the members are motivated to share their ideas and in the process, the effectiveness and efficiency of the SGBs can be promoted.

5.4.3 Elections and terms of office

The findings in this study revealed that although the SGB members understood and acknowledged both the election process and the terms of office of the SGB members, the DoE should address the doubts and fears of parents by educating them long before SGB elections take place, so that the SGBs can be more confident about their duties. The principal should also provide continuous training and development programmes that are monitored by the DoE, which should take the initiative in assisting the SGBs to understand their duties better, so that they can assist the parent component especially. The education fraternity is completely strange to them as the majority of SGB members are not educators. It was found that the educator component also needed assistance to understand their duties as SGB members better. Policymakers should make provision for using different strategies with regard to identifying and choosing parents with leadership skills during elections.

Therefore, it is recommended that the DoE should make a clear provision in the SASA (RSA, 1996a) regarding the continuous training of SGB leaders such as principals and SGB chairpersons, so that they can work together as a team on the SGB committees. It is also

recommended that parents with leadership qualities should be identified and that they should then automatically become part of the SGBs in order to promote the effectiveness and efficiency of the SGBs. The aim should be to get all SGB members actively involved in the activities and proceedings of the SGBs.

5.4.4 Aims of SGBs, SGB meetings and inactive SGB members

All three the schools' participants had a common understanding of the aims of SGBs in public schools. Although it is significant that the participants acknowledged and even understood this particular aspect, there is still room for improvement. Therefore, the researcher recommends that both the principal and the SGB chairperson should see to it that the times of the scheduled SGB meetings suit both the employed and unemployed SGB committee members. Consequently, it is better to organise meetings at convenient times to avoid having inactive members on SGBs.

5.4.5 Executive members of SGBs

The conclusions reached were that the SGBs' executive members were not adequately trained by the DoE for their expected functions and principals were still busy organising training and development for them at the time of this investigation (refer to section 4.5.5.1). The possibilities of SGBs performing their duties effectively and understanding the terminology used in manuals and circulars, for instance, are small at this stage. Therefore, it is imperative that the DoE should introduce training programmes to ensure that the SGB executive members should also know exactly what their duties entail. It is also essential to develop the executive members further in order to boost their confidence by introducing continuous constructive practical alternatives instead of short periods of training. The training of newly-elected SGB members before the assumption of duties regarding their expected SGB duties, will enable them to learn what their tasks entail so that they can function more efficiently and effectively later (refer to section 5.3.7)

5.4.6 The functions and efficiency of SGBs

Closely linked to the election process are the functions of the SGBs, which include the drawing up of policies for the school constitution that should be linked to the policies of the

DoE and the GDE as well as the Constitution of the country. The SGBs' training should incorporate intensive training in drawing up effective guidelines that will be used as a means of promoting the smooth running and governance of public schools. Such systems should include systematic programmes in order to enable the SGBs to know how to cope with tasks such as the drawing up of a school constitution and policies for the schools.

It needs to be made clear to the parent and educator governors that both groups govern the school. The DoE and the principal and/or the SMT should arrange a series of workshops for the different stakeholders prior to the SGB elections in order for them to understand and register that the SGBs should work together as a team for the benefit of the learners and the school and not as individual constituencies.

Therefore, the researcher recommends that the DoE and the policy makers should make provision for the DoE to introduce continuous and constructive developmental programmes during the year before the SGB elections are in process (refer to section 1.5). In addition, the newly elected SGB members should be given one to two months to work with the outgoing SGB members in order to gain the needed experience.

5.4.7 SGB training

Another factor linked to the functions of the SGBs is the need to educate the SGB parent component before the assumption of duties to empower the new SGBs and prepare them beforehand regarding the SASA (RSA, 1996a) requirements and expectations.

This will enable them to know about their duties for the benefit of both the learners and the school. This will also boost their confidence because of the information they have gained. The SGBs must be informed that the SASA (RSA, 1996a) makes provision for SGBs to attend the DoE, GDE and NGO training. It is also important that the DoE be consistent with regard to monitoring the implementation of the policies. The policy makers and the DoE should make provision for measures that can be implemented against those institutions that deliberately disregard the DoE and GDE policies.

