

**AN INVESTIGATION OF HOW
MEMBERS OF A SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY PERCEIVE AND
EXPERIENCE THEIR ROLES: A CASE STUDY**

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by

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ABSTRACT

Education in South Africa is currently facing a lot of changes. This study was prompted by one of these changes, the introduction of a School Governing Body (SGB), constituted in terms of the 1996 Schools Act (South Africa 1996), and replacing the previous Parent-Teacher-Student-Association (PTSA).

The study investigates how the members of a School Governing Body perceive and experience their roles, in an attempt to make a contribution to understanding the nature and implications of education governance policy in South Africa. Central to this exercise is the attempt to understand how the execution of their duties, their practice of both democracy and accountability, and their resolving of tensions and/or differences among parents, teachers and students, impacts upon their school generally and relates both to the Department of Education and other organs of society.

The methodology employed in this study includes a review of relevant literature, international and national, followed by a historical overview of education governance in South Africa. The core of the thesis is an interpretive case study of the SGB of one junior secondary school under the auspices of the Department of Education, Culture and Sport, in the South Eastern region of the Eastern Cape Province. The single most important data gathering instrument used was a series of in-depth interviews. The interviewees were the Executive members of the SGB of the school.

The major findings of the study were that the SGB was powerful and effective in its area of operation in school governance, despite its lack of skills in the execution of its duties. Many of

the difficulties it has encountered can be ascribed to a lack of guidance from the Department of Education. The study thus concludes that whereas the SGB studied represents an important step towards the full democratization of education in general and in this school in particular, its role in school governance can not be described as an unqualified success. However, despite the problems faced by the SGB, its role has made history in the governance of the school. Programmes which the SGB has implemented, such as measures to foster a culture of teaching and learning, have had an important impact on the progress of the school.

Finally, the findings of the study indicate that the most important issues to be addressed in respect of the SGB researched are capacity building, communication, cultural understanding and the level of SGB understanding of the Schools Act.

The study makes certain recommendations for the attention of SGBs and the Department of Education. These include a well co-ordinated capacity building program to be developed and implemented, that will provide SGBs with access to knowledge of the relevant material and other resources necessary to sustain school governance functions.

Because of the limited nature of the study in terms of methodology and constraints of time, the conclusions arrived at cannot and should not be generalized beyond the confines of the study.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Context and historical background

As South Africa struggles free of the legacy of apartheid and strives to realize the democratic ideals enshrined in its constitution, the education system, like most public institutions, is undergoing fundamental restructuring. The old system of several racially and ethnically-based education departments has been replaced by a single national ministry of education and nine non-racial provincial departments.

The process of decentralization involved in the delegation of responsibility for primary and secondary education to provincial authorities does not stop there. Power within the education system has been thoroughly decentralized through the creation of a number of decision-making structures at various levels within the system, from the highest, that is, the national level, down to the lowest, such as the newly constituted School Governing Bodies (SGBs), which have certain powers of governance in respect of individual schools only. The purpose of this study is to investigate how members of a School Governing Body perceive and experience their roles, in the context of the redistribution of power with the educational system and the polity as a whole.

The status and composition of governance structures, and the extent of powers and functions

granted them, reflect notions of social order and justice and the power relations of the society in which they are located. In a professedly democratic society, governing structures should be democratic, meaning that they should embody democratic values and operate in democratic ways. The devolution of power to SGBs as a consequence of the restructuring of the education system in South Africa would appear to be significant evidence of democratization. The new structures of governance have the potential to bring about greater social justice within our schooling system by correcting the imbalances of the past and enabling those involved in schools to participate freely in developing a culture of teaching and learning.

Primary and secondary schooling in South Africa has for a long time been in a state of disarray. There are many reasons for this. One reason is that the massive injustice which has been at the very heart of South Africa's social, economic and political life is vividly embodied in the schooling system. It is a system which has systematically and persistently betrayed the aspirations of the majority of people. According to Morrow (1988), those betrayed by the schooling system have been engaged in a long and taxing struggle of resistance over many years, which has frequently involved self-sacrificing disruption to and even abandonment of individual school careers, serious risk of injury and sometimes death itself.

Central to the popular struggle against apartheid education has always been the issue of education governance. The demand for community involvement in school governance in African education can be traced as far back as the years leading up to the Union of South Africa in 1910, when African education was administered and controlled by missionaries (Christie 1985). But although local communities have raised funds and actually built schools, there is little evidence

of any meaningful community participation in their day-to-day running (Christie 1985).

African communities opposed the introduction of Bantu Education in 1953, even though the Act allowed for the involvement of parents through the establishment of School Committees and School Boards (Kulati 1992). Kulati argues that African people were aware that Bantu Education was part and parcel of a broader political strategy to deny them representation in key institutions. He further argues that the establishment of School Committees and School Boards served not only to legitimise the Bantu Education system, but also to extend the central government's control of schools. That is why both teachers and parents rejected Bantu education and everything that supported it.

From the mid-1980s a chorus of calls for "People's Education" accompanied the beginning of real social and political transformation in South Africa. Capitalization for community control of education became ever stronger. These developments led to the formation of the National Education Crisis Committee (NECC) and the rise of the Parent-Teacher-Student-Associations (PTSAs).

Although not officially recognised or legally sanctioned, PTSAs became established in many African, Coloured and Indian schools. They served as fora for communication among parents, teachers and students concerning matters pertaining to the governance of the school. However, little research has been done on the PTSAs, on the roles they played in schools and on the nature of the factors, either positive or negative, that influenced them in the day-to-day execution of their duties.

The 1994 Draft White Paper (South Africa 1994) , that laid the basis for the post-apartheid

educational dispensation in South Africa, reflects the principles, values and sentiments of the ANC Policy Framework (1994). It noted that in black education "parents and community representatives have at best participated in official advisory and execution structures under paternalistic departmental control", while, "by contrast, in recent years the trend in policy in the self-contained White system has favoured a high degree of administrative decentralization, professional autonomy for educators, and parental ownership and control of schools through governing bodies" (South Africa 1994:9). It advocated that "the principle of democratic governance should increasingly be reflected in every level of the system, by the involvement in consultation and appropriate forms of decision-making of elected representatives of the main stakeholders, interest groups and role players" (South Africa 1994:12).

The Education White Paper 2 (South Africa 1996) provided for a wide range of school governing body responsibilities relating to broad school policy, personnel, admissions, curriculum, facilities, finance, maintenance, communication and community service (South African School Act 1996:17-19). It also provided for school governing bodies to comprise a majority of parents (17). These provisions are reflected in the 1996 South African Schools Act (South Africa 1996). In effect, the Act extends the provision for meaningful parental involvement in school governance which was part of the Model C system to all schools (Visser 1997:626).

Schooling in South Africa, Black schooling in particular, has increasingly over the past half-century been characterized by an authoritarian and bureaucratic style of governance and management (Hartshorne 1990, cited in NEPI Report 1993:127). In the context of this historical trend, and bearing in mind both the politically contested nature of Black schooling and the lack of managerial capacity demonstrated by school management committees and the PTAs, I

propose to investigate how participants in a newly established School Governing Body, constituted in terms of the 1996 South African Schools Act (South Africa 1996), view and experience their roles. It is my hope that this study will throw some light on the issues and problems facing SGBs in former Black schools and how they might be addressed.

1.2. Statement of the problem

Schools in South Africa have recently undergone a lot of changes in terms of school governance. There is evidence to suggest that the skills, knowledge and attitudes of SGBs are not sufficiently developed for them to cope with the challenges accompanying these changes. In particular, historically disadvantaged Black schools, where parents are not familiar with being involved in the education of their children, are experiencing problems in coping with the changes and challenges.

The problem is that, although much can be achieved through its effective implementation, the concept of the School Governing Body is relatively new in South Africa. It is a concept that seeks to move away from the top-down management approach to a more participative one that involves a group of people in the decision-making process. This new system should be democratically governed, professionally planned and effectively managed. The structures and strategies of education management and governance developed should serve to enhance the quality of learning and teaching, and ensure that resources are equitably distributed over the population as a whole.

1.3 The aim of the study

The aim of this study is to investigate how the members of a School Governing Body perceive and experience their roles. It is hoped that the results of such an investigation will help to enable South African schools, especially historically disadvantaged Black schools, to cope with the changes and challenges that will arise in the process of transformation. The study will thus seek to identify and explore important and problematic issues facing SGBs.

Factors that constrain participation by SGB members will be investigated, with the aim of recommending pro-active strategies and solutions, where possible. The study begins with a review of some of the relevant literature, followed by a case study of one SGB based on in-depth interviews with its members. The literature review and the case study will form a knowledge base from which certain recommendations concerning SGBs will be made.

1.4. Organization of the study

This study is organized in the following manner: Chapter 2 offers a review of both international and South African literature pertaining to school governance. The following chapter discusses and seeks to justify the research method used in the study, while Chapter 4 offers an historical overview of school governance in South Africa, leading up to a detailed presentation of the South African Schools Act (South Africa 1996). In Chapter 5 the data is analysed and interpreted, while Chapter 6 offers a conclusion and recommendations.

CHAPTER 2

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

2.1 Introduction

This chapter situates the evolution of School Governing Bodies in South Africa in the context of comparable developments in other countries.

The key concepts which emerge from the review of relevant international literature on education governance are those of centralization and decentralization. Throughout the world, the governance debate appears to be framed by these concepts; according to Buckland and Hofmeyr:

The main structural differences between education systems result from decentralization over time. Centralized or decentralized systems remain very different structurally, although a progressive segmentation and systematization develops side by side after the initial emergence of each type of system. (1992:3)

Although the meaning(s) of the concept will be investigated in more detail in Section 2.2, below, decentralization generally implies a devolution of power from the state to those deemed to have a more direct interest in the process of education, whom we shall call stakeholders. An important focus of this investigation is therefore the experience of the international community with regard to the role of stakeholders, that is, the participation of parents, teachers and students in education governance.

The literature review attempts to answer the following questions:

- * What does the democratic governance of schools imply? Who controls schools and what powers do they have? What is the nature of the relationship between school governance structures and the government? How desirable is the involvement of parents, teachers and students in school governance?
- * What are the problems commonly faced by parents, teachers and students in participating in school governance?
- * What lessons, if any, can be learned from the international experience that would be relevant to South Africa, as the country attempts to redefine its future education governance system?

2.2 Theoretical debates on decentralization and centralization

According to Winkler (1989:4) centralization and decentralization can be viewed as a spectrum ranging from a unitary governmental system, where the central government has the authority and power to make most decisions, to a governmental system within which local government and community organizations exercise large amounts of power. In the ultimate centralized system, all decisions are made by state officials in the country's capital; in the equivalent paradigm of decentralization, all decisions are made through the participation of local individuals, community organizations and governmental structures.

It is clear that a decentralized system of education governance would appear best suited to accommodate the demand for community control of schooling and the involvement of primary

stakeholders in the daily management of schools (see Sayed 1992:2). Decentralization will therefore be the focus of this discussion.

According to Sayed (1992:3), the concept "decentralization" means different things to different people. The use of the term can create confusion, because on the one hand it refers to the creation of additional sites of administration distinct from the head office, while on the other hand it refers to policies that attempt to transfer power and increase participation. It is important to distinguish these and other interpretations of the word.

2.2.1 Forms of decentralization

Winkler (1989:5) identifies three forms of decentralization, namely, Deconcentration, Delegation and Devolution. Rondinelli et al (1987:16-17) adds two more: Privatization and Deregulation.