5.4.8 Training for the recommendation of educators for appointment

The SASA indicates that it is the duty of the DoE to train SGBs regarding the selection and recommendation of educators for appointment, because such a task requires the SGBs to be able to interpret the conditions and provisions pertaining to the recommendation of educators for appointment in the SASA (refer to section 20i) (RSA, 1996a). They must also have prerequisite knowledge and skills for governing a school and understand the terminology used. In addition, it is important for the SGBs to know the requirements for the advertised posts, the procedures to be followed, know what they are not supposed to do and lastly it is important that the individual SGB members should also be competent in all the required areas (refer to sections 4.3.4.2 and 4.4.5.3.). This could be achieved by provisioning in the SASA (RSA, 1996a) that code switching should be done during SGB induction workshops in order to address the language competence and literacy problem especially with black parents (refer to sections 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3). During the induction programmes and workshops, the DoE should make the SGBs aware of the structures, with which they must collaborate, such as the GDE and its GDE officials and the functions of the individual structures. Such structures are mostly established by the constitution with the aim that they should fulfil their roles as outlined by the constitution and applicable laws.

The principal and the DoE in particular, have come under constructive criticism for not performing their functions satisfactorily, for instance, for not assisting the SGBs to perform their duties effectively as outlined by the SASA (RSA, 1996a) (refer to section 20.1). The principal of school B indicated that some principals only teach the SGBs to do what suits them and not that which should be taught (refer to section 4.4.4.4). The DoE came under criticism for not training the SGBs in time and for the short duration of the training (refer to section 4.3.5). The general feeling expressed by the SGB members was that the principals and the DoE should implement training that extended over a period of one month instead of lasting one to two days only (refer to section 4.4.4.4). It is therefore recommended that the training of SGBs should be at least one month and should be presented on a continuous basis.

Another finding was that the respondents indicated that they did not adhere to the regulations set out in the SASA (RSA, 1996a); they contended that SGBs can use their discretion based on the educators' appearance when recommending the appointment of educators (refer to section 4.4.5.3 in this study). The policy makers should try to prevent any confusion and

misunderstanding in this regard by phrasing the procedures and guidelines more clearly in their policy documents. In addition, further research should be conducted in this regard.

The respondents' statements revealed that they do not adhere to the regulations set out in the SASA (RSA, 1996a) as they contended that SGBs can use their discretion based on the educators' appearance when recommending the appointment of educators (refer to section 4.4.5.3). Such a perception can have a negative impact on the appointment process regarding educators and the problem is that the legality of appointments could be affected.

The researcher proposes that the SGB leaders such as principals and SGB chairpersons, should give other members enough opportunity to make contributions during the meetings; this will help to promote the effectiveness and efficiency of the SGBs. (The researcher proposes that all members involved in the SGB meetings should be active participants).

5.4.9 Decision- making and communication

The decision-making process and communication methods in institutions, particularly between the principals and the SGBs are potential sources of conflict and can create tension between the structures involved (refer to section 4.5.7 in this study). It is the responsibility of the principals to persuade SGB members to acquire the necessary knowledge and become skilled in conflict resolution. It is essential to ensure that the stipulations in the SASA (RSA, 1996a) regarding decision-making and the correct communication methods are carried out and monitored under the supervision of the DoE and GDE as a watchdog. Monitors should look into all aspects pertaining to the functions of the SGBs, including the training of SGBs, how decisions are taken by SGBs, the causes of conflict, conflict resolution and election procedures in public schools. If they fail to solve their problems, they can only blame themselves and no one else. In any event, the SGBs should be given a chance to develop themselves and should be empowered to solve their own problems.

5.4.10 Financial management and support by different structures.

The findings should be understood against the background that provision for the financial management of SGBs is made in the SASA (RSA, 1996a). The principals, as accounting officers, should be knowledgeable about and have skills in financial management so that they can be in a position to assist and develop the SGBs further with regard to financial

management at school level (see the section on principals, namely, section 4.5.6.1). In addition, SGBs must have an understanding of the policy pertaining to the functions of the principals regarding financial management. Undoubtedly, there is room for improvement in this regard

The support measures are the means provided by different structures at schools to carry out the tasks and perform the functions outlined in the SASA (RSA, 1996a). Such support structures are established through the SASA (RSA, 1996a) and the applicable laws. For instance, support measures include the different ways in which the staff, parents and DoE play their roles as outlined in section 20 (refer to section 2.4.2e in the SASA) (RSA,1996a). The lack of support experienced by SGBs has led to the failure of the SGBs. The general feeling expressed by the SGBs was that all the other stakeholders must support the SGBs, not only during elections, but also when they are in office.

It is therefore recommended that the different stakeholders with an interest in education must provide the necessary support to the SGBs to perform their required duties. Irrespective of the knowledge and skills they have acquired from other training, it is imperative that the DoE with the assistance of principals must continue to develop them in financial management.

5.4.11 Other responsibilities and problem solving

Good relationships and communication between the SGBs and the principals (as well as the SMTs) is the key to the successful governance and management of schools in order to introduce changes and to meet the needs of the learners and the school. It is imperative that the DoE must establish open communication channels and establish corrective constructive measures for stakeholders who deliberately decide to break communication channels that may result in the poor running and governance of schools. The DoE should establish policies and be consistent in the way in which it deals with the non-adherence to its policies irrespective of the type of schools.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The lack of effectiveness of SGBs of public schools is currently a relatively serious concern and is under investigation. In this study, a number of aspects regarding the effectiveness of SGBs warrant further research:

The level of competency of SGBs to meet the challenges at school level as representatives of the employer, namely, the DoE should be established.

The criteria provisioned by the SASA (RSA, 1996a) to elect SGBs in public school.

The continuous development of SGBs by the DoE regarding aspects such as the:

- Aims of the SGBs in public primary schools.
- Holding of SGB meetings.
- Repercussion inactive members.

The roles of the SGB executive members since they are not sure what their roles entail.

The DoE programmes used to train the SGBs and the people responsible for training need to be investigated regarding how they train the SGBs

The programmes used by the DoE to train the SGBs to perform their functions effectively and efficiently.

The monitoring tools and techniques used to monitor the performance of SGBs.

The disadvantages of the discretionary powers given to SGBs to recommend the appointment of educators.

The educator component commitment to the SGB.

How decisions are taken that represent all SGB members.

The introduction of programmes in financial management by the DoE that cater specifically for the parents of learners in black schools, since some of them have serious drawbacks, such as being functionally illiterate and not having the necessary financial backgrounds.

The introduction of programmes by the DoE that deal with problem solving and communication in complex scenarios rather than with simple case studies.

The relationships between the SGBs and the principals.

The ability of the DoE to establish programmes addressing conflict between the SGB members of public schools should be investigated.

5.6 CONCLUSION

The research has indicated that the SGBs in public schools play a major role with regard to their functions at schools. The effectiveness of SGBs to assist the schools within their

boundaries depends on the quality of support available to them at school level. This assistance should be received from the DoE, the teacher component of the SGBs and the principals as members of the SGBs and the SMTs.

It has been shown that the training received by the SGBs from the DoE is aimed at equipping them to perform their duties optimally. However, it is evident from the findings derived from both the observations and the interviews that the training the SGBs receive is insufficient to achieve the required aims.

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

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APPENDIX 1

P.O. Box 18561

Sunward Park

1470

13 March 2007

Ekurhuleni South District

Private Bag x

Alrode

RE-APPLICATION

I would hereby like to apply to do research in your schools between April and May 2007. The research topic is: ‘The effective functioning of a school governing body: a case study in selected schools.’ The methodology that will be used will be observations, interviews with seven to ten SGB members and document analysis pertaining to the investigation.

The aim of the research is as follows:

- Give practical information with regard to the role of SGBs in public primary schools
- Investigate in detail whether SGBs are functioning effectively.
- Make recommendations with regard to the involvement of SGBs in public schools.

The schools identified as having the rich information needed concerning the research topic in the Gauteng Province are Bopangkgotso Primary School, Zimele Primary School in Vosloorus and Parkdene Primary School in Boksburg.

This research will take place in accordance with the planned schedule between the researcher and the sample group, during the times that will be convenient to the sample group. Confidentiality of the sample group will be highly protected by the researcher. Interviews will take about 30 minutes to one hour per session.

The main reason for this study is: The researcher's interest lies in examining whether SGBs need training to function more effectively after being elected, before they can start carrying out their requisite functions as well as in how good governance and the standard of education in our country as a whole can be improved.

Another aspect that the researcher needs to address is the question whether SGBs can make a positive contribution to school governance or not. Furthermore, the researcher also wishes to investigate the challenges that may be faced by skilled school principals where the parents are illiterate. How do principals share critical information with parents, especially when such information is negative or of a sensitive nature?

The research results will help to further the development of SGBs. This will also help to inform the education department and to determine the problems faced by both SGBs and SMTs in promoting the smooth running of public schools, so that they can introduce programmes that will address the problems in schools.

Presently, the researcher is a teacher at Zimele Primary School and is also a student at Unisa writing a dissertation for a Masters Degree.

Hoping that my application will receive your favourable consideration.