2.2.1.1 Deconcentration

Deconcentration refers to the transfer of authority to lower levels within central government agencies. It can take the form of creating or expanding regional directorates, as has occurred in Colombia, Peru, Chile, and the Philippines (Winkler, 1989:4). Decentralization in the sense of deconcentration simply means relocating the administrative offices of central government physically closer to regional communities, and does not imply real decentralization since decision-making powers remain vested in the central authority (Sayed 1992:3-4).

2.2.1.2 Delegation

Delegation involves the transfer of governmental tasks to autonomous bodies such as public corporations and regional development agencies, which may then receive public funding and are ultimately accountable to the government (Winkler 1989). Rondinelli et al (1987:17) defines delegation as the transfer of the broad authority to plan and implement decisions concerning specific activities, or a variety of activities within specified territorial boundaries, to a semi-autonomous public or private organization that is technically and administratively capable of carrying them out. This appears to be the system in France, where schools are governed under the Education Act of 11 July 1975 (the Loi Haby).

In the case of secondary schools in France, school governance is carried out by School Councils, which comprise the following:

- * the principal
- * five members of the administrative personnel
- * five rather ill-defined, but co-opted persons representing the locality
- * five elected teacher representatives
- * five elected parent representatives
- * five student representatives for the upper secondary (the lycee) and two student representatives for the lower secondary (the college).

In addition there is a Disciplinary Council responsible for serious matters such as the suspension of teachers and students from school. The Disciplinary Council is composed of two delegates from each of the following constituencies: teachers, parents, students, pastoral personnel and

medical personnel (Beattie 1981:184).

However, the functions of the French School Council are not clearly defined and there is uncertainty because of the central government's refusal to contemplate the effective devolution of power from Paris to elected local authorities or schools. Buckland and Hofmeyr 1992:6) caution that while such a system may move the exercise of authority closer to local communities, delegation does not necessarily transfer power from the central administration to a local one. Despite these reservations, the French School Council system should be seen as a step in the direction of a participatory system of school governance.

2.2.1.3 Devolution

According to Winkler (1989:4), devolution implies "the creation of autonomous and independent sub-national units of government which have authority to raise revenues and spend", and as such, "involves transferring responsibility for provision of a service to a local government or regional administration" (Rondinelli et al 1987:62).

Devolution, which is seen as the ultimate form of decentralization (Bray 1985:56), may also result from a federal form of government in terms of which regional or local governments have responsibility for the financing and provision of elementary and secondary education. An example of this is to be seen in Canada.

Canada has a federal system of government, characterized by the complete devolution of responsibility for the provision of school education to each of her ten provinces. Decentralized

education governance is exercised through the District School Boards, Teacher Associations, Student Councils and Parent-Teacher-Student-Organizations (Katz 1974 cited in Makubela 1978).

Canadian Parent-Teacher-Student-Organizations have responsibilities ranging from the discussion of school programmes to fund-raising, while the Student Councils, which have representation on the Administrative Committees, are responsible for extra-curricular activities, publication of school newspapers, fund-raising, maintenance of discipline, drawing up and enforcing of a code of conduct, and ensuring the fair treatment of students by staff and other students (Katz 1994:40).

2.2.1.4 Privatization

Privatization involves the transfer of responsibility for provision of a service to a private, but not necessarily local, organization. This can entail converting a state department into a parastatal corporation, or selling a public corporation to a private organization. In the Netherlands, both primary and secondary education sectors are provided for privately, which means that parents are largely responsible for the establishment and running of educational institutions (Berkhout 1989:107). Each Dutch school has a Joint Authority Council which has the power to make decisions with regard to the school; parents, teachers and students are represented on it (Ministry of Education and Science 1987:107).

2.2.1.5 Deregulation

Deregulation is not specifically a decentralization strategy, but is frequently used to facilitate decentralization and privatization by removing the controls and regulations which tend to keep decision-making powers in the hands of the authorities at central level. According to Buckland and Hofmeyr (1992:6), deregulation can enable the entry of community-based groups into a service provisioning area and result in a small group's effectively gaining control of services in the area. British school governance is an example of deregulation. In Britain, the school governance structures are called Governing Bodies and are composed of parents, teachers and students. Unlike in the past, they are no longer subordinate to the Local Education Authorities (Dekker 1989:45). In Britain secondary schools also have School Councils with sub-committees providing for the direct participation of students.

According to Dekker (1989:45), British parents are highly organised and powerful thanks to the Parents' Charter, which exemplifies constitutionally effective parental involvement in education. Yet although this Charter has conferred on parents some degree of power in educational matters, this power is not "real" in comparison with that which their counterparts in government enjoy, especially with regard to decision making (EDUPOL 1993:3).

British School Governing Bodies share a general overall responsibility with Local Education Authorities and school principals in the area of the curriculum and play an active role in the appointment of teachers.

Of the five forms of decentralization identified by Winkler and Rondinelli, only devolution implies the transfer of power to local levels, although deregulation and privatization can serve to remove decision-making powers from the centre. Movement towards a policy of decentralization is often a response to the perceived failure or weaknesses of centralized forms of governance.

2.3 Rationales for decentralization

The rationales for decentralization may conveniently be grouped into four broad categories (Winkler 1989; EDUPOL 1993:5).

2.3.1 The culture of learning argument

The culture of learning argument emphasizes the decentralization of educational context and the importance of local needs and forms of knowledge. But in reality, the assumed linkage between learning and culture tends to be replaced by the linkage between learning and technology, because the demands of modern labour markets and community systems seem to require more generalized, uniform levels of skills and certification at the national and even international level -- for which centralized governance is more appropriate (EDUPOL 1993:5).

Culture of learning arguments have serious implications for parents, teachers and students. Students who emerge from an education system founded on a preference for localized or culture-specific education would have their mobility severely inhibited, as their skills and

certificates would have no validity outside certain boundaries, whether at the regional, national or international level (EDUPOL 1992:iv).

Localized education may serve to reinforce imbalances in equity, because funding is likely to be dependent upon the resources of local people. This could impose an impossible burden on parents in communities where income and capability are already very low. This unfortunately tends to be the situation in South Africa, particularly among rural African communities.

2.3.2 The efficiency argument

According to Winkler (1989:2), the efficiency argument focuses on the high unit costs of primary and secondary education when provided by a national government with an inadequate capacity to efficiently administer a centralized educational system. The costs of decision making are bound to be high in a system in which even the most minor local education matters must be decided by a geographically and culturally distant bureaucracy in the capital city.

Furthermore, Winkler argues (1989:2), unit costs are pushed even higher by the application by education ministers of a national standard for curriculum construction and teacher quality, so preventing cost savings through adjustments of educational inputs to local or regional price differences and needs.

EDUPOL (1993:3) is in general approving of the decentralized generation and utilization of resources, but points out that the commitment of communities in providing resources is bound

to be contingent on their sharing of power in the decision-making process. Problems may arise because the ministry of education, while happy to accept the additional resources, is not likely to be willing to relinquish control where it can see its policies being undermined or ignored (EDUPOL 1993:5).

2.3.3 The redistribution argument

This argument concerns the sharing of power: it is suggested that decentralized governance structures allow a wider representation of legitimate interests while at the same time dispersing and diffusing sources of conflict. Hence decentralized governance can be a means of conflict management and compensatory legitimating of the state (EDUPOL 1993:5). Winkler's view is that redistribution of political power is the primary objective of decentralization, but that decentralization may be undertaken to empower those groups in the society which support central government policies. Redistribution through the transfer of power from one level of government to another is not necessarily decentralization: ironically, one consequence of such "decentralization" may be to increase the effective control of the central government, or at least that of the key decision-makers in the central government (Winkler 1989:2).

2.3.4 The effectiveness argument

There are some who maintain that decentralization results in a more effective educational system offering better education. It is certainly true that centralized planning policies that were popular in the 1960s have resulted in expensive education of decreasing quality. After

independence, many ex-colonial countries nationalized and centralized their educational systems and established free education as a right; but it seems that as long as that policy continues to be implemented,

the quality of education continues to decline. It is therefore argued that administration and accountability can be improved in education by making schools more responsive to parents and communities and eliminating the need for central government decisions on local educational matters (Winkler 1989:3).

Yet it must be remembered that there are many interested parties in educational decisions, including national policy-makers, local administrators, school principals, parents and teachers. Their interests are not necessarily homogeneous, and it is not unlikely that one or two such groups will try to monopolise power and control (Hurst 1985). However, the existence of this possibility need not necessarily negate the potential effectiveness of decentralization, since negotiation and power-sharing among interest groups can just as easily define the process of change in a state education system (Archer 1984:2).

In all the above arguments there is evidence that decentralized education governance systems can pose problems of their own. This does not mean that there is something wrong with decentralization per se. Decentralization, like bureaucracy, is a tool that governments can use for better or for worse. In some countries decentralization has sought to achieve objectives which have been unrealistic and sometimes even contradictory (Bray 1987:1). Perhaps, rather than thinking in terms of a centralization-decentralization polarity, it would be more useful to

think in terms of the distribution of power to as many actors both within and without the school system as is compatible with the goal of quality education.

2.4 Conclusion

It would appear that in most counties, decision making in education has been characterized by tensions between democracy and bureaucracy, control and autonomy. In the latter part of the twentieth century, the spread of democratic ideals and practice has led to a variety of governmental attempts to decentralize education governance so as to allow stakeholders in the education process to determine their own principles, policies and practice. This is in accordance with the basic democratic principle that all those affected by a decision have a right to participate in its making; furthermore, it has been pointed out that in a democratic society, schools whose function is to prepare future citizens for useful participation in that society have a special obligation to conduct their affairs in a democratic manner.

The foregoing discussion has several important implications for parents, teachers and students concerning the democratic governance of schools. It reminds us that whereas decentralization has become a widespread phenomenon in societies with different histories, it is not an unqualifiedly good thing. What has emerged from the literature surveyed is that not all the benefits usually associated with decentralization inevitably result from it. For instance, a decentralized governance system can limit stakeholder participation to local elites instead of enhancing and promoting mass participation.

The fact that most societies in the world have education governance systems that are a combination of centralization and decentralization poses the question of which policy functions are best served at the centre, and which are best carried out at the periphery, where parents, teachers and students operate. Central to this policy question is the matter of how school governance structures such as the School Governing Bodies should relate to their respective governments. Should they be organs of the state, totally dependent upon and accountable to it? Should they be organs of civil society, independent of the state and accountable only to their respective constituencies? Or should they be semi-autonomous structures that work closely with the state but have some degree of autonomy?

The last-mentioned alternative would seem to be the best, as it acknowledges both the significance of the mixed model of education governance and the fact that participation by primary stakeholders such as parents, teachers and students in the decisions that affect them directly has, over the years, already become a widespread phenomenon. While it is the primary responsibility of the state to provide educational services to all, the call for representation and participation in the operation of these services, on the part of parents, teachers and students, continues to be heard all over the world.

A useful precedent for such a compromise would seem to be the British system. As noted above, British parents are to a certain extent locally empowered by the Parents' Charter (Dekker 1989:45). British Governing Bodies share a general overall responsibility with Local Education Authorities and school principals in the area of the curriculum, and they play an active role in the appointment of teachers. British secondary schools also have School Councils

which provide for direct participation by students. Nevertheless, final responsibility for policy and decision-making rests with the State (EDUPOL, 1993:3).

Against this background of trends in school governance internationally, Chapter 3 will focus on the history of school governance in South Africa, from the establishment of the first school in the 17th century to the implementation of the South African Schools Act of 1996.

CHAPTER 3

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF SCHOOL GOVERNANCE IN SOUTH AFRICA

3.1 Historical overview

The Education White Paper 2 (South Africa 1996:19) maintains that, "once implemented, the vast majority of South Africans will recognise that this decision (to institute widely representative democratic school governing bodies [SGBs] with broad powers) constitutes by far the most significant devolution of responsibility to school governing bodies in the history of South African education". What follows is a brief overview of how this situation was arrived at.

As in 17th and 18th century Europe, from the time the first school was established at the Cape in 1658, it was mainly the church (in this case, the Dutch Reformed Church [DRC]) that provided and supervised formal schooling for (mostly White) children in South Africa. This situation prevailed until almost 1900 (Behr 1988:88). Despite the Cape colonial government's attempts at establishing centralized state control of White schooling during the 19th century (Malherbe 1977:81), local resistance resulted in the 1865 Education Act providing for a system of school governance by school committees, or management boards (Behr 1988: 21). This Act formed the basis of the education system, including school governance, up to 1905, when the School Board Act was passed.

The 1905 School Board Act provided for district level governing bodies, of which two-thirds of the membership would be elected by local rate-payers. School committees were retained to represent parents but were freed of their financial responsibilities, which were now taken over by the boards (Malherbe 1977:128-30). This system of White local participation in schooling prevailed through much of the 20th century. But these were responsibilities not granted to Black parents until the adoption of the 1996 Schools Act.

As far as Black schooling is concerned, in the 17th century there were some DRC-conducted mission schools in village centres, but it was really only with the arrival of European missionaries late in the 18th century that formal, European-based schooling was provided for South African black children in rural districts (Behr 1988:91f.). In an attempt to exercise some control over these schools, and because of the general absence of private resources or initiative, the 1865 Education Act provided for limited state aid to these schools. The school governing bodies (the missionaries) continued to be responsible for the buildings, maintenance and funding the balance of teachers' salaries (Malherbe 1977:96, 116). Apart from minor adaptations this system prevailed until the introduction of the Bantu Education Act in 1953.

The National Party's election win in 1948 was followed by a flurry of apartheid legislation that was to have far-reaching consequences for black schooling. The 1951 Eiselen Commission's recommendations found expression in the 1953 Bantu Education Act (Rose and Tunmer 1975: 258-60). Most significant for governance was that Bantu Local Authorities were to take over school control from the missionaries (Hartshorne 1992:34-36).

Despite legislation during the 1960s providing for parental involvement in schooling, the Study Project on Christianity in an Apartheid Society (SPROCAS), in its 1971 Education Commission report, expressed concern at the diminution of local responsibility for the initiation and administration of school policy and the restriction of what leeway there was to White schools (Rose and Tunmer 1975: 79-80).

The Government's response to the 1981 Report of the De Lange Committee, appointed in response to events in black schooling beginning in 1976 (South Africa 1983: 18), opened the way for increased black parental involvement in school management councils. However, by this time these were discredited bodies, by virtue of their origins in the 1953 Bantu Authorities Act and the fact that they were perceived to be mere rubber stamps with no real powers. Black students, in the urban townships in particular, demanded the establishment of Parent-Teacher-Student Associations (PTSAs) to govern schools democratically.

The PTSA movement was the only governance policy initiative of note within the progressive and mass education movements, and many were established around the country. Although they sought an active role in school governance, with mass-based education organisation support, there was little clarity concerning their actual powers and functions or the role of various interests represented in them, and they lacked management skills (Makhubu 1993, Sooklal 1995).

After the unbanning of political organisations in 1990 and the release of political prisoners it was clear that a new education dispensation would be part of the political transformation.

Various bodies made recommendations for school governance.

In 1990 the government offered four governance options, the so-called Clase models, for white schools that by 1992 were effectively reduced to Model C schools only (National Education Policy Investigation [NEPI] Framework Report 1993:157-58). The Draft White Paper on Education and Training (South Africa 1994:49) referred to these as offering “a radical devolution of state school ownership and management to parent governing bodies”.

The African National Congress's (ANC) Policy Framework for Education and Training (ANC Policy Framework 1994:20-21) argued that, “governance structures which fail to achieve effective community support, have limited parent participation, and exclude teachers and students, have contributed to poor school administration. This in turn is one of the most significant factors causing inferior schooling for blacks in South Africa”. It proposed a system based on democratic principles, “ensuring the active participation of various interest groups, in particular teachers, parents, workers, students, and the broader community” (p.4).

The 1994 Draft White Paper (South Africa 1994), that laid out the basis of the post-apartheid education dispensation in South Africa, reflects the principles, values and sentiments of the ANC Policy Framework. It (p.9) also noted that in black education “parents and community representatives have at best participated in official advisory and executive structures under paternalistic departmental control”, while, “by contrast, in recent years the trend in policy in the self-contained White system has favoured a high degree of administrative decentralization, professional autonomy for educators, and parental ownership and control of schools through

governing bodies.” It advocated that, “the principle of democratic governance should increasingly be reflected in every level of the system, by the involvement in consultation and appropriate forms of decision-making of elected representatives of the main stakeholders, interest groups and role players” (p.12).

The Education White Paper 2 (South Africa 1996) provided for a wide range of school governing body responsibilities relating to broad school policy, personnel, admissions, curriculum, facilities, finance, maintenance, communication and community service (pp. 17-19). It also provided for school governing bodies to have a majority of parents (p. 17). These provisions are reflected in the 1996 South African Schools Act (South Africa 1996). In effect, the Act extends the provision for meaningful parental involvement in school governance provided for in the Model C system to all schools (Visser 1997: 626).

In view of the fact that schooling in South Africa, Black schooling in particular, was increasingly characterized by an authoritarian and bureaucratic style of governance and management during the half century up to the 1990s (Hartshorne 1990 cited in NEPI Report 1993: 127), together with the politically contested nature of Black schooling and the lack of managerial capacity demonstrated by school management committees and PTSAs, I propose to investigate how participants in a newly-established school governing body (SGB) constituted in terms of the 1996 South African Schools Act (South Africa, 1996), view and experience their roles. I anticipate this study will throw some light on issues facing school governing bodies in former Black schools and how they might be addressed.

Before moving on to a consideration of relevant provisions in the 1996 Schools Act, it is worth pointing out that, despite the idiosyncracies of South African social history (in particular the racial segregation of institutions like schools) developments in school governance in this country in recent years broadly parallel the international trends outlined in Chapter 2.

3.2 Brief discussion of the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996

The South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 came into operation on 1 January 1997 (Potgieter et al. 1997). The Act applies to education in the whole of South Africa, but nothing in it prevents a provincial legislature from enacting legislation on school education in terms of the Constitution (South African Schools Act 1996). In the preamble of the Schools Act, the position of the parents is acknowledged. One of the aims of the Schools Act is to uphold the “rights” of all parents and to promote their acceptance of responsibility for the organization, funding and governance of schools in partnership with the state.

Of course, the Schools Act provides for duties for parents. In the previous dispensation parents could only play a meaningful role in the case of so-called state-aided schools or “Model C” schools (South Africa 1988). The Schools Act intends to extend the participation of parents in school governance to all public schools. The idea of a partnership in which parents are supposed to play a meaningful role is clearly a realistic one. For example, it has become clear that the state will not be able to provide sufficient funding, facilities or service to all public schools. A substantial number of parents will have to pay school fees. Where parents have to provide funds or other support over and above their normal tax contributions used for education, it is only natural that they should be given a significant say in the governance of the school.

One of the most important aspects of the Schools Act is the envisaged involvement of parents, teachers and students in the governing body. This is supposed to give expression to the partnership principle mentioned in the preamble to the Act. Although parental involvement was well-known in the former state-aided schools, the introduction of this healthy concept to all public schools is to be welcomed. Obviously, an effective capacity-building program to familiarize parents who have no previous experience of this system of school governance is of paramount importance. According to Section 19 of the South African Schools Act (South Africa 1996), as part of the capacity-building program the Department of Education has commissioned the writing of a simplified guide to the Schools Act, and this document was to have been distributed to more than 28 000 public schools during 1997, which is the book by Potgieter et al (1997).

The South African Schools Act (South Africa 1996) has stipulated functions that the governing bodies should fulfill. I do not intend to discuss these functions in detail here, but a brief outline is provided to indicate the extent of the possible involvement of parents, teachers and students as members of the governing body.

Section 20 of the South African Schools Act (South Africa 1996) headed “Functions of all governing bodies” enumerates certain duties expected of a governing body. The discretion of the governing body is limited to the manner in which it performs its duties. These are the functions:

- I. promote the best interests of the school and strive to ensure development through the provision of quality education to all learners at the school;
- II. adopt a constitution on how the governing body is to function;

- III. develop the mission statement of the school as the main guiding principle of the school;
- IV. adopt a code of conduct for learners at the school;
- V. support the principal and other staff at the school in the performance of their professional functions;
- VI. administer the school's property, buildings and grounds occupied by the school;
- VII. encourage parents, teachers and students and other staff to render voluntary services to the school;
- VIII. recommend to the provincial head of education the appointment of educators and non-educator staff at the school;
- IX. discharge all other functions imposed upon the governing body by or under the Schools Act.

Section 21 of the South African Schools Act (South Africa 1996) permits a governing body to apply to the provincial head of education for the allocation of the following functions, funds permitting:

- I. to maintain and improve school property, buildings and grounds;
- II. to determine the extra-curriculum of the school and the choice of subjects in terms of the provincial curriculum;
- III. to purchase textbooks, education materials and equipment for the school;
- IV. to pay for services to the school.

The functions in terms of section 21 depend on the capacity of the governing body concerned, and for this reason the capacity building program is of considerable practical relevance. }

In Chapter 4 the research methodology used in this study will be described and discussed.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will discuss and defend the qualitative research approach used in this study, and describe the kind of data which was sought and obtained.

In order to achieve the aims of the study, a case study -- using a qualitative research methodology and based on in-depth interviews -- was carried out at a junior secondary school in Butterworth, in the south-eastern region of the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa.

4.2 Rationale for using a qualitative approach

According to Leedy (1997: 104),

the quantitative approach is . . . the traditional, the positivist, the experimental, or the empiricist approach. The qualitative approach is . . . the interpretative, the naturalistic, the constructivist, or the post-positivist approach The quantitative approach is typically used to answer questions about the relationships among measured variables with the purpose of explaining, predicting, and controlling phenomena; the qualitative approach is typically used to answer questions about the nature of phenomena from the

participants' point of view.

Because the aim of the study was to investigate how members of a School Governing Body (SGB) perceive and experience their roles, a qualitative research method was considered to be more apposite than a quantitative one. According to many researchers, including Sullivan (1979), Crain et al. (1982), Rosenberg (1986), Suttles (1986) and Yinger (1986), there is a need for more qualitative research in education, such as case studies, to supplement the findings and enrich the meaning of quantitative studies. Wolcott (1990) has pointed out that up to the 1970s it was necessary to defend naturalistic research approaches. But today these are more widely accepted and one is no longer required to devote a substantial portion of an account to justify qualitative methods (p.26).

The appropriateness of the qualitative research method for the purposes of a study of this sort is endorsed by Bell (1993:5-6), when he writes that

researchers adopting a qualitative approach are more concerned to understand individuals' perceptions of the world. They doubt whether social 'facts' exist and question whether a "scientific" approach can be used when dealing with human beings. Each approach has its strengths and weaknesses and each is particularly suitable for a particular context. The approach adopted and the methods of data collection selected will depend on the nature of the inquiry and the type of information required.