Yours faithfully

Rosina Mahlangu

Signature_____

Contact numbers:

Cell : 082 5315605

H: 011896 1998

W: 011 906 1700

APPENDIX 2

P.O.Box 18561
Sunward Park
1470
13 March 2007

The Principal and School Governing Body
Zimele Primary School
Box
Vosloorus
1475

APPLICATION TO DO RESEARCH

I hereby apply to do research in your school between April and May 2007. The research topic is: The effective functioning of a school governing body in selected schools: A case study. The methodology that will be used will be observations, interviews with about seven to ten SGB members and document analysis of documents relevant to the investigation

The aim of the research is as follows:

- Give practical information with regard to the role of SGBs in public primary schools
- Discuss in detail the effectiveness of SGBs.
- Make recommendations with regard to the involvement of SGBs in public schools.

Your school Zimele Primary School, has been identified as rich in the information needed. All this will take place according to the planned scale between the researcher and the sample group, during the times that will be convenient to the sample group. Confidentiality of the sample group will be highly protected by the researcher. Interviews will take about thirty minutes to one hour per session.

The main reason for this study is as follows: The researcher's interest lies in examining whether SGBs need effective training after being elected and before they can commence with

their expected functions and how governance of schools can be improved as well as the standard of education in our country as a whole.

Another reason for this research is that the researcher needs to address the question of whether the SGBs can make a positive contribution to school governance or not. Furthermore, the researcher also wishes to investigate the challenges that may be faced by skilled school principals where the parents are illiterate. How do principals share critical information with parents, especially when such information is negative or is of a sensitive nature?

The research results will help with the further development of SGBs. This will also help to alert the education department to the problems faced by both SGBs and SMTs in promoting the smooth running of public schools, so that they can introduce programmes that will address the problems identified in schools.

Hoping that my application will receive your favourable consideration.

Yours faithfully

Rosina Mahlangu

Signature_____

Contact numbers:

Cell : 082 5315605

H : 011896 1998

W : 011 906 1700

APPENDIX 3

P.O. Box 18561
Sunward Park
1470
13 March 2007

The Principal and School Governing Body
Bopanggotso Primary School
Box
Vosloorus
1475

APPLICATION TO DO RESEARCH

I hereby apply to do research in your school between April and May 2007. The research topic is: *The effective functioning of a school governing body: A case study in selected schools.* The methodology that will be used will be observations, interviews with about seven to ten SGB members and document analysis of documents relevant to the investigation

The aim of the research is as follows:

- Give practical information with regard to the role of SGBs in public primary schools
- Discuss in detail the effectiveness of SGBs.
- Make recommendations with regard to the involvement of SGBs in public schools.

Your school Bopanggotso Primary School, has been identified as rich in the information needed. All this will take place according to the planned scale between the researcher and the sample group, during the times that will be convenient to the sample group. Confidentiality of the sample group will be highly protected by the researcher. Interviews will take about thirty minutes to one hour per session.

The main reason for this study is as follows: The researcher's interest lies in examining whether SGBs need effective training after being elected and before they can commence with their expected functions and how governance of schools can be improved as well as the standard of education in our country as a whole.

Another reason for this research is that the researcher needs to address the question of whether the SGBs can make a positive contribution to school governance or not. Furthermore, the researcher also wishes to investigate the challenges that may be faced by skilled school principals where the parents are illiterate. How do principals share critical information with parents, especially when such information is negative or is of a sensitive nature?

The research results will help with the further development of SGBs. This will also help to alert the education department to the problems faced by both SGBs and SMTs in promoting the smooth running of public schools, so that they can introduce programmes that will address the problems identified in schools.

Hoping that my application will receive your favourable consideration.

Yours faithfully

Rosina Mahlangu

Signature_____

Contact numbers:

Cell : 082 5315605

H : 011896 1998

W : 011 906 1700

APPENDIX 4

P.O. Box 18561

Sunward Park

1470

13 March 2007

The Principal and School Governing Body

Parkdene Primary School

Box

Vosloorus

1475

APPLICATION TO DO RESEARCH

I hereby apply to do research in your school between April and May 2007. The research topic is: The effective functioning of a school governing body in selected schools: A case study. The methodology that will be used will be observations, interviews with about seven to ten SGB members and document analysis of documents relevant to the investigation

The aim of the research is as follows:

- Give practical information with regard to the role of SGBs in public primary schools
- Discuss in detail the effectiveness of SGBs.
- Make recommendations with regard to the involvement of SGBs in public schools.