Suttles (1986:69), maintains that qualitative studies are ideal for exploring a new field and the

introduction and functioning of SGBs in South Africa is indeed a new field, coinciding with the difficult period of implementation of the Schools Act of 1996.

4.3 Rationale for using the case study approach

I conducted a single case study using a qualitative research method. According to Bell (1993:8),

a case study can be described as an umbrella term for a family of research methods that have a common decision of focussing on inquiry around an instance. What is important about a case study is that it allows the researcher to concentrate on a specific situation and identify the various interactive processes at work.

Bell (1993:8) concludes that "the case study approach is particularly appropriate for individual researchers because it gives an opportunity for one aspect of a problem to be studied in some depth within a limited time scale" . Robson (1993:52) provides a slightly more elaborate definition of case study, as "a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence". "Empirical" in this context does not mean "scientific" so much as signal a commitment to the collection of evidence about what is actually going on in a complex real-life situation, using investigative strategies such as observation or interview as "multiple sources of evidence". Finally, Yin (1989) recommends that novices begin qualitative research with a single case study.

Because of the kind of information sought and the qualitative nature of the investigation, it was important that sources, the people from whom the data would be collected, be carefully considered. The quality of the data obtainable would depend upon the careful selection of research participants.

The case study school was chosen specifically because it is believed by residents of Butterworth, especially those with some acquaintance with SGBs, to have a model SGB by any standards. My own experience as a teacher in Butterworth corroborates this perception. ✓
According to Runkel (1980:175), "a single case study can be a trial, a demonstration that a thing widely thought to be unlikely can indeed be brought about". This remark seems particularly relevant to the school concerned, which can indeed be seen as embodying possibility, as exemplifying just what can be achieved in seemingly unpromising circumstances.

In 1994, the school was divided into two sections because of an increase in numbers. One section was initially housed in the old vacant factory buildings adjacent to the school. In 1996 those classes were brought back to the school premises when the extension of the classrooms had been completed. The building was successful because of the combined efforts of parents, teachers, students and the education authorities. The school has lately become known for its excellent discipline and good examination results, despite the fact that it is located in the midst of various squatter camps and draws its student intake from these informal settlement areas. It was hoped, therefore, that using this school as a case study would shed some light on what a good and effective SGB within a disadvantaged area can and cannot do in the domain of

school governance. The fact that the school had a long history of involvement in the previous PTSA movement could only enrich the study.

4.4 Data gathering

In this section a detailed account is given of how the data was collected at the Butterworth school. Due to constraints of time, the researcher was not able to use the participant observation method popular in qualitative research, especially in case studies. However, in-depth interviews were conducted with seven people participating in the SGB, which should ensure that the data collected provides sufficiently detailed information about the views and perceptions of those involved.

4.4.1 In-depth interviews

In order to obtain as much detail and insight as possible, data for this study was collected through in-depth interviews with individuals. Seidman (1991:xv) regards in-depth interviews as the most appropriate method of investigation in such a context. He maintains that "the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the experiences of other people and the meaning they make of that experience", "if given a chance to talk freely, people appear to know a lot about what is going on" (1991:3). Seidman (1991) goes on to argue that the best way for a researcher to investigate a process (such as how the members of a school governing body perceive and experience their roles over time) is through listening to the individual and collective experiences of the people who live out the process. The structure of the interviews,

the period of time over which they are conducted, internal consistency and (if possible) external consistency, and the researcher's sense of discovery, lend authenticity to the research and allow the researcher to have confidence in its validity (Seidman 1991:16-19). As the phrase implies, in-depth interviews allow for a greater depth than is the case with other methods of data collection (Cohen & Manion 1980:308).

The questions I asked the interviewees depended on how they responded to the main questions I prepared for them. My first question, which was put to all the interviewees and focussed on SGB roles and experiences, was: "What roles does your SGB play in this school and how do you perform them?" I had hoped my respondents would be prompted to reconstruct the range of responsibilities they have and functions and duties they perform, within the framework of those laid down in the South African Schools Act (South Africa 1996).

The second question addressed issues of democracy, decision-making and accountability: "According to the South African Schools Act (South Africa 1996), SGBs operate along democratic lines. Does this particular SGB subscribe to democracy? Explain to me how you arrive at decisions and how you exercise your accountability".

The third question, aimed at gathering information about gender equality and the SGB's relationship with the Regional and District offices, the parent community, local organizations, students and teaching staff, was asked in the following way: "As the South African Schools Act (South Africa 1996) requires you as SGB members to operate on the basis of good relationships and partnerships based on trust between stakeholders, namely parents, teachers, students, other

staff at school, the local community and education authorities, how do you maintain this relationship?"

Following Seidman's suggestions (1991:9), these and subsequent questions sought to build upon and explore the participants' responses to the initial question. I formulated specific follow-up questions in order to obtain as real and full a picture as possible of the interviewees' roles and experiences.

After establishing that the SGB in this school comprised representatives of various constituencies, that is, parents, teachers, and students, and that some of these held executive positions both within their respective constituencies (e.g. school principals, heads of departments, matrons in hospitals, etc.) and in the SGB, it was decided to select the interviewees on the basis of the positions they occupy in the SGB. The main aim was to get people who would be able to supply the information the researcher needed, and it became immediately apparent that selecting a range of participants in this manner was the most appropriate way.

The rationale for their selection is clear: because of their differing roles in the SGB, each was likely to have a different perspective on issues raised by this study, and their participation would serve to enrich its findings. Although the main focus of the study was to establish how SGB members perceive their roles, some questions had to be directed to them concerning those categories of people with whom they as members of the SGB negotiate directly or work closely. These would include the Department of Education, Sanco, Sadtu, and certain local

organizations.

Seven interviews were conducted. The following is a breakdown of interviewees according to position held and gender:

Participants	Position held
Parent	Chairperson -male
Parent	Deputy chairperson- male
Teacher	Treasurer-female
Teacher	Publicity officer-male
Parent	Secretary-female
Student	Student representative-Female
Parent additional member	Female

At the time that the interviews were conducted in August 1998, the participants had been members of the SGB for 18 months, i.e. since January 1997.

4.4.2 Time scale

The fieldwork for this study was conducted over 14 working days, from 9 to 22 August, 1998. Each of the in-depth interviews stretched to approximately 60 minutes.

4.4.3 Data collection procedure

The interviews all consisted of open-ended questions (see Seidman 1991). All the participants

responded positively and were very happy to discuss their roles and the experiences they had of involvement with the School Governing Body. Though the Chairperson felt that their SGB was still in its teething stages, to me the discussions revealed that more than enough "meaningful experience" (Seidman 1991:8) had been obtained by its members.

I am aware of other possible approaches that I might have tried in this study: questionnaires, for instance, might have been helpful in securing certain general data. Questionnaires were not used, however, partly because their administration is time-consuming and does not provide immediate feedback, but mainly because of their inability to probe deeply enough to provide a true picture of opinions and feelings and experiences (Borg and Meredith 1989).

4.5 Data analysis

According to Yin (1989:105), "data analysis consists of examining, categorizing, tabulating, or otherwise recombining the evidence, to address the initial propositions of the study". Wolcott (1990) advocates beginning with basic data sorting, creating categories sufficiently basic or broad or comprehensive to accommodate all the data. Then he suggests we ask some very basic questions -- such as, "What is going on here?" -- in order to "uncover themes that recur across categories" (1990:32-33). I proceeded by examining the interview transcripts and SGB meeting minutes so as to identify appropriate categories for sorting the data on SGB roles and experiences.

Agar (1980:164) argues that the goal of analysis is to identify the themes that summarize the

key concerns of participants, as revealed in their recurrence throughout the interview data. He believes that there is no apparent substitute for the scanning of a qualitative eye to identify these themes. By following this procedure, I identified a number of themes for further analysis.

After completing the transcripts I found there were several interesting points that I did not fully understand, so I went back to the interviewees concerned to interview them again for clarification and also for extra information. This happened in the case of each participant. It took me only an additional five days because the school is not far from where I teach. The interviewees were very happy to help me in this regard.

Data analysis in this study was guided by Wolcott's (1990:35, 360) advice that "the critical task in qualitative research is not to accumulate all the data you can but to get rid of most of the data you accumulate"; that "the challenge is to be selective rather than exhaustive".

4.6 Limitations

The following limitations need to be taken into account in respect of this study. First, the sample of the study is small, especially as it was taken from only one SGB (though it portrays the experience of that SGB vividly enough). The sample is not necessarily representative of SGBs, and therefore the data cannot be generalized to other SGBs elsewhere.

Secondly, the study is limited in terms of methodology. As a single case study, it has made use of in-depth interviews to answer certain qualitative questions. Constraints of time precluded

the use of other methods of gathering data, such as the questionnaire.

See also my reservations about the appropriateness of questionnaires in the context of this research, at 4.4.3, above.

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

This chapter analyses the activities, experiences and perceptions of SGB members, and discusses certain themes that emerge from the analysis.

I begin with a brief overview of the South African Schools Act (South Africa 1996), summarizing aspects of the more detailed account given in chapter 4, in such a way as to set the scene for the first theme identified for discussion: how the SGB has applied the Schools Act.

5.1 Summary overview of the Schools Act

In keeping with the spirit of the Constitution and the first and second education White Papers (South Africa 1994, South Africa 1995), the Schools Act provides for a democratically elected SGB, representative of the main stakeholders, interest groups and role-players in the school. These include parents, teachers and learners, but parents must enjoy a majority of at least one.

SGBs are expected to operate on democratic principles (including those of responsibility and accountability) in the governance and funding of schools, in partnership with the State (South African Schools Act 1996:2). They are required to develop a school constitution, a mission and vision statement, and a code of conduct (South African Schools Act 1996:14). The preamble to the Act requires SGBs “to provide an education of progressively high quality for all learners” (South African Schools Act 1996:2), and generally to promote a culture of teaching and learning

in the school.

Furthermore, the SGB is required to develop an admissions policy, and policies on language and religion in accordance with the principles of the Constitution (South African Schools Act 1996). The SGB is also entrusted with certain administrative functions, including the issuing of an effective time-table and maintenance of the school buildings (South African Schools Act 1996:6).

On the personnel side, SGBs are responsible for the recruitment of educators and for submission of recommendations for their appointment to the provincial ministry. SGBs have the further responsibility of preparing an annual budget for the school, and supplementing the resources supplied by the State through establishing and administering a school fund (South African Schools Act 1996:24).

Finally, the Schools Act provides for the possibility of negotiated powers, whereby SGBs, through developing their capacity, can increase their powers.

The duties, responsibilities and powers outlined above provide a framework for the discussion of the perceptions and activities of members of the SGB at the case study school, which follows.

5.2 How SGB members have applied the Schools Act

The SGB is pivotal to the new, democratic model for the organization, governance and funding of schools, as set down in the South African Schools Act (1996:2). One of the primary objectives

of establishing SGBs in school governance was to get them involved in activities and programs within and beyond the school (South African Schools Act 1996:2). By stressing the parental and community roles in education, the idea was promoted that education is not solely an activity which takes place in schools, but one which affects people in all spheres of life.

The Schools Act (South African Schools Act 1996:2) identifies SGBs as the primary units of local-level governance. However, there has thus far been little information about what work could or is actually being done by SGBs, or about the implications of this. There seems, however, to be evidence that SGBs generally lack the administrative and leadership capacity to do the work they are supposed to do. There is therefore a need for systematic analysis of the work actually being done by SGBs in school governance. What follows is an account of the activities and achievements of the SGB at the case study school.

5.2.1 Documents formulated by the SGB

It emerged that members of the school's SGB had experienced certain difficulties in formulating the documents they were supposed to draw up to guide them and the school during their term of office. These included the SGB's own constitution, a language policy, a mission and vision statement, and a code of conduct.

5.2.1.1 The constitution

The Schools Act (South African Schools Act 1996:14) stipulates that “the governing body of a school must function in terms of a constitution which complies with minimum requirements

determined by the Member of the Executive Council by notice in the Provincial Gazette". However, it emerged that SGB members at the researched school did not know what procedure to follow when formulating the Constitution. What little in the way of guidance which was offered by the Schools Act was difficult to understand. Members were obliged to fall back upon their familiarity with the constitutions of other organizations, and to attempt to apply this knowledge to the task on hand.

The SGB considered the constitution to be a major document which should be prepared with proper guidance, and felt that the Department of Education had never informed them sufficiently, nor prepared them to meet the problems that they encountered. They got help from an NGO which came specifically to conduct a workshop on school governance. One participant commented:

We were lucky that our school was one of the nine affiliated schools to the Quality School Project (QSP), that was going around the district conducting workshops on school governance. Otherwise we would not have coped with this important document. I still wonder how other schools coped. It was not an easy task.

It emerged that when formulating the constitution the SGB did not understand the guidelines in the document issued to them by the Department of Education on "Understanding the South African Schools Act" (Potgieter et al. 1997:29). This document informs the reader that what must be written into the constitution are "many principles and rules guiding the way in which the governing body must function" (Potgieter et al. 1997:30), and stipulates certain elements that

should not be omitted. The SGB was uncertain whether to include only the elements stipulated or look for other factors. Their problem lay essentially in understanding the import of the phrase 'many principles'. After lengthy discussion the formulation of the constitution was completed in an SGB meeting, making use of information offered by the guide and supplementing this with suggestions gleaned from the South African Schools Act (1996:14) (refer to Appendix B).

At a meeting held by the SGB on 10/05/98 the constitution was reported to have been finished and submitted to the District Office. The next step appeared to be the formulation of a mission and vision statement.

Before we move on to a consideration of this activity, it should be noted that, for reasons of confidentiality, not all the minutes of SGB meetings at the case study school are available in the Appendix. The SGB held two meetings in 1997, followed by many more in 1998. At these meetings issues like the formulation of school policy documents, fund-raising activities and the control of school funds, reports on SGB activities and the transfer of teachers were discussed. The various problems that the SGB encountered during these meetings will be discussed in the relevant, thematically determined section.

5.2.1.2 Mission and vision statement

When formulating the mission statement, there is apparently no statutory duty on the part of the SGB to consult with parents. It emerged that this SGB involved the parents in formulating the mission statement. However, it emerged from the interviews that all the co-opted members from the parent body as well as members of the SGB were involved in formulating the mission

statement. Interviewees pointed out that because some of the parents were not "learned", there were certain issues that they did not easily grasp, which made for slow progress. One participant claimed:

I am worried about our community. Some of our people are not learned, you know. Some of the things are so technical. I remember when we were doing the mission statement for our school, some parents had problems in understanding some of the terms in the Schools Act. You had to reconcile, but it was not easy and you have to make sure that you are not leaving them behind.

The SGB members are proud that they managed in the circumstances to compose a mission statement for their school. One of them said:

The school's mission statement is of our own making. We sat there for almost a day from 10 am and it was about 7pm when we dispersed. It was never easy because with some SGB members and other co-opted members it took them time to understand what to do. That is when we discovered that there are people who have immense resources. By that I mean people who have the knowledge of things like drafting a mission statement if one organises them and makes them understand. They helped us through together with the information we got from that Model C school. We got a lot of input from them. It was not easy, believe me.

The above interviewee acknowledges the help the SGB received from a certain Model C School:

We once visited the nearby Model C school here in Butterworth, and the response we got

was marvellous. The governing body members of that school have a mission statement to guide them through. We asked for advice and help on how to go about it. Believe me, the response was positive and as a result we have our own mission statement in our school.

This cooperation confirmed the belief of another participant that those schools with strong SGBs, like the former Model C schools, should share expertise with those schools that were still struggling.

The mission statement composed by the SGB at the case study school includes also their vision statement for the school (see Appendix A).

SGB members said that they had attended a workshop for all the SGBs in the Region, but had not found it at all beneficial. The issues that they considered vital were not dealt with. According to one participant:

We did attend a workshop for SGB, but unfortunately it never addressed the issues we wanted to be addressed. Issues like keeping monies, formulating a mission statement, in fact, each and every function of the SGB. There is a need for a fruitful workshop.

5.2.1.3. Code of conduct

According to the South African Schools Act (1996:8), the governing body must first consult with, inter alia, parents, before it may adopt a code of conduct. The process of consultation is not

explained in the Schools Act. In terms of general principles, however, it may be assumed that the process must be a reasonable one in the circumstances and one which contains sufficient democratic elements. At the case study school, the SGB called a meeting of elected parents, teachers and learners to address this issue. The ideas of all those present were taken into account, as per the requirements of the South African Schools Act (1996:8) (see Appendix B). This process of consultation, loosely directed by the provisions of the Schools Act, enabled the SGB of the school concerned to adopt a code of conduct acceptable to all stakeholders.

The code of conduct made provision for parents to be informed timeously of all relevant developments, and to be given reasonable opportunity to be present at disciplinary proceedings. It also allowed for SGB intervention in the case of serious misconduct, when the offender(s) would be called to appear before the disciplinary committee of the school and the SGB forum to explain themselves, and would be punished or cautioned according to the school's code of conduct.

As is stipulated in the South African Schools Act (South Africa 1996:8), a code of conduct “must be aimed at establishing a disciplined school and purposeful school environment, dedicated to the improvement and maintenance of the quality of the learning process”. This means that members of the SGB may be involved in addressing disciplinary problems pertaining to teachers as well as students. There were cases in 1997 when the SGB had to attend to the high rate of alcohol consumption by students, and to the abuse of power or authority by teachers. The new system seemed to have a deterrent effect: there had been a marked decline in student and teacher misbehaviour, seemingly because potential delinquents were intimidated by the prospect of being hauled into an SGB forum and made to account for their actions. Here is one example,

quoted from the interviews:

We had a teacher here who was not attending school at all. The students were left alone in the class and as a result we had to report this to the District Office after numerous attempts to call her to school and account for her actions. We as SGB members were shocked to find that this particular teacher was staying in the Regional Office and was given jobs to do there. We managed to come up with a solution after this teacher decided to apply for a study leave. In that case we were able to get a replacement. Otherwise, you will find that communicating with the local offices is not easy.

SGB members saw the abolition of corporal punishment in schools as a positive change. This was not a view universally shared by parents, however, some of whom did not understand how someone could come and tell them how (not) to discipline or punish their own children. The SGB therefore believed it had a duty to convince the community at large that corporal punishment was no longer acceptable in schools. According to one of the participants,

We had some difficulties in convincing parents that there are alternatives to this sort of punishment. Several meetings were held where we spoke about the new laws and even advised parents how they might practise other forms of discipline at home, like giving a child extra work to do.

Teachers set the example at school: instead of beating students, they gave them detention or extra duties. In one instance in 1997, for example, a student who slapped another student was detained by the class teacher and given work to do in the school garden. In 1998 most students were given

extra work for late-coming and absenteeism, without prior reporting.

Another point that came out of the research interviews was the negative attitude of SGB members and parents towards certain regulations pertaining to the execution of their functions. It emerged that some members of the SGB were not happy about students being represented in serious matters concerning teachers though they know its one of the South African Schools Act's requirement that all the SGB members must be part of the decision (South Africa 1996). They claimed that in situations requiring them to sit in judgment over their elders and superiors, students would be awkward, shy and withdrawn. The students' representative interviewed expressed the same viewpoint.

Since the school is located in an area notorious for criminal activities like dagga-smoking and house-breaking, the school has experienced some problems. One participant believed the strong relationships fostered between the parents and the school, as well as with the police and the surrounding community, have been most effective in curbing misconduct and promoting a caring and stable environment. He said:

We did have some internal problems with theft. The governing body met with the parents of the students concerned, and it was, in fact, those parents who guided us in our decision to remove their children from school.

For the most part, members of the SGB had to fall back on their own experience to cope with these challenges. Those with relevant experience had to educate others who lacked such experience. Most of this was done by the four members with previous experience of serving on

a governing body.

What emerged from the interviews was the opinion that the intervention of the SGB in drawing up and implementing a code of conduct had been hugely successful, though it is clear that certain problems were experienced as a result of individual members' lack of relevant experience and know-how. One other problem identified concerned the cumbersome nature of communication with the Department of Education. Although the principal is to all intents and purposes the mouth-piece of the SGB, the Department of Education and the principal cannot enter into binding agreements without due consultation with the SGB. This sometimes makes for unwieldy, if thoroughly democratic, decision-making processes.

5.2.1.4 Policy on language and religion

Though the students in the school are Xhosa-speaking, the SGB decided that English would be the official school language for all learners, to be spoken even during break time. The language policy was formulated in consultation with parents, teachers and students in a meeting.

It appeared that, despite the declared status of English as official language, students did not feel at ease when they expressed themselves in that language. This was the view of a student representative, who said:

Some of us do not feel free when we are asked to speak English. Sometimes you are ill and you want permission to go to the Doctor. The principal will keep on saying, "Speak English". We feel great but it is not easy with some of us. We have different

backgrounds.

When I asked her if the students practised speaking English during break time, she replied: "We don't, we concentrate on playing our games which are in Xhosa. We try when we see a teacher coming towards us. We want to. It is not easy but we are trying".

Although there is, theoretically speaking, freedom of religion at the school (in line with the South African Schools Act [1996:8] stipulation that freedom of religion obtain at public schools), in practice prayers are conducted by the principal and staff members before the school as a single congregation. The routine is to read an extract from the Bible, sing a hymn or and end with a prayer and a benediction. There were apparently no priests or preachers who felt it necessary to look after their congregants by providing services at school: perhaps it is significant that the inter-denominational Student Christian Movement (SCM) is operating at school. The un-doctrinaire nature of the morning service is demonstrated by the fact that sometimes parents who had arrived early for other reasons were asked to conduct prayers; as one parent said:

Sometimes you go to school early and the principal will ask you to conduct prayers. You just ask the children to sing any common song and after that you pray. When the prayers are over, you go to the principal's office and tell him that you have just come for this and that. If there is a problem he wants the SGB to attend to he will say it.

5.2.2 Election and composition

Section 23 (9) of the South African Schools Act (South Africa 1996:18) stipulates the number



of parent members, teacher members and learner members in the SGB. With regard to the election of parent members of the SGB, it emerged that the criteria apparently invoked by parents when electing their representatives are not sufficiently circumspect. This has hampered the progress of the SGB. It appeared from the interviews that when parents elected their representatives, they looked for people who contributed a lot in the discussions, whether they had political interests or not. One member said:

We were elected in a meeting by the parents. When you are contributing a lot they elect you even if sometimes you ask a lot of questions. Mind you some of these questions are irrelevant or have political connotations, you know, and some of the contributions are sarcastic. Then when we sit down alone as SGB members you find that we have a problem of being going astray by some of the irrelevant ideas brought by some of the members.