Your school, Parkdene Primary School, has been identified as rich in the information needed. All this will take place according to the planned scale between the researcher and the sample group, during the times that will be convenient to the sample group. Confidentiality of the sample group will be highly protected by the researcher. Interviews will take about thirty minutes to one hour per session.

The main reason for this study is as follows: The researcher's interest lies in examining whether SGBs need effective training after being elected and before they can commence with

their expected functions and how governance of schools can be improved as well as the standard of education in our country as a whole.

Another reason for this research is that the researcher needs to address the question of whether the SGBs can make a positive contribution to school governance or not. Furthermore, the researcher also wishes to investigate the challenges that may be faced by skilled school principals where the parents are illiterate. How do principals share critical information with parents, especially when such information is negative or is of a sensitive nature?

The research results will help with the further development of SGBs. This will also help to alert the education department to the problems faced by both SGBs and SMTs in promoting the smooth running of public schools, so that they can introduce programmes that will address the problems identified in schools.

Hoping that my application will receive your favourable consideration.

Yours faithfully

Rosina Mahlangu

Signature_____

Contact numbers:

Cell : 082 5315605

H : 011896 1998

W : 011 906 1700

APPENDIX 5

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Introduction

I want to talk to you about how SGB members perceive their functions in a public school in your province, namely Gauteng, as well as in your country. I am interested in your perceptions of a number of issues, for example how effective the functioning of the SGBs is in terms of decision- making, financial management and control, to name but a few issues, regardless of your knowledge of specific laws that apply to education.

I am going to divide this section into three sub-sections. We will start with the composition of SGBs and their elections and then secondly, we will talk about financial management and thirdly, about the decision- making process in public schools.

A. Questions: Composition of SGBs and elections

Why it is important that the SGB members should be composed of different stakeholders? (The term ‘stakeholders’ refers to the different constituencies in an institution consisting of SGB members, educators and learners).

How are SGB members elected?

What is the main aim of having SGB members in public schools?

Why is it important that the parent component of SGBs should be in the majority?

I would like you to think back to the time when you were elected as members of SGBs. Remember the period after receiving training in connection with the effective functioning of SGBs and you were ready to begin your daily duties and so on. How did you feel and why did you feel like that?

When do you hold SGB meetings?

What could be the real reason for SGB members not attending meetings?

Which procedures were implemented by SGBs to replace inactive SGB members?

When do SGBs meet with non-SGB educators and is it necessary to meet with them?

Why is it very important that the SGB members should draw up a school constitution and why should it be linked with the country's constitution?

B. Functions and training of SGBs

Explain in detail what you understand regarding the effective functioning of SGBs.

Describe the role played by the teacher component of SGBs.

Describe the role played by the principal as a member of the SGB.

Discuss the difference between the governance and the management of public schools in detail..

Is it very important that SGB members should receive formal training before they assume their functions and why?

Should SGB members receive continued training from the government and other organisations that have an interest in education and why?

Now I am going to ask you about your satisfaction or dissatisfaction with SGB training.

Let us start with where/why the SGB training satisfies you and [later on] where/why the SGB training does not satisfy you?

Tell me about the last time you went to a SGB workshop for further development.

How long did the training last and how did you feel after you had completed the workshop?

Why did you feel that you needed to attend the workshop?

What advice could you give to newly elected members of SGBs?

To what extent does the current literature provide guidelines regarding the functions of the SGBs?

C. Financial management

I would like to take you back to the time when you receive training in financial management.

Now

Tell me about the most effective (best) way to manage the school funds.

Why is it important to budget for the school's needs?

Why it is important for the SGBs to raise funds for the school?

What is in section 21 of the SASA (RSA, 1996)?

Which regulations are in place to determine whether the DoE groups schools under section 21 schools?

When do you have auditing in your school and why?

One of your functions is to encourage parents to pay school funds. Why is it so necessary that the parents should pay school funds?

D. Decision making process and communication methods

Discuss the process of decision-making in your school.

How is the issue of different religions addressed at your school?

Discuss the role played by the principal in decision-making.

How do you communicate with other stakeholders and why do you use that/those communication method/s?

We all know that some (black) parents in public schools do not pay school fees.

What action is taken against those parents who do not pay school fees?

What criteria do you use when selecting and appointing educators.?

What is your experience of performing that duty?

Conclusion

I would like to thank you for your participating in this investigation. At the same time, I want to acknowledge the important part played by you because of your willingness to share this information with me. I would also like to assure you that your contributions are valuable in that they can assist in improving the way that SGBs function in our public schools.