Another parent commented:

There was one time in 1997 when we found that no, there are certain elements who had political interests in this SGB and yet we have to be neutral. We sat down and said, "Look, we are here for the interests of our children and the government. Let us not show our personal political interests here, we are parents of the school" [Umntu icaps yakhe makayijongise ngemva xa engena ngala gate yesikolo, kuba singabazali asizo politicians esikolweni]. We had to tell other parents the same thing in a meeting. Since then we did not have problems.

The struggle against apartheid education had aimed at achieving a new democratic, non-racist and non-sexist educational dispensation. The latter requirement, at least, appears to have been met in respect of the gender profile of the SGB: 9 of the 14 members are females. Moreover, prominent executive posts are held by women, including those of treasurer and secretary, and everyone appears to be happy with their performance.

5.2.3 Admission policy

As the South African Schools Act (South Africa 1996:6) stipulates that the governing body may not administer any test relating to the admission of learners, or authorize the principal of the school or any person to administer such a test, this SGB has left matters pertaining to admissions and the setting of time-tables to the principal and his staff. The SGB formulated and adopted an admission policy at a meeting held in 1997, but after admissions for that year were over, so it was only implemented in January 1998. The policy followed the requirement of the Constitution that it not conflict with the South African Schools Act or applicable laws in the province (South Africa 1996:6); there were no discriminatory tests conducted to determine who should be admitted, nor were any children turned away for any reason concerning money, gender, pregnancy, race, marital status, or any other discriminatory factor offensive to the Constitution. Admissions were done by the admission committee elected by the principal and staff.

However, this increased enrolment at the school and had resulted in large numbers in all the classes. It emerged that the teachers were not happy about these numbers. They felt that the Department of Education had been unreasonable in insisting on such an admission policy. One teacher representative said:

The Department of Education is unfair. I think this was done for political reasons and the teacher ratio was not considered. It is only on paper. Our classes are full. We are not coping. Now they still talk about redeployment. We do not understand.

When admissions were complete, the SGB forum and the parents were called to a meeting with the school administration to give a report on admissions. No irregularities were reported or appear in the minute book.

5.2.4 Financial administration

SGBs have the power to determine the school fees payable annually by students to supplement the resources supplied by the State (South African Schools Act 1996:24). Clearly this is a sensitive area, and the levying of school fees only becomes feasible if appropriate agreement is reached among all the constituencies represented on the SGB.

The SGB at the school in question had agreed on the modest sum of R20 per student for school fees in 1997, and the same amount in 1998. However, by no means all parents paid in full, or on time. They came up with many excuses for not paying school fees. Since the South African Schools Act stipulates that no child may be turned away or expelled because of lack of funds (South Africa 1996:26), the SGB sought some means of persuading parents to pay. One SGB member said:

We had to call a meeting and try to tell them that the money is upgrading the standard of education for our children. Threats like we are going to request that the progress reports

be retained for those students not paying, or send the children home before writing exams are often made. And lucky enough though that is against the law, they tried by all means to pay or make arrangements to pay in manageable instalments. Most of our parents are not working people and are pensioners.

Another participant agreed that parents were amenable to reason, saying: "Some of the parents, I feel, do not pay because they do not feel like paying early. Because if you show them the need, they pay. You don't ask for money, show them the need and they will pay".

When school funds were exhausted in the middle of 1998, parents were asked to pay another R20, which brought the total fee bill to R40 per student for the year. The minutes of the SGB meetings show that although their budget was handed over to parents for approval at the beginning of the year (which is line with the South African Schools Act [1996:24] requirement that before a budget is approved by the SGB it must be presented to a general meeting of parents for approval), they did not give sufficient consideration to estimated expenditure when determining the fees. One participant said:

I will take an example: last year [1997] we started this structure of extending classrooms. We asked for R20 from each parent. Okay, the money was paid out, you know, very slowly, and this year again [1998] we met as parents and SGB members and we said, "Please people let us pop out another R20 for the fixing of windows, ceilings and floors we could not manage." Now all our classrooms are tiled and now we are in the process of buying ceiling material.

This would seem to confirm the essentially ad hoc basis on which the SGB operated in the calculation of school fees.

It appeared that the SGB had followed the South African Schools Act (1996:24-25) regulation that school funds are not to be used without the sanction of SGB members and that parents have free access to the school's financial records and books. This is evidenced by information gleaned in the interviews, that when withdrawals were made all three signatories were required to sign, i.e. the chairperson, the secretary and the treasurer. There is a special bank book for school funds and a separate bank book for building funds. These bank books are kept by the treasurer. According to one participant,

When the school needs to buy something, a written request is made in a form of an invoice or a receipt. We come together as SGB and approve that. The three signatories, i.e. the chairperson, the secretary and the treasurer, sign a cheque payable to the shop or company. There is no hard cash given to teachers.

Records of expenditure were kept and financial reports drawn up. Two financial reports have been produced since 1997: when funds were exhausted in June 1997, a financial report was prepared and presented to parents at a meeting, so as to make them aware that there was a need for fund-raising activities. Another financial report was presented at a general meeting of the SGB held in August 1998.

Partly as a result of the poor budgeting described above, as time went on the school found itself short of funds. The SGB, together with members of the school staff and the local community,

set about various fund-raising activities. These included staging musical concerts, organizing raffles, and approaching big businesses like Tanda Milling Company for sponsorships. On occasion, "Funny-Day" shows were organized at school, when students were each requested to pay a small amount. The SGB also wrote letters, and appointed individuals from within the SGB and from among the parents to go around asking for donations. They explained clearly what the money was going to be used for.

However, despite repeated requests for their help, not all parents participated in fund-raising activities. It is possible that they did not fully understand the purpose of fund-raising. Some claimed to be too busy, others that they did not know how to participate, while others simply saw it as a waste of their selling time. It emerged from the interviews that it took numerous meetings to convince a sufficient number of parents to take part. Nevertheless, the effort was worthwhile. The funds raised enabled the school to bring back the classes that were temporarily accommodated in the old factories near the school. Interviewees also mentioned that the school is in the process of fencing its premises, and hoped to construct a partition in the school hall.

The general view about fund-raising among participants was that it had afforded them the opportunity to upgrade their own school, and in the process upgrade their own community. The school belongs to the community, they stressed. And the community responded admirably: even though most of the students come from an informal settlement, their parents allowed them to attend concerts even during awkward times, for the good of the school. One participant said:

I respect this community: when you show them the need, they will co-operate. Most of our people are coming from these shacks. They do not know these things, fund-raising,

you have to explain to them and be patient with them, then they will co-operate. They will come in numbers even if that means chaos in terms of managing the door takings, some just want to see what is done in music concerts. But they are there.

Since most of the parents are unemployed, some relying on the pensions of elderly relatives and others depending on income from spaza shops, it is not surprising that school fees were not paid promptly. It seemed that the major source of income for the school had become donations and the proceeds of concerts and raffles. This certainly justifies all the effort put into getting parents involved in fund-raising activities, since these activities were helping to keep school fees down. The process is on-going: the school has many projects in the pipeline, like putting in ceilings in some of the classrooms and tiling the floors. They seem to be positive in all that they are doing.

5.2.5 Personnel

The apartheid system did not recognise the PTSA's of the 1980s as legitimate structures in schools (NECC Commission Paper 1994), which inevitably hampered their daily functioning (EDUPOL 1993:vii). The SGBs are created in order to work in good faith with the Department of Education. It is therefore interesting to try to ascertain what kind of working relationship SGB members at the case study school actually have with the Department.

Concerning the appointment of new members of staff, SGB members indicated their awareness that there are certain steps to be followed: identification of the (dire) need for an additional teacher in the school; placement of advertisements at the District Office and in the print media;

interviewing of applicants; and selection of the appropriate candidate. However, during the period of this research, appointments were suspended in all schools in the Eastern Cape pending redeployment, which meant that the SGB was unable to appoint any new teachers.

In 1998 there arose the case of a teacher who wanted to be "loaned" to a certain school in East London. The case was referred to the SGB, who, acting within their powers (South African Schools Act 1996:8), were unwilling to release the teacher concerned. It turned out that they did not fully understand the term 'loan' in this context: to them it implied that the teacher was surplus to the school's requirements, and they would lose the post. Nevertheless, by following the procedure of making a recommendation according to their rights as SGB members, they acted in the school's best interests. It emerged that when the recommendation was forwarded to the district office, inspectors came to explain that there was a circular that had recently been released allowing teachers in certain circumstances to be seconded where they wanted to go. Teachers were using this as a way of obtaining transfers. It appeared that the SGB members' knowledge of their rights helped them to do the right thing: the teacher concerned had to be kept at the school because she was not surplus to its needs.

Though the South African Schools Act (1996:6) envisages SGBs working hand-in-hand with the Department of Education, the principal and the community at large, it seems from this example that communication is not good. Had the Department of Education furnished the SGB with all the recent circulars, the problem outlined above could have been resolved with ease.

There is also the bureaucratic handicap, already referred to, which prevents a principal from entering into any binding agreements with the Department of Education without first securing

the approval of all SGB members.

5.2.6 Negotiated powers

According to the South African Schools Act (1996:16), the SGB may apply to the Head of Department in writing to be allowed to assume the following functions, funds permitting: extension of the school (extra-curriculum); maintenance and improvement of school property, buildings and grounds; purchase of textbooks, education material and equipment for the school; and payment for services to the school. It appears that this SGB had a vision that their school should concentrate more on technical education, since they felt that there were more avenues of opportunity open to learners with technical qualifications in the modern world.

However, it emerged that the SGB was unaware of how it was supposed to go about negotiating this power. The idea of extending the curriculum was written into the vision statement and sent to the district office (see appendix C). Members of the SGB mistakenly thought that this was sufficient. To date there has been no appropriate follow-up. It emerged that the rest of the negotiated powers had never been attempted so far

5.2.7 Culture

Although members of the SGB recognised the importance of the democratic principle at stake, they had conflicting ideas about the presence of students at their meetings. One parent representative said:

I am having problems with Student representatives. I think in that case the Department of Education made an error. I know that this is for every school in South Africa, but our

cultures differ, you know, our children are not used in sitting in round table with elders discussing. Some of these issues discussed are so big to be discussed by children. We are hammering them, you know. I think as a teacher you know that whenever you discuss with a child you consider the level of the child's ability. Sometimes we are handling delicate issues of reprimanding a teacher in front of the student. At the same time if we discard them and say in certain issues let us leave them, it is not right because we should take joint decisions.

A student representative said:

They are our parents and our teachers. We respect them and we feel shy to hear some of these things and we just keep quiet. What they have decided on such issues we just agree.

This situation creates a potential conflict between the government's commitment to transparency and democracy in education, and its equivalent commitment to equal treatment and respect for all South Africa's cultures (South African Schools Act 1996:2). To honour the latter, the state would have to concede that the inclusion of students in the SGB offends against the cultural norms of certain communities and therefore represents an infringement of their constitutional rights. On the other hand, it might be argued that it is in the long-term interest of society that young people from such a culture learn to speak up and defend their interests in a democratic manner. On the evidence of the interviews, it seems that such situations are not in fact intolerable if handled with appropriate tact and understanding.

5.2.8 Culture of learning and teaching

It appears that the desideratum that the SGB support the principal and staff of the school in their professional functions (South African Schools Act 1996:16) was fulfilled within the spirit of the new dispensation in this school. SGB members were actively involved in the culture of learning and teaching at the school. For instance, they were unhappy about the fact that school inspectors had stopped inspecting schools because of teachers' union demands that the methods of inspection be changed. They therefore came up with a plan to monitor work done by teachers and students, a plan agreed to by student and teacher representatives on the SGB.

There were two programmes run by the SGB at this school which had a direct bearing on the culture of teaching and learning. The SGB members came together and deliberated about how best to achieve effective teaching and learning in the school, including in their plans expert input from outside the school. As a result, it was decided that it was the responsibility of the SGB to supervise school work, together with the Principal, the Deputy Principal and the Heads of Departments (HODs), until things were back to normal as far as inspection is concerned.

The SGB was concerned that not all teachers might be doing their jobs as well as they might, and that there was no mechanism in place for monitoring this. There were also teachers new to the teaching fraternity who might be in need of guidance and assistance. One participant commented:

We as SGBs had a plan, you know, to go to the classes and listen to the teachers teaching. The students have to give their parents books with teachers' comments everyday when they go home. The parents have to sign the students' books showing that they have seen their children's work and progress. Some of the teachers are co-operative but some are not, others are very dedicated to their

work. There are those that are lazy and they will try to dodge.

Another respondent said:

I am worried about the newly-appointed teachers who have not been assessed ever since they were employed. Those teachers will never know which standards are expected of them. They do not know whether they are on the right track, you know. Now, the future of our children is at stake out of ignorance.

The purpose of the exercise was to develop staff performance and also encourage students to work. Though it was carried out in a good spirit it appears that some of the teachers were not happy at first because they thought they were being exposed. They were worried that they would be dismissed if they were found not to be doing their work properly. But their fears were allayed when they realized that the process was not one of fault finding but rather aimed at helping and encouraging them. One teacher said:

Some of us were not happy because they thought that this was violating their rights. Their fear was that if anyone can be found not doing the work he would be dismissed from the job. But because it was done with good spirit, they later saw that after all this was helping them. We cannot know when we are no longer satisfying the Department of education needs if we are not checked.

There was also a program for mutual performance appraisal among teachers. The purpose of this program was to raise the level of commitment and professionalism that was perceived to be

fading in the teaching fraternity. Throughout the academic year teachers were evaluated by their colleagues with the help of various heads of departments within the school. The idea was that at the end of each year the best teachers would be announced and given a merit award. The teachers' tests and class work given were checked by colleagues to make sure that they had followed the syllabi correctly. Written reports were compiled and advice given, and all this done in a good spirit throughout.

The SGB members were of the opinion that these programmes had been very successful and effective. They believed that as a result of their direct involvement in these programmes, teachers had grown professionally and were more committed to their work. Teacher and student absentee rates had dropped, and academic results had improved tremendously, especially the pass rate at grade 8.

5.2.9. Accountability and decision making

The South African Schools Act (1996:14) points out that "a governing body stands in a position of trust towards the school". The accountability of the SGB would appear to be two-fold: while members of the SGB are jointly accountable to the school, each member is accountable to the stakeholders he or she represents. The SGB at the case study school seems to have discharged these obligations admirably.

All the activities that they performed during their term of office, as discussed in this chapter, were reported to the school and its administration and also to the parents at meetings convened by the SGB. Decisions made by the SGB seem to have been arrived at through compromise,

consultation and consensus, in fact consensus has been the order of the day. Every participant has been accorded the right to influence decisions. Proper consultation was undertaken before action was taken. Though it is apparent from the foregoing analysis that not everything went smoothly from the beginning, there was no mention of any instances of deadlock by the SGB members interviewed.

5.2.10. Community-related programmes

The SGB at the case study school involved students at the school in an AIDS education program, with the aim of sensitizing the community to the realities of AIDS and related health problems. It emerged that a member of the SGB who is a nurse, together with parents who are also nurses and professionally involved in this programme, helped to launch this initiative. She commented as follows:

Our students mainly come from the squatter camps and their parents do not have the knowledge of AIDS education health problems. We felt that we must do something to this community. Everybody has the right to live, so they must know about the health precautions.

What they did was to organise the students to attend an AIDS demonstration conducted in Vullivalley Senior Secondary school by the Eastern Cape Technikon group. The students attended and hopefully became aware of the dangers. There seem unfortunately to have been no follow-up lessons on AIDS in the school curriculum.

5.3 Issues emerging from the data

The main issues to have emerged from the data analysis may be grouped under the following heads:

- * Capacity building
- * Communication
- * Culture
- * Level of understanding.

It appeared that, despite its manifest successes, the SGB had since the beginning of 1997 been hampered by poor infrastructure, a lack of resources and training, a lack of communication and empowerment, certain cultural problems and low levels of understanding.

5.3.1 Capacity building

It appears that the question of capacity building has been problematic since the inception of SGBs. These bodies throughout South Africa were promised training in their roles and responsibilities. According to the South African Schools Act (1996:14), out of funds appropriated by the provincial legislature for the enhancement of the capacity of governing bodies, the Head of the Department must provide both introductory training for newly elected governing bodies, as well as “continuing training to governing bodies to promote the effective performance of their functions or to enable them to assume additional functions”. To date, the researched SGB has not received any training as the workshop they attended never furnished

them with such training.

Members of the SGB felt that they had a demanding job for which guidance and thorough training was required. One of them commented:

The idea of us as SGB being involved in the school governance is good, but if only the Department can organise fruitful workshops on SGB we can go further. It seems as if we are left in the lurch, given documents to read on our own. What is that? Let me tell you, in the workshop we attended was the officials from the government only asked us about problems we thought of in the SGB forum. No demonstrations were done. We were told that capacity building is underway.

The argument that SGB members must simply learn from experience does not convince. The period of eighteen months during which members had served on the new governing body was too short for them to have become thoroughly conversant with the Schools Act, let alone for them to have acquired sufficient relevant experience. That not all the SGB members are professional educators is another factor: while four of the seven interviewed are teachers, one is a nursing sister, one is a car salesman and one a student.

In order for SGB members to function effectively, they need to be fully conversant with the relevant regulations and thoroughly trained in the performance of their duties. This the Department of Education has manifestly failed to ensure. Right through the process of formulating and implementing the policy documents, members of this SGB were obliged to rely on their own experience, or to organise assistance themselves.

It appears that issues of discipline have presented enormous challenges to this particular SGB. Faced with increased numbers of students, fewer teachers and the absence of a developed culture of human rights, the SGB has had to develop creative methods of dealing with misconduct. The data analysis above has revealed that they were not all conversant with relevant policy documents, and that the Department of Education was very slow to back them up with capacity building.

According to the Schools Act (1996:18), all SGB members have equal responsibilities and powers in the execution of their functions. In addition to being read as a cultural phenomenon, the fact that the student representatives did not exercise the power they had out of deference to their elders could be read as a lack of empowerment on their part, a situation which could be addressed by capacity building.

The data analysis also showed that the SGB lacked certain skills in the handling of school finances. The fact that funds dried up in mid-1998, obliging them to request a second fees payment, indicates a deficiency in forward planning. Again, it emerged from the interviews that when the fund-raising program was implemented at the school towards the end of 1997, most of the parents did not co-operate because they did not know what to do. It was the duty of the SGB members to guide them, but the SGB members had no special skills to do this, and only gradually came up with the convincing argument that parents should be fully involved in fund-raising programs so as to keep the school fees low.

Three SGB member signatories take care of school funds and expenditure, including the banking and payment of accounts. None of them received any relevant training at the one workshop they attended. According to the SGB treasurer: "There was a workshop that was conducted in

Butterworth for all SGBs in the region. We were not trained how to control school monies. There were promises that training will follow. I am using my own experience". The school researched can just count itself lucky to have had such honest, diligent and resourceful individuals serving on its SGB.

5.3.2 Communication

What emerged clearly from the interviews is a degree of concern arising from uncertainty as to how the SGB was supposed to communicate with the Department of Education. According to the Constitution (1996:14), communication should occur through meetings with parents, teachers and stakeholders. The school principal is the obvious go-between, but as both a representative of the Department and a member of the SGB, his or her position is ambiguous. Although the process of communication was provided for in the South African Schools Act of 1996, it appears that no follow-up has occurred.

It seems from what interviewees had to say that the relationship between the SGB and the Department of Education, more especially the Department's local offices, was not good, which of course affected the communication process. It also appeared that the local education offices need to tighten up their responsibilities before the people they are serving lose confidence in them. Interviewees were of the impression that in these offices there was a lot of uncertainty as to who was responsible for what. One described the problem as follows:

It seems there is a lot of uncertainty as to who is supposed to do what. When you come to so and so's office you will never feel contented, you will feel as if somebody is

running away, there is no accountability, you will not know who is responsible for what.

It seems that the rule of thumb is that, if the situation suits the state, it is fine by them and they co-operate fully, but if it does not, then it becomes the school's baby. The power of the Department can thus be seen as separate from that of the SGB, rather than being integral or complementary to it.

Communication is vital for the SGB movement to be effective and for the Department of Education to ensure that the new policies are in place. It seems that the Department has a long way to go in this regard.

5.3.3 Culture

The South African Schools Act (1996:2) announced that the country needed a new national system of education to protect and advance our diverse cultures and languages. The SGB studied could be seen as having unequivocally committed itself to a program of modernization, which means, somewhat ironically, that it has actually been inhibited in carrying out its functions by stakeholders' clinging to traditional cultural beliefs which the Act claims to protect.

For example, the abolition of corporal punishment was negatively received by many parents, and the SGB -- with the support of the principal and the staff -- had to be firm about sticking to the new rule. The disciplinary use of a switch, it was argued by parents, had been a part of African culture as far back as could be remembered. It could be replied that all cultural practices change with the times, and that there is nothing intrinsically "alien" about the abolition of corporal

punishment.

Another example of cultural resistance can be seen in the students' resentment of the fact that they were supposed to speak English at all times. It is arguably their right to be allowed to express themselves in their own home language. But the SGB evidently believes that students need to be conscious of the fact that English is an international language that will empower them in their future life, and does not see the rule as culturally discriminatory or as disputing the equal validity of all eleven languages in South Africa.

The cultural implications of the presence of students on the SGB has already been discussed in section 5.2.7 above.

5.3.4 Level of understanding

It appears that there was little consistency in the SGB's understanding of the policy documents they had to formulate and implement. Some members of the SGB were obliged to become teachers of other members of the SGB. Clearer guidance from the Department of Education would have eased the process of application.

Compounding the potential for confusion was the fact that there was a broad margin for disagreement in the interpretation of the regulations. For instance, where the Act requires consultation with parents, it makes sense to interpret it as a reference to any parents who happen to be reasonably available. But it could be construed much more narrowly.

Again, the alternatives to corporal punishment were not understood by all in the same way. This became clear when the students who were involved in theft were taken away from school by their parents, and the SGB saw this as a solution. It was in fact in contravention of the law which states that a “Member of the Executive Council”, not the parent, “must determine by notice in the Provincial Gazette the behaviour by a learner at a public school which may constitute serious misconduct, and disciplinary proceedings to be followed in such cases”.

The question of varying levels of understanding in fact reduces to a question of proper training and Departmental guidance in the interpretation of the Schools Act and associated regulations.

5.4 Some personal perspectives on SGB members' experiences

Since it has been part of the aim of this study to explore the feelings and perceptions of individual members of an SGB, it seems appropriate to close with a selection of quotations from the interviews, framed with a minimum of interpretive commentary.

Those interviewed indicated that they were initially overwhelmed by the responsibility they were required to assume. None of them had any doubt that they had an important role to play in school governance and in the education dispensation. One member of the SGB said that now that a democratic government was in place, the future role of SGBs was guaranteed; moreover, SGBs would be obliged to tolerate and promote democratic practices. One of the members said:

I feel great to be part of this SGB. You become self-disciplined and self-motivated, to know that you can make a joint decision and work as a team. Though we were not offered

any skills, I found it motivating to seek for yourself the way to go out of a problem.

One respondent described the influence of parents' apathy:

I was not happy about the attitude of parents when we asked them to help us with the fund-raising. It seemed that if funds are exhausted it is our own baby. I felt demotivated, but with the co-operation of my colleagues I became motivated.

Another theme traced by this study, the poor relationship between the Department of Education and SGB members, is borne out by the following observation made by one of the respondents:

I am glad that I am have to be one of the members who went to the District Office. Some of these officials are unapproachable as if you have disturbed them. What are they there for, I don't know.

The interviewees indicated that they had learned a lot from their experience, most notably in the (culturally challenging) areas of democratic practice and consultation:

It is for the first time that I have to sit down with other people and listen what they have to say and agree with them. I am an African man, I am used to tell family what I think and do not want them to say "no". But to be a member of the SGB is an achievement.

Again,

To be an SGB member taught me to accommodate other cultures. I knew sitting down with children at table as a western culture. But now I understand that it is not a bad idea.

Children are people, you cannot talk to them by beating them all the time.

Finally, according to a teaching staff representative:

I feel great to be an SGB member so as to learn skills of management. Though the principal is a person who delegates at school, to be involved in controlling the activities of the school open avenues for one's future.

5.5 Suggestions for further research

In order for SGBs to contribute fully to the democratic governance of schools in South Africa, I would point to the following needs. There is a need for:

- * the establishment of local, regional and national workshops for SGBs;
- * the in-service training of all SGBs around the country;
- * the provision of services such as health and counselling for students.

Future researchers might respond to the challenge of these needs by asking the following questions:

- * whether governing bodies are conversant with their functions and duties;
- * and what remedial measures could be put into place to improve the operation of SGBs.

In conclusion, what came out of the research was that all the SGB members were of the opinion that the programs they had embarked on had been very successful. They believed that because of their direct involvement and participation, and their frequent availability at school, conditions had improved remarkably. They claimed that the teachers had grown professionally and were

more committed to their teaching; that learning had improved; that school administration was more efficient because the Principal had demonstrated his flexibility in dealings with the SGB; and that school funds had been responsibly managed.

It has also emerged from this study that, in the execution of their duties and functions, members of this SGB have been guided by principles of democracy and democratic accountability. Democracy in this context means consultation with all involved; it means that all those affected by decisions should actively participate in the decision-making process. In this and in many other respects, and despite its several handicaps and shortcomings, the SGB studied has set a shining example for others to follow and learn from.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter will summarize and conclude the study, and make recommendations toward the solution of problems identified in the course of the research. Although the suggestions made are of interest to all stakeholders in education governance, most are for the attention of appropriate parties in the Department of Education.

6.1 Conclusion

The initial aim of this study was to investigate how the members of a School Governing Body perceive and experience their roles. The central problem arising from the field investigated is that the skills, knowledge and attitudes of SGB members appear to be inadequately developed in order for them to cope with the changes taking place in the South African educational system. Parents, in particular, at historically disadvantaged schools for blacks, who are not used to being involved in the education of their children, are experiencing difficulty in coping with the new changes and challenges.

A review of relevant literature in Chapter 2 was followed by an account, in Chapter 3, of the research process: a case study of a secondary school in Butterworth, in the south-eastern region of the Eastern Cape, conducted through the use of in-depth interviews. The respondents were all members of this school's SGB.

From the literature review it emerged that the changes currently being undergone in South Africa under the general rubric of decentralization were by no means unique: virtually every educational system in the world had been through, or was going through, some process of achieving a suitable balance between centralized and decentralized modes of school governance.

In South Africa, the need effectively to implement the changes in educational governance prescribed by the South African Schools Act of 1996, and to keep up with the pace of change in the world generally, means that School Governing Bodies have to be adaptive and innovative. Members of SGBs therefore need to acquire the skills, attitudes and capacity to be able to perform their functions. They must have access to the knowledge, information and material resources necessary to sustain effective governance. All this, it seems, can only be achieved through some kind of capacity-building training program, which it is surely the responsibility of the Department of Education to initiate.

From the research interviews it would appear that urgent attention needs to be given to minimising or, where possible, eradicating existing tensions, differences, and communication problems between SGBs -- including parents, teachers and students -- and the Department of Education. These are the key players in school governance and they ought to enjoy a sound working relationship.

It also emerged from the research interviews that a diligent and proactive SGB could have a considerable impact on the progress and well-being of a school, especially in respect of installing and sustaining a valid culture of teaching and learning.

Although most of the members of the SGB at the school studied were performing this role for the first time, several of them had experience of working in other consultative and decision-making groups, and they used this experience to good advantage. Certain areas, however, such as budgeting and negotiation strategy, were entirely new to them, and they were fortunate to have kept afloat in what is very much a sink-or-swim situation.

In sum, a school is not an independent entity. It operates in a social context, an important element of which is the local community. The school draws its intake from the community and depends on the community for much of its financial and social support. The community has a right to have a major say in the governance of the school. The school cannot therefore rely solely upon the expertise of professional educators, but must accept and indeed welcome representation on the SGB of parents (and even other members of the local community). But for the latter to make a useful contribution, they need to have appropriate training and experience.

6.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations are made in order to help SGBs meet the changing demands of school governance, and operate effectively and efficiently.

6.2.1 Skills development

The appropriate training of SGB members is crucial for their effectiveness and efficiency. As indicated in the study, certain skills were lacking among all members of the SGB in certain spheres. The government had apparently made promises to provide the necessary training, but

had conspicuously failed to do so. While it is generally accepted that the changes in school governance introduced by the new government are welcome and long overdue, state responsibility does not begin and end with the passing of an Act of Parliament.

A well co-ordinated capacity building program should be developed and implemented, so as to provide SGBs and teachers with the knowledge they need. The program should be developed and carried out as a process of constant consultation with individual SGBs. Part of the problem has apparently been that the Education Department has simply had no idea of what sort of help new SGBs might possibly need. The assistance that they have offered, in the form of occasional workshops, was judged to be irrelevant and useless by the interviewees in this study. However, the workshop undoubtedly remains the most valuable medium for the exchange of ideas and expertise in such a context.

The Department of Education, in conjunction with SGBs, should also target parents of school-going children for capacity building. Parents need to become aware of themselves as a constituency with important powers in respect of their children's education, and they need to be shown how to use these wisely and constructively.

It is imperative that urgent attention be given to clearly defining convenient channels of communication among SGBs, other stakeholders, and the Department of Education. Once these have been identified or created, the opportunities for misunderstanding or confusion will have been greatly reduced.

If the government cannot assume sole responsibility for capacity building, SGBs should receive

some form of state subsidy to take the initiative themselves. Again, some initial state funding to support the SGB's operations (for resources like a computer or photocopy machine) would help a great deal. A well-equipped SGB can operate more effectively and efficiently.

It is recommended that recommended that some teachers earmarked for redeployment could be used temporarily for the induction and training of SGBs, after undergoing some orientation on the process.

Finally, the importance of democratic principles and practice in school governance should be stressed at all times. Sectarian interest-groups, or those with a narrow or inappropriate political agenda, must not be allowed to commandeer and dominate SGBs, to the detriment of the school and the surrounding community as a whole.

If the involvement and participation of SGBs can be properly conceived, properly planned and properly implemented, the following can really help the new South Africa to realize its cherished educational ambitions:

- * the achievement of democracy and accountability in schools in general, making them accessible to the broader society.
- * the restoration of a culture of learning and teaching that is currently lacking in South African schools.
- * the generation of additional financial resources for the benefit of schools in South Africa.
- * the building of capacity among parents, teachers and students, especially at the

lowest levels of education.

- * helping to establish partnership between previously privileged public schools and their disadvantaged neighbours, for the benefit of both.
- * the creation of harmony between the state and schools.
- * the creation of good relationships among parents, teachers and students.

In conclusion, it is gratifying to observe that there is broad general agreement between the SGBs and the state, that SGBs should continue to serve as semi-autonomous community organs, linked to the state but accountable to the communities they serve. All in South Africa now have the right to demand consultation, representation and participation in their schools' decision-making, policy-making, implementation and monitoring processes.

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LANGALETHU J.S.SCHOOL

MISSION STATEMENT

LANGALETHU is committed to help each child to reach his or her own potential as a person and a citizen by building their thinking and practical skills so as to improve the quality of life thus contributing to the reconstruction and development of the country.

All this shall be achieved through effective communication, inclusivity, care, love, mutual respect, courage, determination and co-operation among all stakeholders.

Without discriminating against any other language the medium of instruction of this school shall be english.

Langaletu is striving to be a leading institution in education in the Eastern Cape.

1. Every pupil, must remember that she or he is a member of Langaletu Junior Secondary School, both in public and in private. She or he is expected to behave in a responsible, tolerant, courteous and sensible manner. Any action or remark that is discourteous, dishonest, malicious or destructive that can have a bad effect on the reputation of the Langaletu Junior Secondary School will be regarded as an offence.
2. Pupils shall attend school the whole of the prescribed day.
 - 2.1 In the case of illness during school hours, pupils must report to the Deputy Principal, who will deal with individual cases and decide on the course of action. Parents will be informed if possible or alternative arrangements will be made.
 - 2.2 Pupils arriving late or leaving school during the morning must report to the Deputy Principal. She or he will record the reason in a note-book.
3. Pupils shall remain on school premises during the school day.
 - 3.1 Books, lunches, etc., that have been left at home may be fetched only with special permission from the Deputy Principal.
 - 3.2 Pupils must not talk to visitors over the fence.
 - 3.4 A pupil may not absent herself or himself from any class without obtaining permission from the teacher concerned. This will be given only in exceptional circumstances.
4. In the case of absence, it is preferred that parents phone or write school Principal immediately, informing her or him of the nature of the illness and the possible length of absence. If this is not possible the pupil must furnish her or his class teacher with a note explaining the reason for her or his absence. For an absence of longer than three days the Principal may demand a Doctor's Certificate.
5. Every pupil shall participate in the educational programme as prescribed by the Education Department unless exemption has been granted by the Department. This exemption is obtained on application through the Principal.
6. All pupils are urged to participate in sport and other extra-mural activities.

VISION OF OUR SCHOOL

1. We would like LANGALETHU to, if possible concentrate more on technical education and encouragement of skills as there are more avenues opened to learners with these types of education in the modern world.
2. Also, adding cultural education to the present one will, later on benefit the learners.
3. Encouragement of extra mural activities e g sport and music as these activities will keep the learners occupied, thus keeping them away from committing crime.
4. High standards of discipline to be maintained, as disciplined learners will result in disciplined communities.
5. Learners to be taught and encouraged proper ways of communication
6. English, as it is the commonly used language of communication, to be the medium of instruction.
7. Parental support needed to achieve our vision.
8. -Courage and determination of LANGALETHU towards building a sound community.
9. Teaching of health and safety measures which will also result in healthy and good communities.

A VISION FOR OUR SCHOOL

Developed by the parents of
LANGALETHU Junior Secondary School

